



PUBLICATION: PROMO MAGAZINE
COUNTRY: UK
DATE: SEP 2001

DESCRIPTION: ARTICLE ON VJING.
MOVING FROM CLUBS ONTO DVD

LAST NIGHT A VJ SAVED MY LIFE

The growing VJ phenomenon is breaking out of the clubs onto DVD and TV, so isn't it time the music video community took notice? Dugald Baird reports

The Light Surgeons

Alongside the traditional world of promos, another crop of artists involved in music-related visuals is springing up. Based in the club scene, the work of VJs and other visual artists is taking audio-visual creativity in fresh new directions.

Those involved in the scene come from backgrounds as diverse as graphic design, experimental film, fine art, TV production or even printing. But what they have in common is a belief in the possibilities of exploring new avenues in the visual arena. Their mixes are capable of being enjoyed on many different levels – as an intense viewing experience, or simply as background images which create a mood or ambience.

The VJing scene has grown up out of the club culture of DJ mixing, audio sampling, visual sampling and DIY film-making. For some, the impetus is a feeling that club culture is no longer pushing boundaries. "Today's generation want more stimulation," says Matt Black of pioneering audio-visual duo Coldcut. "They're not getting it from just the music, so to meld the audio together with the visuals is a natural next step."

However, there are many different approaches to mixing visuals. Artists such as Coldcut and Hexstatic focus on integrating the audio and visual elements of their work using video sampling, while VJs such as Lazy Eye, Reality Check and Overlap work alongside club DJs, providing a mix cut in time to the music. Meanwhile, high-profile VJ teams such as the Light Surgeons are making inroads into the digital film world, creating documentary-style work using their own music. There are also a growing number of experimental visual artists outside the club world whose work is finding a home under the umbrella of the VJ scene.

While VJs have in the past frequently used

found footage or video appropriated from films or TV for their mixes, the boundaries are increasingly blurring between their work and that of film-makers and other visual artists. "Some people still sample footage, but a lot of people are shooting their own material or making their own animations," says Addictive TV's Graham Daniels.

Matt Black sees the VJ as becoming an integral part of the future of global club

Visuals to support club DJs' sets are often necessarily transient in nature. "One of the main frustrations of doing visuals in clubs is that you never have a finished product," says the Light Surgeons' Chris Allen.

"I trained in graphic design, where you always have a finished piece of work. I've done hundreds of light shows for all sorts of people all over the world and recorded lots of them but it doesn't really capture the event."

DVD can offer an ideal solution. "VJing has always been a live scene that has never really had its own recording medium," says Addictive TV's Graham Daniels. "Some people have released audio-visual mixes on video, but it was never really the right medium. Now DVD provides a good platform for VJs to become recording artists."

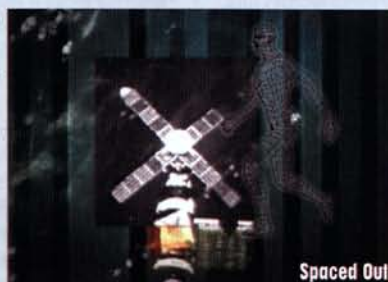
Addictive TV have been at the forefront of bringing the work of visual artists onto the format, with their Transambient series for Channel Four released on DVD. Daniels and

culture. "I can see posses coming up where a couple of people do DJing and audio, another does the graphics and someone else puts the video together," he says. "I think that will be the band of the future. There's our cohorts Hexstatic, there's Lucky People Centre from Sweden and EBN from New York. We're kind of the old school of it, but there's more people coming up who we've met on our travels like Covert Ops from Montreal, OVT from Chicago and Mutant Video Posse from LA."

Alongside Coldcut, Hexstatic have helped pioneer work that combines music and images into one package. Their last album, *Rewind*, included a CD-Rom with their own visual mixes of album tracks, and they are looking into the opportunities provided by DVD. "We're thinking about doing a DVD with our next album – obviously it's the perfect medium for our stuff," says Hexstatic's Robin Brunson. "There's millions of kids worldwide with Playstation 2s which can play DVDs as well, so there's now a much bigger market for it."

Music DVDs such as those for Super Furry Animals and Orbital have opened up opportunities for VJs to move into high-profile releases. Long-time Orbital VJ Giles Thacker directed the band's video for *Tension*;

TAKING OFF: VISUALS LAUNCH ON DVD



Spaced Out

Nick Clarke recently put together the *Spaced Out* DVD project, in which visual artists have been given free rein to remix Nasa footage of moon launches and space exploration. The variety of styles on display highlights the dynamism and diversity of the

scene, from the sampling trickery of Coldcut to the lyrical visuals of Brian McClave.

Other releases to use the DVD format include Recognition Media's D-Rom series (originally based on CD-Rom), which presents animated visuals and footage from clubs alongside a DJ mix.

Hopefully initiatives such as *Spaced Out* will lead to audio-visual mixes on DVD becoming a recognised genre at retail. "We're trying to push visuals as an entertainment medium in their own right," says Daniels. "A lot of VJs also work in the commercial sector doing 30-second title sequences or stings but they don't often get the chance to be 'recording artists' in their own right or do visual mixes on TV."