

**MESTRADO**

**MULTIMÉDIA - ESPECIALIZAÇÃO EM CULTURA E ARTES**

# **The Making of Meaning: A Phenomenological Study on Audiovisual Practices in Music Video Productions in Porto**

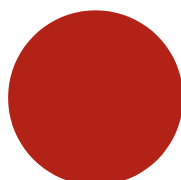
**Kieran Engel**

**M**

**2024**

**FACULDADES PARTICIPANTES:**

**FACULDADE DE ENGENHARIA  
FACULDADE DE BELAS ARTES  
FACULDADE DE CIÊNCIAS  
FACULDADE DE ECONOMIA  
FACULDADE DE LETRAS**



**The Making of Meaning:  
A Phenomenological Study on  
Audiovisual Practices in Music Video  
Productions in Porto**

**Kieran Engel**

Mestrado em Multimédia da Universidade do Porto

Orientador: Heitor Manuel Pereira Pinto da Cunha e Alvelos (Professor Catédrico)

Setembro de 2024



# **The Making of Meaning: A Phenomenological Study on Audiovisual Practices in Music Video Productions in Porto**

**Kieran Engel**

Mestrado em Multimédia da Universidade do Porto

Aprovado em provas públicas pelo Júri:

Presidente: Bruno Sérgio Gonçalves Giesteira (Professor Auxiliar)

Arguente: Abhishek Chatterjee

Orientador: Heitor Manuel Pereira Pinto da Cunha e Alvelos (Professor Catédrico)



# Resumo

A fusão de elementos de áudio e visuais nos videoclipes (MVs) serve como um método influente de expressão artística e narrativa. Esta pesquisa explora como as interações entre as duas modalidades ganham forma através dos olhos dos seus criadores e quais fatores impulsionam o seu processo criativo. Embora a pesquisa existente tenha fornecido informações valiosas sobre a história e os aspectos técnicos das produções de videoclipes, há uma lacuna notável na compreensão das experiências vividas pelos artistas visuais que trabalham em MVs. Este estudo pretende preencher essa lacuna, empregando uma abordagem fenomenológica para desvendar as emoções, percepções e processos de pensamento desses artistas.

Para abordar as questões mencionadas, este estudo utilizou entrevistas em profundidade com profissionais da indústria que estão relacionados a videoclipes ou ao trabalho audiovisual. As entrevistas serviram como base para uma análise temática indutiva que resultou num mapa conceptual detalhando as interconexões entre os temas emergentes. Além disso, foi realizada uma análise comparativa baseada numa análise de conteúdo qualitativa de uma série de documentários de curta duração sobre as experiências de realizadores de MVs. Isto foi feito para triangular os resultados da análise temática e expor variáveis dependentes de contextos geográficos.

Os temas mais significativos encontrados discutem o processo de colaboração, a tomada de decisões, a identidade pessoal do artista, as conexões audiovisuais e as limitações impostas pela indústria musical. O estudo revela que as decisões dos artistas visuais variam de espontâneas a altamente planeadas e baseiam-se em fatores inter-relacionados, considerando motivações internas, constrangimentos externos e dinâmicas colaborativas. As conexões audiovisuais nos MVs são influenciadas pelas letras e características musicais e expressam-se através da edição, cinematografia e cores. Ao mesmo tempo, a análise comparativa demonstrou que os realizadores globais preocupam-se menos com as limitações orçamentárias. Em suma, estes factores contribuem em diferentes graus para uma experiência individual para produções de MV, influenciando o seu resultado final que foi representado visualmente num mapa conceptual e num modelo de processo. Este estudo forneceu, acima de tudo, um modelo acessível e eficiente para entrevistar os criadores de MVs e analisar as suas respostas, proporcionando uma visão abrangente das suas experiências subjetivas.

**Palavras-chave:** Abordagem Fenomenológica, Comunicação Audiovisual, Experiências Subjetivas

# Abstract

The fusion of audio and visual elements within music videos (MVs) serves as an influential method for artistic expression and storytelling. This research explores how the interactions between the two modalities come into existence through the eyes of its creators and what factors drive their creative process. While existing research has provided valuable insights into the history and technical aspects of music video productions, there is a noticeable gap in understanding the lived experiences of visual artists who work on MVs. This study aims to fill that gap by employing a phenomenological approach to uncover the emotions, perceptions, and thought processes of these artists.

In order to address the mentioned issues, this study employed in-depth interviews with industry professionals whom are either related to music videos or audiovisual work. The interviews served as the groundwork for an inductive thematic analysis which resulted in a concept map detailing the interconnections between the emerging themes. Furthermore, a comparative analysis was performed on a qualitative content analysis of a short-form documentary series on the experiences of MV directors. This was done to triangulate the results from the thematic analysis and expose variables dependent on geographical contexts.

The most significant themes that were found discuss the collaboration process, the decision-making, the artist's personal identity, audiovisual connections and limitations imposed by the music industry. The study reveals that visual artists' decisions range from spontaneous to highly planned and are based on interrelated factors considering internal motivations, external constraints and collaborative dynamics. The audiovisual connections in MVs are influenced by the lyrics and musical features and express themselves through editing, cinematography and colours. At the same time, the comparative analysis demonstrated that global directors concern themselves less with budget limitations. All in all, these factors contribute in differing degrees to an individual experience for MV productions influencing its eventual outcome that have been visually represented in a concept map and a process model. This study has above all provided an accessible and efficient model for interviewing the creators of MVs and analysing their responses for a comprehensive overview of their subjective experiences.

**Keywords:** Phenomenological Approach, Audiovisual Communication, Subjective Experiences



# Acknowledgements

Foremostly, I would like to thank my family who always support me in whatever path I may embark on. I can trust them with anything that happens in my life and they continue to inspire me to move forward. I am grateful to have them as my family and express my sincere gratitude and love to my dad, Henk; my mom, Geertje; my brother, Jannick and my sister, Erin.

A big thank you to my friend Marcos Batista, whose love and kindness I truly appreciated during my time in Porto.

I want to thank all the interviewees, Rita Goulão, Fabio Mota, Anonymous and Vasco Mendes for their time and insights which have made this thesis possible.

A thank you to my supervisor, Heitor Alvelos, who has consulted me throughout this process and guided it into a successful thesis.

*Kieran Engel*



# Index

|                                                         |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1. Introduction .....</b>                            | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 Context and Motivation .....                        | 1         |
| 1.2 Problem and Objectives .....                        | 1         |
| 1.3 Research Methodology .....                          | 2         |
| 1.4 Structure of the Thesis .....                       | 3         |
| <b>2. Literature Review .....</b>                       | <b>5</b>  |
| 2.1 Introduction.....                                   | 5         |
| 2.2 Conceptualisation and Purposes of Music Videos..... | 5         |
| 2.2.1 Subjective Experiences of Creative Artists .....  | 8         |
| 2.2.2 Viewer Experience .....                           | 9         |
| 2.3 Audiovisual Connections.....                        | 11        |
| 2.3.1 Visual Aesthetics .....                           | 14        |
| 2.3.2 Editing Practices .....                           | 15        |
| <b>3. The Phenomenological Study .....</b>              | <b>20</b> |
| 3.1 Relevance of Phenomenology to the Study .....       | 20        |
| 3.2 Research Design .....                               | 21        |
| 3.2.1 Selection of Participants .....                   | 21        |
| 3.2.2 Qualitative Interviews.....                       | 22        |
| 3.3 Critical Analysis .....                             | 23        |
| <b>4. Results and Discussion .....</b>                  | <b>26</b> |
| 4.1 Introduction.....                                   | 26        |
| 4.2 Audiovisual Connections and Meaning.....            | 26        |
| 4.2.1 Lyrics .....                                      | 27        |
| 4.2.2 Musical Features.....                             | 29        |
| 4.2.3 Colours.....                                      | 31        |
| 4.2.4 Cinematography.....                               | 34        |
| 4.2.5 Editing .....                                     | 37        |
| 4.3 Collaboration among Creatives .....                 | 38        |
| 4.3.1 Exchanging Ideas.....                             | 39        |

|                                                      |           |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 4.3.2 Work Style .....                               | 45        |
| 4.4 Personal Identity .....                          | 49        |
| 4.4.1 Prior Experience and Inspirations.....         | 49        |
| 4.4.2 Personal Development .....                     | 55        |
| 4.5 Decision-making and the Creative Process.....    | 60        |
| 4.5.1 Spontaneity .....                              | 61        |
| 4.5.2 Though-out Planning .....                      | 63        |
| 4.5.3 Random Decisions.....                          | 64        |
| 4.5.4 Approaches to a Music Video.....               | 64        |
| 4.5.5 Song Quality .....                             | 68        |
| 4.5.6 Tailoring to the Audience .....                | 69        |
| 4.5.7 The Music Video Industry and Limitations ..... | 71        |
| 4.5.7.1 Budget .....                                 | 72        |
| 4.5.7.2 Time .....                                   | 78        |
| 4.6 Concept Map and Process Model .....              | 80        |
| 4.7 Comparative Analysis.....                        | 83        |
| <b>5. Conclusion.....</b>                            | <b>85</b> |
| 5.1 Key Findings.....                                | 85        |
| 5.2 Limitations to the Study.....                    | 88        |
| 5.3 Recommendations for Future Research.....         | 89        |
| <b>6. Reference List .....</b>                       | <b>90</b> |

# List of Figures

|             |                                                            |    |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 1    | Still of the music video for “cellophane” by FKA Twigs     | 4  |
| Figure 2    | Still of the music video for “Big Hammer” by James Blake   | 25 |
| Figure 4.1  | Still of the music video for “Puzzles” by LINCE            | 27 |
| Figure 4.2  | Still of the music video for “Barco Vazio” by Anda Pacheco | 30 |
| Figure 4.3A | Still of the music video for “Solipsism” by Fenne Lily     | 33 |
| Figure 4.3B | Still of the music video for “Solipsism” by Fenne Lily     | 33 |
| Figure 4.4  | Still of the music video for “Solipsism” by Fenne Lily     | 35 |
| Figure 4.5  | Still of the music video for “No Mistakes” by White Haus   | 77 |
| Figure 4.6  | Concept map visualizing key themes and relationships       | 81 |
| Figure 4.7  | Process model visualising key steps and factors            | 82 |
| Figure 5.1  | Simplified concept map                                     | 87 |



# Abbreviations and Symbols

|               |                                     |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| MV            | Music video                         |
| ASL           | Average shot length                 |
| DOP           | Director of photography             |
| POV           | Point of view                       |
| Reccie        | Someone in charge of reconnaissance |
| <i>et al.</i> | <i>et alia</i>                      |
| <i>i.e.</i>   | <i>id est</i>                       |
| <i>e.g.</i>   | <i>exempli gratia</i>               |

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Context and Motivation

This research originates from an insufficiently explored field within the creative industries regarding personal accounts of its creators. It concerns the area of music videos (MVs) that is, within the context of this study, regarded as both a multimedia artefact—utilising a combination of music and video—and as an artistic artefact that is imbued with cultural and creative significance. Even though the study did not start out as an exploration of individual experiences, it was always rooted in uncovering the intricacies of audiovisual connections. Research on this matter and its state-of-the-art could bear a foundation for further innovation on this synergetic relationship between sound and image from the artists' point of view. Moreover, it is of importance for creative artists to know the full extent of interrelations that ultimately affect their work. It provides insights that can help them evaluate whether their creative process is as efficient as it could be. Finding out what their peers are experiencing in the field, sets the stage for greater understanding and appreciation of each other's crafts which contributes to improved communication and a more sustainable working environment. Furthermore, a comprehensive understanding of why certain choices are made for MVs aid academic analyses surrounding the topic. Often analyses on MVs discuss their audiovisual qualities, cultural-historical context, cinematic value compared to the film industry, and marketing potential. Specifically, research on audiovisual qualities could benefit from a creator's perspective, because their thought processes ameliorate the apprehension of why certain visual elements in MVs are favoured over others, thus, eliminating the chance of any misconceptions in analyses performed by third-parties. This could add to the credibility of research in this area, by validating what has been previously presumed.

## 1.2 Problem and Objectives

While existing research provides valuable insights into the technical aspects of music video production and analyses of its audiovisual tendencies, there is a noticeable gap in understanding the lived experiences of visual artists during the creation process. Their common-sense thinking is vital for an extensive understanding of the audiovisual medium that is MVs. By delving into the phenomenological aspects of music video production, this study aims to uncover the subjective experiences of artists involved in the creation of audiovisual content and seeks to understand the

nuances of how audiovisual elements are perceived and interpreted by the artists themselves. Furthermore, this research aspires to contribute a deeper understanding of the interaction between creativity, collaboration and resulting decisions in the industry of music video production. The findings of this study may have practical implications for music video producers, directors, and other artists, offering insights that could inform creative processes and enhance the effectiveness of audiovisual storytelling and collaboration. Moreover, the construct, in which these artists work, could come to light and communicate what factors foster a limiting or prosperous environment for them. Therefore, the following will serve as my research questions:

1. How do creative individuals behind the production of music videos select and interpret audiovisual elements?
2. What factors drive their creative decision-making process?
3. How do these creative individuals collaborate with other key contributors throughout the music video production process?

### **1.3 Research Methodology**

This study presents a literature review followed by a qualitative approach with phenomenology at its core in order to address the previously stated research question. Scholars on audiovisual media and music videos, and in a lesser degree non-academic sources in the form of interviews were cited and analysed for the literature review. The section of the paper corresponding to the phenomenological study is focused on testimonies of industry professionals in music videos that were acquired through semi-structured interviews. A non-probability sampling approach was employed that is primarily purposive (Patton, 1990) and makes use of convenience and snowball-sampling as well. The sampling, eventually, proved to be contingent. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were performed on four participants fitting the contingent requirements. The results of the interviews were analysed through an inductive coding process, adapted from the method by Glaser and Strauss (2017), composed of initial and line-by-line coding with a focus on values coding (Saldaña, 2013). Afterwards, the emerged codes were used to identify themes through repetitions, indicative words, transitions between topics, differences among interviewees and relevance to the research questions, adapted from the method proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The relationships between themes were uncovered in the creation of a concept map and a process model. Finally, a qualitative content analysis of 10 episodes of the series ‘Director ID’, produced by Canal180, was performed and, in turn, used for a comparative analysis with the themes that had arisen from the thematic analysis.

## **1.4 Structure of the Thesis**

This document is composed of seven chapters comprising the entirety of the study. Chapter one, the introduction, gets succeeded by chapter two which details the literature review on audiovisual research. This literature review commences with the production of MVs in relation to the music industry followed by a discussion on the creators of MVs, the audience experience and audiovisual connections. Chapter three talks about the relevance of phenomenology to this field and the methodology that ensues from this approach. Chapter four presents the results and discussion in synchronicity per identified theme of the thematic analysis and, afterwards, demonstrates the concept map, process model and the results of the comparative analysis. Chapter five finalises the study with the conclusion in which the key findings, limitations and recommendations for future research are discussed. Chapter six hosts the reference list.



**Figure 1** FKA Twigs' "cellophane" (2019). The vibrant emerald green contrasts with the earth-toned backdrop while serving as a recurring element in the MV, enhancing the visual continuity. (Huang, 2019)

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Jirsa and Korsgaard (2019) have noted, in their review on changes in the field of music videos, that conducting studies on the productions and creative process behind MVs has been overlooked for the most part. This literature review aims to build a foundation for comprehending the underlying thought processes of visual artists in MV productions, namely about their usage of audiovisual techniques and collaboration with others in the creative team. To achieve this, it is essential to examine how researchers within the field of multimedia analyse and explain the properties of audiovisual content. Appreciating their perspectives on this topic will provide us with guidelines for interpreting the creative decision-making and collaborative efforts of the artists themselves. Ultimately, we will investigate how certain audiovisual aspects impact the viewers, as this potentially influences the decision-making process. With this approach in mind, this literature review explores common practices in MVs and how these are typically perceived by the audience. This includes discourses on the conceptualisation and goals for MVs, the audiovisual toolset and the messages it conveys, and relationships between different aspects of MVs.

### **2.2 Conceptualisation and Purposes of Music Videos**

Directors often face challenges imposed on them by the music industry itself concerning the need to stand out, having inadequate budgets and narrow time frames. Music companies and creatives commonly have opposing ideals which stem from the fact that the former views MVs as a commercial commodity while the latter might see it as an artform. Upon starting the ideation process of an MV, directors employ different methods after receiving the initial briefing. Famous directors like Floria Sigismondi, Emil Nava and Jonas Åkerlund have stated that they write down ideas that come to mind at night, take long drives or inquire about the meaning of a song, respectively. The treatments directors produce for an MV go generally uncompensated, whilst record labels request roughly three to seven proposals. Nowadays, next to the song and lyrics, the directors also receive concepts from the companies or music artists, as they have gotten more involved in the process. However, it is common practice that the resulting MV deviates from the chosen treatment (Vernallis, 2023).

Vernallis (2023) argues that directors sometimes need to manoeuvre through negotiations regarding the amount granted when requesting the appropriate budget. Asking for too much money might mean not getting the job, while asking for too little could end up by supplementing the budget out of their own pockets. Throughout the 2000s till 2010s, small budgets were provided to the creators considering the norm for MV budgets had been steadily reducing since the 90s and the music industry always managed to find people eager to make MVs when starting their career (Vernallis, 2023). Nowadays, MVs range from frequently having a very tight budget to having big productions with high costs which can vary per MV even for the same music artist (Jirsa & Korsgaard, 2019). Consequently, the production team needs to get creative with solutions and it is not too outlandish to see directors shouldering responsibility for other tasks besides directing such as editing. Eventually, the music video industry is seen as a stepping stone for creatives to reach more lucrative jobs such as in commercials, since it is hard for people to sustain themselves solely on creating MVs. Directors in commercials and cinema frequently started out in the music video industry where they had the opportunity to experiment on creating their unique styles that would later on become their trademark (Vernallis, 2023).

According to Shaviro (2017), this time of more readily available advanced technology facilitates different production approaches and dynamics. Digital advancement has made it possible to manage money and time more efficiently, a major hurdle for the industry. Furthermore, novel technologies have caused the division between production and post-production to become less distinguished, since various cinematographic techniques can be altered in editing now. An example of the usage of a relatively newer technology features the use of preprogrammed camera movements which can precisely replicate it every time. This has made it possible to composite multiple takes within the same image whilst performing intricate camera movements, something that has been a recurring technique in MVs over the last few years (Shaviro, 2017).

Vernallis (2013) investigated the style and approach of MV directors by comparing two famous figures in the field, Francis Lawrence and Dave Meyers. She states that MV directors have a part in every stage of an MV production which is different from film directors. Essentially, the way they visually envision songs will dictate how we experience the song through this medium. By reviewing Vernallis' analysis of these two directors, we can begin to form a basis of what aspects and methods concern MV directors.

Upon examining Lawrence's work, she begins to argue that MVs never bring too much narrative into the video, as it compromises the attention given to the music. Instead, directors implement other overarching structures that give attention to smaller pieces of narrative which she refers to as processes or threads, where a process could be any series of consecutive actions. She argues that Lawrence's narratives are purposefully too convoluted to clearly understand them. Lawrence mentions that the first thing that comes to mind is the camera movements upon hearing the song. Often directors use various camera movements to keep up with the pace of the music. When the camera's motion is faster or slower than the music's pace it even draws greater attention to the music. Additionally, Lawrence prefers to use editing that is slightly disjointed to the music, as his cuts are off-beat and irregular (Vernallis, 2013). This too puts focus on the music itself rather

than the image presented, as it subverts an established pattern of cutting on-beat (Vernallis, 2004, 2013). Moreover, Lawrence uses textures to create a sense of continuity throughout his videoclips, he prefers to refer to the music instead of to the lyrics when making an MV, and he intentionally creates resemblances in the beginnings and endings of his MVs, underlining the structure of the MV and denoting the importance of closure. People and objects are frequently cut off at the edge of the frame in his MVs, serving as an incentive for viewers to look for extratextual information about the space. Normally, set designs in MVs are quite devoid of elaborate details which renders it easier to purposefully direct the viewer's attention. However, this emptiness might leave the lives and histories of the MV's characters underdeveloped which is only natural considering MV directors have to work with a format that has limited time and context. Meyers, on the other hand, fosters sets with great detail and creates the sense of a lived-in space. He understands how sets are associated to music genres by convention and knows how to use it to his advantage. Apart from sets, the whole world within an MV is particular in the sense that sounds hold greater influence over the environment than what is normally perceived in media and Lawrence makes use of this characteristic as well.

Moving on to Meyer's *modus operandi*, it is noticeable that he pays closer attention to musical features and the rhythm of the song. The accompanied imagery takes on the characteristics of a specific instrumentation of the song which he uses to direct the audience's attention. In turn, this changes the way the audience might experience a song and especially which sounds will predominate at that moment. Vernallis states that Meyers has a knack for creating metaphors for timbral qualities. He further enhances an emphasis through his editing where he inserts stylistic effects at pivotal points for the musical structure of the song. In terms of cinematography, Meyers switches frequently between close-ups and wide shots. Furthermore, there usually is a shot in the MV that will follow a certain figure and create a perception of depth to the environment in which the MV takes place.

Vernallis mentions that the outcome of an MV is based on subjectivity, since it reflects how the director experiences the respective song and how they want to utilise the medium of MVs. Lawrence and Meyers both demonstrate very different approaches when it comes to MV production which becomes apparent in the final video. Vernallis (2013) states, "Lawrence exhibits a sense of large-scale structure, an attention to visual and musical continuity, and a concern with music video's history of representation, as well as a classicism that suggests a humanistic orientation. Meyers's work can be characterized as brash, politically playful (and sometimes questionable), star-driven, and grounded in the song's local details." (p. 235). Ultimately, the viewers' experience of a song, and perhaps even the meaning they attribute to it, is influenced by the decisions of the directors (Vernallis, 2013). Even though the MV's purpose is mainly a commercial one for many people including the record company, it is not necessarily the case for its directors. The record labels impose restrictions on the creative process of directors and music artists through the allotted time and money, and the image they want to uphold which result in the directors having to draw up treatments that comply with the company's expectations. It is then up to the directors to discuss with the record company and ensure the MV maintains their creative ideals. Within these discussions, the label could impose changes to the concept that might seem minimal to them, but can have a significant impact on the MV, for instance a change of attire. On the other hand, the directors can comply with certain

demands of the record company such as the location, whilst not fully disclosing their intent behind its utilisation. Additionally, music video directors are involved in every production stage in a music video, i.e. concept development, budget design, location scouting, cinematography and editing. This grants them greater freedom to shape the MV to their liking, even when they have to compromise in some aspects with the record label (Vernallis, 2004).

### **2.2.1 Subjective Experiences of Creative Artists**

There is a scarcity in academic research on the subjective experiences of MV directors, and namely other visual artists, behind the production compared to the abundance of studies analysing such audiovisual media through various frameworks. Carol Vernallis has done a series of interviews with music video directors over the last 20 years discussing their style, beginnings and ideas, some of which I have examined in this subchapter. Furthermore, in order to acquire a contemporary overview on this topic, I had to turn to non-academic sources as well.

Carol Vernallis made an interview with British MV director Emil Nava who is renowned in the industry and has been making MVs ever since 2008. Emil Nava did not get a formal education in film studies, he bases much of his directing on his intuition. Consequently, he likes to use colours to portray strong emotions. He loves to make his videos get a dream-like feel to the point that you could get lost in it. One way in which he believes this can be achieved, is through stacking multiple video layers on top of each other, creating an overlay effect. Because of his dedication to the music artists and their songs, he manages to maintain relationships with certain artists which makes him feel able to go even further out-of-the-box with his ideas and usage of colour. When it comes to editing, he usually edits the video in two opposing manners, one is energetic and the other is simple, and he tries to find a harmony between the two that feels right to him. Emil prefers to visually segment the video the same way as the song does in order to “reset your emotions” (Rogers et al., 2019, p. 157) going from one sequence to the next. In regards to his work for the music video of ‘This Is What You Came For’ by Calvin Harris and Rihanna, he mentions that the lyrics played a big part in defining the idea for the video (Nava, 2016). Particularly, the word ‘lightning’ steered the concept of the video towards high energy, lots of lighting techniques and strobe effects (Rogers et al., 2019).

Another interview conducted by Carol Vernallis features Aubrey Woodiwiss, a lauded colour grader who has worked on numerous big scale productions within the music and film industries. The interview was made with the intent to investigate how a colour grader actually perceives colours in real life and in their work. The interview is based on three exemplary instances of his work one of which we will discuss here. Vernallis provides her own audiovisual analysis and compares it to Woodiwiss’ reflections on his choices and interpretations. She examines the effect colours have on the narrative and perception of FKA Twigs’ ‘Cellophane’ through the colour composition per scene, colours of objects and how they are transferred, and the contrast and relationships of colours (Huang, 2019).

In this MV, Vernallis notices five distinct colour schemes that generate a range of experiences in the viewer, that is dependent on the order of these schemes. Singular colours foregrounded in objects or within the overall scene create continuity by connecting throughout the MV, as she particularly observes for the colour green. Furthermore, an overarching perceptual feature of the colour palette progresses from warm to cool and back to warm tones again which helps us acknowledge the journey the main character went through. Ultimately, she notes the unusual highly subdued contrasts between the subject, in this case FKA Twigs, and its surroundings.

Woodiwiss knew he wanted the tonality of the video to start out warm, but he always tries to disrupt a relatively monotone setting by implementing a range of colours. He states that a range of colours helps the viewer get attached and adds a certain depth to the scene. For this MV, he added an emerald green which complements the scenes' tonality and also brings forth sympathetic feelings towards the artist. His decision for emerald green also stemmed from the fact of how he looks at FKA Twigs, i.e. as a strong character. He imagined a hero's journey for her, saying that the colour emerald is associated to a gem and signifies a magical MacGuffin often encountered in such fables. Furthermore, he notes that the spaces in the MV are not defined by clear boundaries, but are smoothly transitioning into each other and he reflects this into gradual tonal transitions within the ultimate scene, for example. In the final stages of his colour grading, he often turns his attention to creating audiovisual connections. At a certain point in the MV, FKA Twigs moves up towards an artificial sky by ascending a pole and this is accompanied by an overall rising sensation in the music and sound design. In response to this, Woodiwiss makes the sky appear hazy and inserts a halo at the top of the pole.

When Woodiwiss comments on the work method, a common industry obstacle pops up which is the time constraint. However contrary to general opinions, he does not see the time constraint as an impeding factor. Namely, he says that human eyes can get accustomed to colours fairly quickly and, thus, working rapidly decreases the chances of this happening for him. Woodiwiss feels that he has to take into account the desires of various collaborators like the musician, the director and the company. Frequently, other collaborators do not speak the exact jargon of a colour grader and he needs to translate their visions into concrete objectives. He, and many other colour graders he adds, aim to achieve the highest quality possible even with the pressure of diverse demands. Additionally, he states that he wishes to emotionally impact the viewers through the journey that his colour grading portrays (Vernallis, 2023).

### **2.2.2 Viewer Experience**

It is unsurprising that, despite challenges such as declining budgets, music videos have become a persistent staple in the music industry, as it has been affirmed in numerous publications over the years that music accompanied by visual stimuli has an abundance of positive effects on the listener (Boltz et al., 2009). These can include aspects such as heightened emotional tension (Vines et al., 2006), clarifying music's intended meaning (Sun & Lull, 1986), stronger affective reactions (Dasovich-Wilson et al., 2022) and prevention of song wear-out (Goldberg et al., 1993).

The meaning that gets conveyed through an MV is a product of its many fundamental features including the usage of semiotics, narrativity and performance. Therefore, when the audience watches an MV, it may alter their previously perceived meaning of the song (Dasovich-Wilson et al., 2022). This ties into Nicholas Cook's work (1998) where he introduces the concepts of conformance, complementarity and contest within multimedia. They describe the relationship between two modalities in a given medium as coherent, neither incompatible or compatible, and contradictory, respectively. He states that contest takes places when each medium brings forth its own meaning, regardless of the similarity between the different meanings. Contest is one of MV's most essential characteristics. Especially, since Dasovich-Wilson et al. have established that comprehending the underlying meaning is one of the most popular reasons to watch an MV, even to this day (Dasovich-Wilson et al., 2022). It can be challenging to attribute meaning to music by itself, however, as Cook indicates, music is almost always experienced in relation to something (1998). Arguments are made by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999) that our ability to employ and interpret the transferal of meaning between two media is both a result of genetics and culture. For example, the sophistication and elegance of a classical music piece, shaped by its cultural associations, can be transferred to a commercial to give the product a similar impression. (Vernallis, 2004).

It is even suggested that any type of visual accompaniment to music, regardless of the emotional weight of the visuals, will positively affect certain musical qualities such as rhythm, volume and tempo. These qualities were perceived to be more rhythmic, louder and faster, respectively, in Boltz's study (2009). They noted that these perceived qualities are generally seen as being positive in nature. Therefore, it is surprising that the same effect takes place with visuals that were, according to the participants, composed of negatively charged images.

They stress that only musical qualities pertaining to temporal aspects and loudness seemed to be affected by the visual information and qualities such as pitch and harmony were unaffected. Two possible causes were identified for this outcome. Firstly, various preceding studies found that the tempo of a song is the biggest contributor to the perceived emotional state of music (Hevner, 1937; Juslin, 1997; Scherer & Oshinsky, 1977). Secondly, Boltz et al. stated that tempo, rhythm and loudness are simpler concepts and, thus, more easily distinguishable traits to the general public than pitch and harmony are. Though, the latter is not supported by empirical evidence and is merely a speculation. They also found that melodies, that were deemed neither negative or positive in emotion, were perceived with a different emotional affiliation based on the visual information presented. A positively charged video would evoke a positively sounding melody and vice versa for its negative counterpart (Boltz et al., 2009).

Dasovich-Wilson et al. argue that Boltz (2009) demonstrates the influence of visual stimulation to the perception of a few musical parameters, however, it does not describe the audiovisual relationships within an MV context. In a qualitative study through an online questionnaire they investigated everyday listening experiences of MVs, which resulted in a framework. They inquired

the participants on four categories related to the experience of watching an MV: intention, attention, reaction and retention (IARR).

Attention in this research's context refers to which aspects of the MV grabs the participants' attention, which aspects might distract them from the pleasurable experience, and which factors direct the attention to one modality over the other. The main categories identified for attention of the viewers are semantic and structural features. Where semantic relates to how emotions and narrative are represented in the video and structural refers to concrete features like editing and movement, and how these reflect musical qualities. They found that 65% of the participants paid attention to the semantic features, where more attention was directed towards narrative than the representation of emotions. Within the structural features category most of the participants' attention was directed towards audio-visual synchrony followed by coherence in music and body movements.

The category 'reaction' is defined as the emotional responses of the participants and the aspects of the MV that causes them. Additionally, they considered the conditions that make MV influenced reactions more noticeable compared to reactions influenced by audio-only experiences. The past experience participants had with the music and/or MV influences their emotional responses. As Cohen (2013) previously stated that people derive meaning from media like music and video based on their past experiences. Reaction is divided into 'weak affect' and 'strong affect', of which the latter was reported in more cases, 47% of participants. Common reactions under strong affect were mentioned as "... emotional contagion, feelings of connectedness, and strong sensations." (Dasovich-Wilson et al., 2022, p.10). The MV negatively impacts the mood of 14.7% of the participants and this is mostly because of visual and personal factors such as the quality of the MV being subpar or that the MV's interpretation of the music does not coincide with their own. Watching an MV can, thus, either hinder or enhance the pleasure of listening to music, depending on whether the imagery shown adds onto the narrative and emotional tone, and complements the individual's preconceived meaning of the song.

A recognised limit to Dasovich's study is that it all depends on the MVs that the participants get shown, as the results cannot be expected to be equal for all MVs a person experiences. The emotional responses are tied to the degree in which participants could choose their songs and complementary MVs, because music that is selected by themselves brings forth more positive emotions. Additionally, the participants' were only shown MVs they already knew, therefore, there is no data on experiencing MVs for the first time (Dasovich-Wilson et al., 2022).

## **2.3 Audiovisual Connections**

Music videos are amongst a medium that seamlessly integrate audio and visual components and uses this dynamic to its fullest potential to build upon its narrative and emotion-evoking properties (Vernallis, 2004). Visual and aural stimulation influences a person's emotional states, in which the superposition and juxtaposition of these two modes can impact one's experience in many profound ways. The way visual and aural information interact with each other in your brain has potentially a big influence on how you perceive and experience your surroundings, including the media you consume (Lin et al., 2022).

Directors have a wide array of methods, proven to be effective through trial and error, available to produce a coherent connection between image and sound in a music video. For instance, they make use of the experiential qualities of sound and try to replicate this in image. Therefore, it is imperative to comprehend the qualities that make up sound and image in order to be capable of rendering resemblances between the two modalities. Vernallis argues that at the core of the distinction between sound and image, is the way we process it. Sight is seen as a dissecting sense, whereas sound is defined as a unifying sense. Elements of sight are deemed to be static in time and space with defined boundaries. On the other hand, sound is thought of as a continuous process through time and space where the boundaries are undefined. We generally feel as being an external observer to sight in which we have a sense of control as to what to look at, whilst sound envelops us and leaves us no opportunity to decide what to hear and what not. Although, this is not to say that sound and image can only reflect the qualities of their own modality. In fact, transcending these boundaries and having image resemble the qualities of sound, is one of the key aspects that music videos strive for. Therefore, the visuals in a music video are designed to be of a more fleeting nature. The goal for the images is to envelop us and resonate within us as is the case with music itself (Vernallis, 2004). An inherent property of music is that it evokes a sense of tension and expectation within the listener, an effect that can be mimicked within the images. This produces an audiovisual sequence that establishes a pattern of which the expectations can either be met or subverted. Depending on the context, both subversion of and compliance to expectations can bring a satisfying experience (Chion, 2019).

In real-life sound is the result of an action or incident as sound appears to follow after a physical event. In MVs it is common that this causal relationship is inverted, i.e. the sound from the music motivates a change in image, as we had seen in the case of MV director Francis Lawrence. Furthermore, sounds are much more bound to the environment in which they reside, as opposed to images that are more easily considered as standalone objects. As a consequence, images are intentionally put in a greater relation to each other in music videos. Theorists such as John Anderson and Michel Chion tend to think about means of synchronisation between image and sound (Vernallis, 2004). According to Chion (2019) MVs have a horizontal relationship between modalities where image and sound run parallel without an apparent relationship. However, their entanglement is solidified through points of synchronisation. These so-called synch points occur when a sonic and visual element align in a single moment. Our mind unconsciously renders the image and sounds as belonging together in a process called synchresis, a portmanteau of synchronisation and synthesis coined by Chion (2019), even if the image and sound do not naturally belong together. This makes it possible to perceive events such as lip-syncing and foley in film as a single entity (Chion, 2019). Chion identifies various types and circumstances of synch points:

- Degrees of synchronism: Lip-syncing, for instance, can vary in its degree of synchronisation. Sometimes it's done loosely, while other times it's strictly aligned to the audio.

- Audiovisual sequence: Synch points become more significant when they occur within an audiovisual sequence. For example, both audio and visuals may cut away at the same time, or seemingly disparate elements align by the end of the sequence.
- Louder sounds: Louder sounds are more strongly entangled with the represented image at that moment, compared to quieter surrounding sounds and visuals.
- False synch point: A false synch point occurs when the expectation of a synchronised event is subverted. For example, an image may cut away while the expected sound still plays.
- Throwaway synch point: A throwaway synch point is a subtle and brief audiovisual alignment that has no significant impact on the narrative but adds to the scene's realism.
- Repetition synch point: Another way to conjure a synch point is through repetition, which can be based on elements such as colours, shapes, objects, or cinematography. The connection is further enhanced when this repetition aligns with a recurring musical element in the song (Chion, 2019).

Richard Middleton (1990) argues that there are aspects to music that come into play as a continuous event, e.g. a gradual change in tempo. By accompanying such continuous aspects of music with similar gradual transformations in image, an elongated sync point is created so to speak. As a consequence, it serves as a tool for establishing continuity and build-up. Michel Chion (2019) coined the term visual microrhythms to define motifs that take place in a film. These motifs hinge on synchronisation and subtlety, contributing to the realism of a scene. Within music videos they can reflect timbral qualities of a song by accentuating it in detailed imagery. Often in the beginning of an MV a one-on-one connection is established in the MV between music and image. It allows space for looser connections later on in the song as the groundwork for the affiliations has been done. Vernallis then refers back to Chion's concept of synch points when mentioning recurring connections between music, image and lyrics. She says that synch points can be metaphorical, syncretic, indexical, symbolic, iconic, based on repetition, based on absence, and responsive to sound (Vernallis, 2004).

The concept of 'added value', introduced by Chion, relates to how sound adds additional meaning and emotional weight to a given image. It is especially true in cases of synchronism between sound and image (Chion, 2019). Giulia Gabrielli states in her analysis of MV director Michel Gondry that added value occurred in an inverse relationship, i.e. image added additional information and meaning to a sound (*Rewind, Play, Fast Forward*, 2010). However, Chion does not explicitly mention the inverse to be true, it is merely implied by his reasoning that there is a reciprocal influence between image and sound (Chion, 2019).

The overall look and feel of a music video is affected in every production stage by various fields ranging from the set design, costumes and artist performance to the cinematography, colour grading and video-editing (Vernallis, 2004). In order to keep the following section concise, the focus will be on the most influential audiovisual elements in MVs, which are visual aesthetics—lighting, colours and cinematography—and editing techniques.

### **2.3.1 Visual Aesthetics**

It is easier in music videos than in cinema to remember the videos with their respective colour palettes in mind, because of the short format of MVs. Usually colours in MVs are diffuse, without clear borders and can seep from one scene into the next. Vernallis argues that both the characteristics of sound and colour are dependent on their surroundings and, therefore, complement each other quite well. The way a colour is perceived is dependent on adjacent colours and the reflected light, the same goes for sound which is perceived in relation to the sonic environment.

Both colour and sound can be broken down into perceptual constituents, for colour these include hue, saturation and brightness (Vernallis, 2004), and for sound there are pitch, timbre and loudness (Hermes, 2023). Playing with each of these individual qualities of colour brings its own implications where hue is significantly tied to emotional affect. Conventions on colours play a big part in conveying specific moods or emotions which are largely attributed to biology and cultural associations. Blue tints can impart calmness, melancholic emotions and mildness, whilst red can be associated with intensity, warmth and progression. Timbre and hue add depth in a similar manner to a song and image, respectively, and even influence the other's appearance. Vernallis states that "When a music video is shot in black and white, the timbre can appear less vivid." (Vernallis, 2004, p. 124) Saturation is quite literally correlated to intensity which in turn can mimic and highlight the flow of tension and release in songs.

Even though synaesthesia is uncommon in people, it can be argued that people, among which are visual artists behind MVs, make subconscious connections between music and specific colours. Additionally, a predisposition for certain colours among MV directors have been a product of music genre conventions as well as technological and historical circumstances. Colours can aid the narrative of an MV by shifting from hue as per story progression and occasionally outlining the segmentation of a song. By not diverging too much from the original colour palette, a visual continuity can be established and complementary colours can be used to prioritise desired elements. Using a combination of opposing colours on the colour wheel, on the other hand, is harsh and demands attention more than the smoothness of adjacent colours (Vernallis, 2004).

The field of applied media aesthetics serves as a basis for the analysis and synthesis of effective communication within moving images combined with sound, according to Herbert Zettl (Barbatsis, 2004). It provides guidelines for maximising the intended perception of fundamental elements of the video scene. Zettl subdivides the primary aesthetics of the moving image into five categories which are: lighting and colour, two-dimensional space, three-dimensional space, time-motion and sound. Essentially, these five categories serve to clarify and intensify the core body of the respective media

through a concept called meta-messages. It can be described as the contextual setting that guides the viewers perception of the explicit content of the media. Most of the time these meta-messages become inseparable from the events that they encompass and they render our perception of the event to be biased. Zettl demonstrates this phenomenon through the act of montage in editing, where the juxtaposition of certain images generates the meaning rather than the images on their own.

Lighting is the first aesthetic component discussed and can be understood as the manipulation of light and shadows. On a basic level, the lighting reveals the place and appearance of objects in a scene. The shadows, that are cast due to the illumination, hold significance and are usually considered as part of the object that casts them. Aspects of shadows like length, direction and fall-off, i.e. the gradient from the light side to the shadow side of an object, can influence the mood of a scene drastically. There are two main lighting scenarios used commonly in film which are chiaroscuro and flat lighting. The former features an obscure background with heavy contrasts, quick shadow fall-offs and distinct highly illuminated sections which cause for a dramatic mood. Conversely, flat lighting showcases an abundance of illumination that causes a diffused environment lacking defined shadows and articulates a sense of detachment. The representational value of colour mediates information about objects, scenes and moods. Furthermore, the balancing of colours within an image is a vital function for visual aesthetics. Since we are talking about videos, the images are not static and, thus, colour balances can shift rapidly on screen. Therefore, more attention is paid to the balance between background and foreground colours and the distinction between high and low saturation. Zettl states that highly saturated colours evoke high energy and vice versa with desaturated colours. Additionally, desaturating the scene as a whole makes the viewer, supposedly, be more introspective towards the content.

Even a small detail, seemingly insignificant to the viewer, like the aspect ratio of the video brings along associations and influences the preconceptions and expectations of the audience. For example, the (in)famous cinema bars—the black bars at the top and bottom of a video—originally resulted from the difference in aspect ratios between the filmed content and viewing screens with smaller widths. Consequently, these bars, that are occasionally deliberately added, have come to signify that the video is of cinema-worthy production (Barbatsis, 2004).

### **2.3.2 Editing Practices**

The editing stage of MVs is a critical part that ultimately defines, for a large part, the course of the narrative and the emotional experience. Therefore, video-editors should fully comprehend the narrative that is meant to be portrayed for effective visual storytelling. Editors possess a wide array of tools to manipulate the essence of a video including arrangement, pacing, transitions and cuts.

Editing in MVs is considerably different to editing in cinema. The flow of the editing in MVs is based around the rhythm of the music and reacts to it. Music constantly flows and is experienced over time instead of in an instant. Videos bring out this temporal quality by playing with the pacing and velocity of images. The editing emphasises a variety of qualities in a song like the timbre, lyrics and the song's segmentation. MVs have the characteristic of dividing scenes concomitantly with the

song's segments and commonly even showing one image sequence per musical phrase. Editing in MVs, contrary to cinema, is not primarily used to present us with contextual information that enables us to comprehend the narrative better. Rather it adds to the absence of information about actions, narratives and spaces by cutting away or having a non-chronological timeline. Vernallis makes an analogy between the panels of a comic book and the cuts in an MV-edit stating that they function in the same manner. As people read through the comic books, they will fill in for themselves the changes in space, time and character that occurred in between panels. The same goes for MVs, since there can exist drastic changes from one shot to another.

The continuity usually imposed throughout editing in cinema is not a recurring feature for MVs. Film has to provide the viewer with a logical singular path throughout, however, MVs cannot hinge too much on continuity as it might predominate the narrative over the music, hence its scarce use in MVs. Furthermore, MVs simply do not have to follow all the same continuity rules as in cinema, because of the music tying sequences together (Vernallis, 2004). Continuity is reinforced by the 'mental maps' we make that maintain a logical unfolding of events in three-dimensional space and time. It is constructed by what part of the scene has been revealed to us through close-ups, medium and long shots. Continuity throughout a scene is based on the location of objects and their vectors being consistent. In media aesthetics, vectors are essentially directional entities divided into three groups: graphic, index and motion. Graphic vectors indicate lines in the image such as a window pane, index vectors are produced by objects and people pointing or looking in a certain direction and motion vectors are similarly objects and people that move on their own (Barbatsis, 2004).

Other typical features in MVs, which are usually considered unseemly in cinema, are cutting from motion to motion, the frame passing through people's joints and the usage of jump cuts. The latter has brought about a use of flash frames that serve the same purpose as a jump cut whilst contributing to a certain aesthetic. All of this boils down to the fact that the usage of such techniques—long shots, close-ups, low-angle shots, high-angle shots, etc.—gain a different meaning and function in MVs compared to cinema. Ideally, the editing should provide an equal relevance between the song, the performance, the narrative and the lyrics. On occasion, practical effects can take over the task of editing, e.g. with strobe lights, and give way for the editing to be apparent for other aspects of the music. Making the editing noticeable can drive attention to any specific element that needs to be highlighted. For example, the accentuation of musical elements in a song, where short cuts make us more aware of the beat of the song whilst longer cuts can underline a melody (Vernallis, 2004). Cutting between still images in a video, i.e. montaging, instead of sequences drives attention to the edit in a similar manner and manipulates the perception of a song. The perceived energy of a song can shift more towards active or passive depending on the format. Namely, music accompanied by videos of moving images are deemed to be more passive and smooth and those accompanied by montages of images are deemed as active and with a staccato feel to the notes, i.e. short and detached (Boltz et al., 2009).

Sedeño-Valdellós (2015) sought to define the length of shots in MVs on average in relation to the category of MV. The average shot length (ASL) is computed by dividing the total time of an MV by the number of shots it contains. Furthermore, she aimed to open a discourse on criteria for what she outlines as MVs in the “second stage of aesthetic development” (Sedeño-Valdellós, 2015, p. 3). Andrew Goodwin (1992) stated that features that are unique to MVs include the existence of relationships between visuals and music genre, visuals and emotional tone of the music, and visuals and lyrics through amplification. Additionally, he specifies that MVs have an abundant usage of close-ups, depictions of the music artist and references to other media like movies, series and other MVs. Therefore, a quantitative analysis has been done on the average shot length of MVs, alongside its relationships between visuals and music, visuals and lyrics, and artist close-ups and MV category. She groups MVs into four categories: performance, concept, narrative and a mix of these. She argues that the music industry prefers the use of a mixed MV, as they can promotionally showcase the artist whilst paying tribute to the meaning and lyrics of a song.

To define the relationship between the music and the visuals portrayed in an MV, Sedeño-Valdellós refers to a framework established by Ennio Simeon (1992). In his framework he describes three types of connections which are kinetic, syntagmatic and content-based. Kinetic connections between music and image are based on the tempo of the music and the velocity of action in the video. A syntagmatic connection has to do with the division of the song’s sections like chorus and verse and how this gets accompanied by changes in visual setting and so forth. Finally, a connection based on content refers to how the visuals represent sounds of the song directly, this can include lyrics as well.

She acknowledges that the framework of relationships could be more elaborate, but that she refrains from this intentionally. However, it is not explained why only one category is ascribed per MV, while in most cases multiple if not all categories seem appropriate for an MV. For the distinctions between lyrics and video relationships she turns to Goodwin whom has dictated that three important relationships exist between lyrics and imagery. He states that visuals can either straightforwardly depict lyrics through illustration or metaphorically and indirectly reference the lyrics through amplification. The third connection between lyrics and visuals showcase no understandable relationship or are even contradictory at times.

The observations are based on 40 MVs of which half are the most watched MVs on YouTube in the years 2013 and 2014 and the other half are the most creative MVs in the same years, according to IMDVb. It is unclear what expertise IMDVb has and which criteria it holds for deeming an MV creative or not, which takes away from the validity of the results. She found that performance videos are the most abundant in MVs that garner the most views on YouTube in 2013 and 2014, whilst the majority of the most creative MVs is concept-based. Additionally, a longer ASL is detected for the latter category which is roughly twice as long as for the most watched MVs. Possibly the more creative MVs use longer shot lengths on average to establish a clearer aesthetic. Naturally, close-ups of the artists are most prevalent in performance videos. The most watched videos prefer a kinetic relationship between music and visuals, i.e. a correspondence in the tempo of the song and the video. On the other hand, content correspondence has a much larger share in the most creative MVs. Again,

she only ascribed one correspondence type per MV. Lastly, the relationship between visuals and lyrics is found largely to be of the amplification kind (Sedeño-Valdellós, 2015).

Music is temporally subdivided into measures, or bars, which contain a certain amount of beats depending on the time signature. Within a measure you have beats and downbeats where usually most of the emphasis is laid on the downbeat, i.e. the first accented beat in a measure (Brunotts, 2023). When the cuts in the editing, a transition from one linear film sequence to the next, in relation to the beats and downbeats of music are made to be parallel to each other, you get a unified structure. This structure can then be broken up by displacing the coherency of the cuts and beat, resulting in a contrapuntal structure, as dictated by Zettl (2008). In fact, timing the cuts and beats in a synchronous or asynchronous manner has a measurable effect on the perceptual pleasure of the audience, i.e. “the positive affective response elicited by sensory stimuli” (Lin et al., 2022, p. 1). On the other hand, Zettl advocates for the effect music has on the cutting in the edit. He mentions that the structure of music itself, e.g. through a discernible beat, has the ability to tighten the formation of an irregularly edited montage. Conversely, an inconsistent musical rhythm has the potential to make a tightly edited montage appear disjointed. This is the case, because according to him, the viewer is inclined to accommodate the video to the music instead of the other way around (Barbatsis, 2004).

Lin et al. devised two complementary experiments to research the perceptual pleasure among individuals when exposed to congruency and incongruency between cuts and beats and whether they can register the difference. They found that, indeed, synchronising the cuts with the beats gives a higher perceptual pleasure among individuals relative to misaligned cuts and beats. In a subsequent questionnaire, the participants declared that they were not aware of any disparity between the audiovisual test samples in terms of temporal manipulation. Recognising the potential of this simple audiovisual congruency, it becomes yet another tool for artists to make use of and elicit desired emotions from the audience. Say, hypothetically, the pre-chorus of a song talks about pleasurable feelings, the editor could already have in mind to make cuts synchronous to the beat in order to bring forth an emotionally coherent experience. On the other hand, if the goal is to create discomfort, a dissonance between the aural and visual aspects of an MV like asynchronous temporal features could prove to be effective. A limitation of this study is the fact that it was done online which leaves it not as well monitored as in a real life setting. Furthermore, they acknowledge that they only used subjective parameters for measuring the perceptual pleasure of the participants, where they could have utilised physiological parameters as well (Lin et al., 2022).

Juxtaposed images in an MV are most of the time related to each other, at least in some way. Additional information is inferred from what the shots do not show as a consequence of the edit, as is the case in the analogy of the comic book panels Vernallis made. A common trope in MVs is the matching of graphics in between shots, i.e. same colour or shape. Whereas cinema would need a motive for this, MVs are inherently devoid of having to justify the sudden change in shots, because they are more easily considered complementary to each other in MVs. Unique to MVs is that the song’s mood and theme form a contextual basis for how we should relate one image to its adjacent one. On the other hand, it is harder to predict if any given sequence in an MV prioritises the narrative

or any other structural component such as the music or the artist. Thus, it leaves us guessing its significance to an overarching story. The function of editing in MVs takes on multiple forms and can fluctuate between these in rapid succession (Vernallis, 2004).

In conclusion, this literature review has examined the production environment of MVs, analysed how certain directors approach their projects, and defined the existing theory on audiovisual communication in MVs. It has become evident that prior research focuses largely on the styles of directors and occasionally their experiences and, therefore, testimonials from other key creatives in the music video industry, such as editors, cinematographers, and other visual artists, are scarce. Moreover, while the audiovisual impact of music videos has been well studied from the viewer's and academic's perspective, little has been done to examine how these connections are conceived by the creators themselves. This presents a clear gap in the literature that has informed the research questions of this study. By addressing the subjective experiences of these professionals through a phenomenological approach, this study seeks to offer new insights into the creative processes behind music video productions and the audiovisual properties of MVs. The following chapter will elaborate on the methodology used to explore this area.

## 3. The Phenomenological Study

### 3.1 Relevance of Phenomenology to the Study

The epistemology of the following section of the research is based in interpretivism and utilises qualitative research methods to address the formulated problems of the study. The aim is to shine light on an underdeveloped area within the field of music video research, which focuses on the artists behind the production of these multimedia artefacts. Their subjective experiences and behaviour has been quite overlooked compared to their cinematic counterparts. Especially, considering the MV industry is a whole different entity on its own and fosters a unique working environment in terms of collaborations, creative ideation and challenges. Exploring how industry professionals deal with this particular environment and how it shapes their creative output is of significance for studies on MVs in order to fully grasp the reasoning behind the final work. An examination will unfold of their tacit knowledge in an attempt to see the world from their point of view. Therefore, the focal point of this study is on qualitative interviews conducted with industry professionals. Additionally, to fill the absence of individual experiences in the literature review, research was performed in a non-academic sphere online. I took into account testimonials of no older than four years, in order to remain current with recent developments, relating to various professions such as director, cinematographer, colour grader and editor. However, only interviews with directors seem to be present of which often the topic is not about their experiences in connecting visuals and sound, but rather their experience in the music industry.

The following section is gathered from a website dedicated to inspiring people through understanding the thoughts of professionals in the creative industry (*Welcome to The Creative Independent*, n.d.). The interviews feature music video directors Nina Ljeti and Sophie Muller discussing their work methods within this industry, however any mention of their approach to making audiovisual connections is absent.

Nina Ljeti is a Canadian filmmaker and a musician who has made MVs for numerous music artists. Ljeti remarks that in an ideal world lots of creatives would probably dream of getting all the time they need and explore a large amount of possibilities that come to their minds. However, she acknowledges that limitations in time and money never need to be an impeding factor. In fact, Ljeti declares that some of her more popular MVs are the product of said limitations. When collaborating, she gets excited to see how musicians envision their own music visually and, since she already has

an established trademark, she does not have to compromise much on her ideas. Additionally, her approach to directing actors in MVs, i.e. the musicians, is different from movies, because she prefers to refrain from giving directions to musicians. She believes you can get the right material from anyone if you use their characteristics advantageously. It took some time for her to start trusting in the messages she wants to convey with her work and says it is a crucial part for collaborating with and approaching other artists (Gordon, 2024).

Sophie Muller is a well-known British music video director who has worked with some of the biggest pop stars of the last decades. Muller's *modus operandi* involves determining the mood of the music video she is making firstly and build everything around this initial concept. She recognises that storytelling is not her forte and that MVs are actually an outcome for her due to not having to flesh out narratives in detail. In fact, she does not like to use storyboards, only treatments, and reacts on whatever feels right in the moment of directing. She is usually in charge of every production stage and does the writing, directing and editing herself. She had realised early on in her career that she would not be able to work together with an editor, since they would not understand what she was trying to do for the video. Within the editing, Muller sometimes has to rely on established tricks in the industry in order to tie it all together, for example always being able to cut to a close-up of someone performing. Interestingly, Muller does not care for her own affections towards the song she is working on, instead she focuses on the opinion and the involvement of the music artists. In the end she does not get her ideas from listening to the song, but from having conversations with the music artist in question (Ziegler, 2021).

## **3.2 Research Design**

### **3.2.1 Selection of Participants**

As the study is phenomenological in nature and, therefore concentrated on individual experiences, the primary goal is to provide insight into these experiences. Accordingly, this study employs a non-probability sampling approach with few participants whom have been contacted through a mixture of purposive (Patton, 1990), convenience and snowball sampling. The criteria for participant sampling for qualitative interviews were devised with a purposive approach in mind. Thus, the research questions formed the basis for participant selection. Furthermore, over the course of the study the sampling proved to be contingent, as the initial requirements for sampling changed over time. Initially, the prerequisites for a participant to be interviewed for this study stated them to be visual artists who are in any way related to music and that their oeuvre proved them to be capable of exploring audiovisual relations. Subsequently, the research questions had gotten reiterated and, thus, also the criteria for the participants. The sampling, thereafter, demanded visual artists who take part in the production of MVs and have a visual influence on the conveyance of emotions or meaning through audiovisual means. As we have established precedingly, emotions and meaning can be influenced by a scala of techniques including camerawork, editing, colours, narrative, and so forth. Additionally, it was determined that the participants would be situated in the vicinity of Porto,

Portugal, as part of a convenience sampling strategy. Eventually, the location-based criteria of Porto had been altered to artists who have taken part in MV productions in Porto or have had at least a part of their academic and professional careers situated in Porto. Snowball sampling was used throughout the investigation and resulted in a referral from one interviewee to Vasco Mendes (*Vasco Mendes*, n.d.), who fitted the criteria perfectly. Namely, he is a director, editor and colour grader for numerous MVs of Portuguese musicians, who grew up and still works in Porto.

The second interviewee is Fabio Mota (*Fábio Mota DOP*, n.d.), who is a director of photography and a colour grader from Porto. He has professional and international experience in creating music videos, tv-series and documentaries.

During the study, a different type of source came to my attention which is a Porto-based broadcasting channel dedicated to culture and creativity surrounding music, called ‘Canal180’ (*Canal180*, n.d.). They produce a series, ‘Director ID’, which specifically focuses on the creative processes of global MV directors by interviewing them on their home turfs (*Director ID*, n.d.). The third interviewee for the study, who asked to remain anonymous, is involved with this series and was included, because of his knowledge on the show as well as music videos and directors.

Lastly, I interviewed a graphic designer called Rita Goulão (*Min*, n.d.) who has designed numerous album cover art as part of a Porto-based music label called ‘Monster Jinx’ (*MONSTER JINX*, n.d.). She demonstrated to have experience in making audiovisual connections and collaborating with musicians.

In the end, several attempts had been made to get into contact with industry professionals in Porto which proved fruitful only half of the time. Over the course of the study, eight people had been contacted through different means, i.e. e-mails and Instagram, of which four responded and agreed to do an interview. A fifth participant was considered, someone whom I had contacted before and would have been more reachable this time through a connection with Vasco Mendes. However, considering the time-consuming aspect of analysing interviews, it was actively chosen to not involve another participant and focus more deeply on the gathered interviewees.

### **3.2.2 Qualitative Interviews**

A cross-sectional time horizon is employed, as we are obtaining information at a single moment in time, however, how the individual’s experiences have changed over time does come to light. The implemented interviews were chosen to be semi-structured, because it allows for the essential topics to be addressed while maintaining a degree of freedom for the interviewees. They get the opportunity to ramble which gives an insight into what they deem to be of significance. The interviews are accompanied by an interview guide containing introductory, direct, indirect and structural questions, leaving room for probing, follow-up, specifying and interpreting questions in the course of the interview.

An observational approach to MV productions did not seem viable given the relatively long time frame from conceptualisation till post-production, the sporadic workstyle of the contributors and confidentiality issues. Furthermore, the workflow is highly decentralised where most

contributors work from their home offices, specifically in the pre- and post-production phases which complicates the observational process.

### 3.3 Critical Analysis

The interviews were interpreted through a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) that allows for finding patterns in subjective experiences expressed in thoughts, beliefs and opinions. The approach to the thematic analysis is an inductive one, i.e. the codes and themes were derived from the interviews and other artefacts itself instead of using a predetermined set of them (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). As was established before, there exists little research on the individual experiences of visual artists behind music videos and, thus, an inductive approach is most viable and suited for the exploratory nature of the research. This method has required me to bracket any preconceptions and biases that might have been present at the start of the analysis. Furthermore, the interviews were analysed on a semantic level in order to avoid any interpretive biases.

Themes were extracted by means of coding and finding patterns among them. The patterns are based on the following findings between codes: repetition, metaphors and analogies, transitions in topics by the interviewee, indicative words, agreement and disagreement among participants, emphasis, differences on the same topic among participants, context, comparative statements, emotional tone, actions, values and beliefs. The initial stage of the coding process was done with open coding followed by line-by-line coding. Structural, value (Saldaña, 2013) and simultaneous coding are some of the common methods used for the initial stage. The codes generated throughout the analysis of the interviews were subjected to reiterations. The extracted themes, subsequently, formed the foundation for a concept map on the creative process in music video productions that delineates relationships between the themes. The results of the thematic analysis are supported by a great quantity of quotes from the participants, which have been transcribed in an intelligent verbatim manner where filler words and repetitions have been omitted (Bryman, 2012). Pauses in the participant's speech and broken sentences have been indicated by ellipses. Occasionally, broken English and additional information has been supplemented by bracketed comments to facilitate more comprehensive reading (*Rhetorical Functions in Academic Writing: Providing Support*, n.d.).

Ultimately, to support and contextualise the findings from the set of interviews, a content analysis was executed on 10 of the most recent episodes of the series 'Director ID' produced by Canal180. The findings from the content analysis were used in a comparative analysis with the results from the thematic analysis regarding the frequency and context of themes present in both analyses and identifying themes unique to each analysis. The comparative analysis focused on broader contextual patterns that are unique or similar to Porto, Portugal.

The research gap that was found through the literature review informed the formulation of the research objectives and, hence, the first two research questions, namely: How do creative individuals behind the production of music videos select and interpret audiovisual elements? What factors drive their creative decision-making process? The third research question is an addition derived from the research objective to understand the interactions between creativity, collaboration and decision-

making. The sections of the literature review that address the conceptualisation and creator experiences provided knowledge relating to the query about factors influencing the creative decision-making process. The primary research, that is focused on the interviews, addressed each research question through the interview guide and the thematic analysis. Finally, the qualitative content analysis of Director ID was related to the inquiries about influencing factors of the creative process and collaboration dynamics.



**Figure 2** James Blake's "Big Hammer" (2023). The visual concept of a car's perspective serves as the red thread throughout the music video, that gets elaborated upon as it progresses. (Hudson, 2023)

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Personal accounts of creative visual artists in the music video industry have been lacking in academic research, whilst their intentions and decision-making process could offer a novel perspective on analyses regarding this audiovisual medium. Therefore, this study aspires to unearth the experiences of these individuals on topics regarding collaboration, working in the music industry, and implementation of audiovisual techniques. The secondary study has addressed and provided knowledge on the query on factors influencing the creator's creative process. The investigation of this chapter is guided by all three research questions of the study: How do creative individuals behind the production of music videos select and interpret audiovisual elements? What factors drive their creative decision-making process? How do these creative individuals collaborate with other key contributors throughout the music video production process?

In order to approach the research questions, a phenomenological method was implemented which consists of four in-depth interviews with industry professionals accompanied by a content analysis of a short-form documentary series about MV directors. The interviews were analysed through an inductive thematic analysis. The results and discussion of the thematic analysis are presented in this chapter of which the identified themes coalesce into a concept map. The results of the content analysis are discussed through a comparative lens in order to identify contextual patterns based on geography. This chapter is partitioned by the emerged themes which are: Audiovisual Connections and Meaning, Collaboration among Creatives, Personal Identity, and The Decision-Making Process. Hereafter, the concept map and the comparative analysis are presented.

### **4.2 Audiovisual Connections and Meaning**

The theme 'Audiovisual Connections and Meaning' covers the means with which visual artists react to certain aspects of a song and try to convey specific feelings and messages within the MV. The visual artists each have their own idiom in terms of visual language and this theme talks about the embedded meanings in visual techniques either through conventions or their own intended interpretations of it. However, their usage of visual techniques does not hinge solely on conveying messages and emotions and instead is also a product of larger constructions within the MV

production process which will be addressed in subsequent themes. The main areas that reflect their feelings towards a song through embedded meanings involve the editing, cinematography and usage of colours. Furthermore, the focus can be laid on different aspects of a song that guide the visuals in the music video such as any prominent lyrics, identifiable musical features and the overall character of a song. Any decision on how to precisely match visual imagery to a song are based mostly on the artists' own aesthetic judgements and intuition. In this theme, we will look at how audio input, i.e. lyrics and musical features, influences the artists and how this naturally progresses into their visual output related to colours, cinematography and editing.

#### 4.2.1 Lyrics



**Figure 4.1** LINCÉ's "Puzzles" (2017). The glitch effect applied to the main character is a visual representation of the title of the song. (Mendes, 2017)

Lyrics are one of the basal characteristics of a song to hold onto when creating imagery and produces a connection between the image and the song coined by Ennio Simeon as a content connection (Sedeño-Valdellós, 2015). Both Fabio and Vasco mention how it is preferable to avoid making an illustrative relation, i.e. a literal translation of the lyrics into images, between the lyrics and the images of the MV. As Vasco states, it could prove to become tiresome. Instead, they both opt to indirectly reference the lyrics through amplification, as is described by Goodwin (1992). After all, this is the most frequently implemented relationship between lyrics and images in creative MVs of 2013 and 2014 (Sedeño-Valdellós, 2015).

When Vasco hears the song he is going to work with, he could decide to focus on the lyrics or the title and pick out words that pique his interest in order to create a visual concept.

I got the song first if I like it, I get excited and then I decide if I'm gonna follow the lyric or the rhythm, for example. [...] About lyrics also try to random... not randomly, but pick some words that define the song. I'll ask for the lyric, pick the main words that could catch my attention, for example, and with these words I would start to create a concept.

Like “Lince – Puzzles”, I shot the video. The word ‘puzzles’ of the title gave me some idea to just use some kind of glitch, but just in the character. So the glitch is also a puzzle in terms of pixels. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024; Mendes, 2017)

For one specific video, Vasco made generous use of a phenomenon described by Zettl (2004) in which he states that two juxtaposed shots, that can be meaningless on their own, illicit a novel connotation.

So just combine all of the shots in a way that I would give meaning to shots that wouldn’t have meaning when I shot them. So by compiling a lot of shots together. I remember that this video, I think is the best example, because it's like it doesn't show what is portrait [portrayed] in the lyric every time, so show sometimes, so you can get okay not get tired of making like how do you say, comparison? No, not comparison... (Vasco)

*Connections? (Interviewer)*

Yeah, connections yes. [...] I have a shot of the house that I shot and then I went to get like a couch randomly on the garbage that I shot also. I combine these two shots together and this means that you're afraid of not paying the rent, for example. [...] I remember I was filming someone laying on the bench and I found like I shot this personally on the bench like in the airports and then after that I found like a truck on the streets. I shot the truck, commanded [combined] these two shots, maybe you're afraid of dying, because you're in the position of die and then you have like a truck. [...] I think that this one is a good example about how to work with the lyric, how to portrait [portray] everything that is in the lyric and to do this kind of games of connecting images that don't match when you're shooting, but that makes sense on the editing. (Vasco) (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Besides offering a potential starting point for the visuals, the lyrics also inform Fabio further on the genre and mood of the song which results in specific aesthetic approaches for him.

I think most times we don't wanna be too direct to what the lyrics say, cause that... but it's more creating allegories for what that parts of the song are saying. I guess that's also where semiotics can come in. [...] We try to be as specific and the lyrics will definitely influence the mood of the song, if it's a romantic song or if it's a breakup song, or if it's something beyond or... What the theme is, will have definitely influence the style of the film, and what kind of settings, and what kind of camera language you're gonna be working with. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

In another case, lyrics have influenced the usage of colours, as Rita states: “So I used very colourful, was everything that was very colourful and fun, because the lyrics also were...” (R. Goulão, personal

communication, March 1, 2024). Ultimately, it depends per director whether they determine to visualise the intended meaning of the artist behind a song or let their own feelings towards the song guide their visualisation of it, Anonymous argues.

*Do they always like go with the story that the artist intended to be behind the song? Do they interpret the song kind of in their own way and then make the video about it? (Interviewer)*

It varies a lot I mean most people go through the literal meaning of the song and some just feel the song and that flux of spirit from the song can generate something visually, but it happens both ways really. (Anonymous) (Anonymous, personal communication, May 28, 2024)

#### **4.2.2 Musical Features**

Occasionally, an effort is made to complement the musical line of a song by singling out a rhythmic element or instrument and let this influence parts of the MV, as Vasco does. Additionally, Fabio mentions that he responds visually to instruments and in particular their temporal presence influences his cinematographic choices which can be pre-determined or can come to him spontaneously in the moment of recording.

I got the song first if I like it, I get excited and then I decide if I'm gonna follow the lyric or the rhythm. For example, inside the rhythm what I'm gonna follow, which layer I'm gonna follow from the... if it's gonna be the drums, it's gonna be the guitar, it's gonna be the violin, piano, if it's gonna be something that is more hearable in the first layer or in the lowest layers. (V. Mendes, personal communication, 12 June 2024)

*If you listen to the song and you like take out these type of sonic qualities like the genre or the pitch or rhythm or timbre, do you also think about this when you when you try to do things with the camera, with the shot? And do you try to like make them complement each other or maybe even be opposed to each other? (Interviewer)*

100% yes, that's very much there. [...] I think that comes on the conversation or it comes also on the moment that we're actually doing that specific part of the song. [...] Where it's like wait, this moment here should have a push, or this moment here should have a twist, or we should push out until the end of the song, because it's the end and it makes sense or... And I think those things are definitely thought of even when you're reccing [jargon for doing reconnaissance] on the location, you're listening to the song and you're kind of imagining this happens at this part of the song, that happens in that part of the song. [...] In an ideal world, you're definitely locking into the pitch and the pause, you know, when the music, when the instruments come out, we have like a solo or something then you definitely highlight those things. (Fabio) (F. Mota, personal communication, 17 May 2024)

The mood of the song 'Barco Vazio' by Anda Pacheco, on which Fabio was working, really compelled him to shoot in dark and gloomy weather, otherwise the setting would not fit well with the song, he says (Pimentel, 2024).

I really like the style of it as well which was very moody very dark. [...] Ideally, that was my point in the beginning that we had to shoot in that [weather]... The mist is all post production okay, the mist is all the effects, but it needed to be flat it needed to be overcast. [...] That was also my necessity from the beginning that we would have to shoot in this kind of weather, otherwise it wouldn't work. [...] We have to shoot in shitty weather, otherwise it won't work, it just won't work. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)



**Figure 4.2** Anda Pacheco's "Barco Vazio" (2024). The mood of the song is reflected in the weather of the music video. (Pimentel, 2024)

Rita mentions an incident where she thought the proposed artwork did not fit the music she heard at all and accordingly made changes to fit the music. She felt the story and mood of the album conveyed uncertainty and mystery and tried to implement this in the artwork by using a visual metaphor between blurry vision and uncertainty. Additionally, within the music, she heard muffled sounds that reinforced her visual concept. In that way, she is reflecting the timbral qualities of the song that Chion had described as a visual microrhythm (Chion, 2019).

I listened to the album and I saw the picture he [the musician] kind of showed me as a reference and I thought 'this has nothing to do with what I just heard'. So I talked to him and I think it's great to do a portrait, but I don't think this aesthetic has nothing to do with your music. So I propose something entirely different. It's going to be still a portrait, but it's very, like very blurry, very diffused. [...] It came like from the music, like from the atmosphere, but also from the concept. Like it was a very, kind of inspired of it in this story

as well, [...] like very lots of uncertainties and like a very [...]. I just feel like it's blurry, it's something that provokes some mystery, some curiosity. And I mean you could also hear this in the music. (Rita)

*Like this blurring atmosphere or...? (Interviewer)*

Sometimes, for example, like a muffled sound like you're muffling it and then you release it. (Rita) (R. Goulão, personal communication, 1 March 2024)

Even though Rita does not consciously translate identifiable musical features such as the pitch or tempo into visuals, she says that it subconsciously influence her choices for certain visual elements in her artwork.

*Properties like pitch and tempo, rhythm and timbre, maybe. Do you think that you can use these kind of aspects in your visual work? (Interviewer)*

I mean I don't think of them objectively, like I don't think of analysing the tempo or the pitch too. But I think maybe that comes out kind of organically, because as I listen to it, obviously like a faster rate is gonna convey a certain sensation or the lower pitch is gonna convey another one. (Rita)

*So it's kind of automatic? (Interviewer)*

I think so. It plays a big parts in the final art like in colour I use, for example. Like some songs I hear or hear it aloud and I say like 'this album is blue like it's totally blue'. (Rita) (R. Goulão, personal communication, March 1, 2024)

Furthermore, Rita mentions that conventions on music genre sometimes already shape the visual aesthetic beforehand, which in this case she was purposefully contrasting.

Well, I think here in Portugal, but also like internationally, there was like a very specific aesthetic that defined hip hop. It was everything was very like, either shiny and bling or very tough [...], it has to be something very urban, very gritty. (R. Goulão, personal communication, March 1, 2024)

### **4.2.3 Colours**

Colours, similar to musical features, are a vessel for creating synch points (Vernallis, 2004). It is another important factor that gets attention in the creative process, as well as in the editing through colour grading. Colour schemes of an MV are either chosen at random due to personal preferences,

I have like a palette of colours that I like to use, I restrict myself to those colours and I enjoyed them.[...] Sometimes I pick like two, three colours that will define the video and then... with not like specific meaning. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

to signify a specific meaning, where Vasco makes use of the convention on the colour orange,

Of course, like in case of the orange one for Clã, that's called "Sinais" (Mendes, 2020). I mean orange is kind of warning something like, it's like a warning. It's not like danger still, it's not red, but it's like still a something to alert as. So of course, sometimes it would be like on purpose. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

or to complement the overall aesthetic of the MV. Vasco often takes a specific colour scheme as a basis on which other decisions might rely to complement his choice of colours such as specific sets or objects.

I knew that I wanted to use this green car, okay, so the video has to all be green to justify a green car. [...] Instead of using the red light, I use the green lights and she's like revealing the pictures with the green light, so even the light on the flash is like green.

[...]

I decided that orange colour will be the main colour, orange, yellow mixed with grey. [...] go after the... that element that is also orange, for example, in the case of cities is the one with Berlin. [...] What are the buildings that are yellow? What are the buildings that have blue? So that's why I go and investigate the city and I think that the colours are really one of the things that have to be agreed in the beginning, not to be like so random. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

However, it seems Vasco does not give precedence to any of these methods and uses a mix of these approaches to colour. Vasco acts in a way that Vernallis already described, namely how a predisposition for colour can be the result of technological advancement (Vernallis, 2004) and that a dedication to a given colour throughout the MV establishes greater continuity (Vernallis, 2023).

*How do you choose like a colour? For example, like is it because you get the feeling when you hear the music or is this random? (Interviewer)*

I think it's... yeah can be a little bit random or more colours that I like to work and I know that some... For example, the cameras in the past, if I would put reds, the reds would be bad on the camera, because they won't be the red that I want. [...] But sometimes it's like kind of random in a sense. Of course, some songs push for some kind of colours or some kind of ambience, but sometimes colours that I like or... like I'm telling you, this green car, it has to be used. So I have to go around and use everything green. That's... the base was mainly always like kind of greyish, because of the buildings, because of architecture. So I build from that like try to bring some colour through the characters. [...] I have like a palette of colours that I like to use. I restrict myself to those colours and I enjoyed them and sometimes like 'okay, I know this is the orange time, this is the green time, this is the red time'. (Vasco) (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)



**Figure 4.3 (A-B)** Fenne Lily's "Solipsism" (2020). The change in colour palette aids in signifying a pivotal change in the character's world. (Clover, 2020)

Fabio mentions how he has utilised colour to signify a pivotal turning point in the narrative for his MV 'Solipsism' by music artist Fenne Lily (Clover, 2020). The MV of 'Solipsism', as the name suggests, is about a girl who experiences a transition into a world where she is the only conscious person. Her psycho-spiritual episode takes place in the humdrum context of a local supermarket. He created the concept of an otherworldly state in the MV with visual techniques focusing on the colours, for which he emphasizes that the colours were fundamental.

The background had the shelves full of lights as well, kind of. So the idea there was to create like a very kind of strobe-y world where we don't really know where we are, but we know that we're spinning and that kind of takes us into the people dropping in the same kind of coloured, neon-colourful space. [...] The use of colour was important to create that otherworld-ness. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Eventually, Fabio has the most control over the colour grading in the post-production of an MV where he can alter the colours according to the mood of the MV and the song.

Well, I think the influence is very much there, the shots we do, the tones and colours and moods that we wanna imprint into the video is definitely there. [...] I do come in at the end of the post-production phase to do the colour grading and that's where we make sure that... I can make sure that I can imprint the look at least of the... So you know make it darker, make it bluer or make it more colour separation or make it greener. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

#### **4.2.4 Cinematography**

Specific choices for cinematographic techniques rely on the visual artist's own personal preferences or a meaning that they are trying to convey. The cinematographic language that is used to convey meta-messages, as discussed by Zettl (Barbatsis, 2004), is dependent on the context of the video itself, according to Fabio. He states that each MV essentially can change the meaning of a certain cinematographic technique, in the same way that Vernallis stated that cinematographic techniques gain a different meaning in MVs compared to cinema (Vernallis, 2004).

Sometimes, the understanding their aesthetic, if they like to work with wide lenses up close, or if their close-ups are more long lenses. What does that mean? What's the difference between these two in this particular story? How can we make use of all our language and use... define what the language means for this particular project? I guess that goes to put into symbiotic [semiotic] symbolism in a way, like to me symbolism... I think you can define every time what the language means. It's like you have this, you have the English, but then you can speak this English in a very different way every time. Where this can mean something different and this can mean something else even if it's not the kind of the standard meaning. Where black and white can mean something or highly saturated can mean

something or steady cam moves or crane moves or... (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Next to context dependency, the choices for cinematography hinge on what meaning it has for the creatives themselves to use any specific technique. I asked Fabio to clarify his decisions for lighting, colour and cinematography for 'Solipsism'. He defined what his visual language meant in the context of this narrative, stating that white light signifies an ordinary world as opposed to flashing colours being a strange and parallel world. The setting being a supermarket, reinforces this idea of a normal world, because it is a highly organised and frequented space for most people. Furthermore, slow zooms were used to convey moments of dread. Subsequently, he visually represented her shift into the new world using her point-of-view and spinning motions.



**Figure 4.4** Fenne Lily's "Solipsism" (2020). The usage of fast spinning motions reinforces the image of the main character transitioning into a new world. (Clover, 2020)

Well, I think what Tom [the director] wanted back then, was to have these two worlds, right, where people are kind of pretending to be normal in a normal setting and then they just get switched off into a kind of an underworld state where they are just not existing anymore or where they go into this parallel dimension. This is a very philosophical concept of solipsism. And I know we wanted to do it in the supermarket, cause it's the most mundane place where that kind of stuff could happen. [...] And so the techniques we use were mostly having the... I think the camera was mostly very still. We wanted it to be very kind of white and just normal people, white being in a white space where you'll feel like 'oh, everything's normal here and everything's...' [...] And then we wanted to use this tension building with slow zooms and having this kind of looming threats coming slowly and that's when we use the zooms very slowly at first.

[...]

She gets kind of goes into that the space of where she's the only one who's aware that she's going into solipsism phase. And so I think we really wanted her to be aware that like... almost like in the trip state where we go with her POV [point of view] and then she gets thrown into this super... I think the idea was to create a space of hyper speed where she's kind of traveling. And so we just built like a little circular platform where she was sitting in the middle and I was in the edge of the platform with the camera on a tripod [...] so it allowed me to do like 360-spins. I think that was the approach to change that the... to shift from like normal-world into crazy-world and then once there once we were there, then we used handheld, kind of show how the world was kind of unsafe now and crumbling and kind of strange. [...] We had fast zooms as well [...]. It should feel like a bit like an acid trip somehow. [...] And she's the only one who's aware, who's alive in this other world.

[...]

Then establish some basic camera language techniques that would then be hyped, like a slow zoom suddenly becomes crash zooms. [...] I think it worked out where it's like low level camera language and then hyped camera language, and then we introduced handheld in the end just to shake everything up pretty much. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

In another MV, Fabio uses slow and steady camera movements to emphasize the journey of the main character.

We just wanted it to feel like a slow journey, so you... we were just like shooting on a steady camera all the time, the camera was always moving slowly. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Vasco's modus operandi in respect to cinematography involves many stable camera movements, because a shaky camera brings too much interference from outside and creates a stressful sensation, according to him. If he wants to create a certain amount of energy that complements the song, he opts to utilise the editing instead.

*Can you describe how you decide upon like audiovisual elements like cinematographic techniques and editing styles? (Interviewer)*

What I like is, for example, smooth camera movements also. So if you see that I'm shaking with a camera, I don't like to see that for example, because it means that someone is behind the camera and you feel too much the person that is behind the camera. So for me, I like stable shots and I use a lot of camera movements [...]. It has to be stable so it's not distractive.

So this way you just enjoy the shot and you don't feel nervous, because most of them you just don't need me to feel nervous behind the camera. [...] One of the first videos that I was using two cameras facing the centre, so I could just exchange on editing from one lens to another really fast to give this shaky feeling of the song that was there. (Vasco) (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Anonymous discusses director Colin Read, who used a specific composition in his music video "Walls" to visually represent the concept implied by the title and he, simultaneously, alludes to the theme of immigration through composition and narrative (Read, 2020).

He [Colin Read] does this thing with composition and I was seeing his music video [...] it's called "walls" and I saw it and I didn't even think about the meaning behind it. I just saw it visually. [...] A lot of people were commenting in the commenting sections that this was an immigrant story. [...] In this case is very literal, he's building walls through composition, so it's a good example too. (Anonymous, personal communication, 28 May 2024)

#### **4.2.5 Editing**

In the edit, attention is paid to whether the cutting matches the beat or flow of the song, as Fabio mentions here. This ties into the fact that cutting off-beat feels less pleasurable than cutting on-beat (Lin et al., 2022).

I'm involved in the editing process where I watch the cuts and I give my feedback about what sequences work better than others [...] or how this cut is not in the beat or how this feels a bit off. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Vasco uses editing's capabilities to highlight instruments and rhythm, and to facilitate a seamless integration of his catalogue of footage from various spaces.

I remember other videos that they were like two characters and they look up and they are like in Lisbon but I just film the floor of them looking up and then I cut to the shot that I have of New York buildings so in a sense they travel there. It's like always about faking a little bit the scale of things. That's also the funny parts of it, like sometimes pretend that we are not just here, that we are anywhere, we are in the universe that is not restricted to Porto. [...] And then I said 'okay, let's bring this shots in this music video to gain dimension'. So when she goes to the rooftop of a building, you're in Porto and she's with the flashlights. So then she's [...] in New York, like that I combine some wide shot of New York.[...] This kind of editing that is like more documentary, that's where I would have shots of random cities and then I would combine them in a music video. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

The musical segmentation of a song and its tempo are of influence to how he approaches the edit overall. He mentions that sometimes it is necessary to slow down on the edit and give the viewer time to process the watching experience. He used to make many fast cuts but now has progressed into using longer shots. This could be indicative of his work on MVs in a more alternative genre than pop music, as it has been found that longer shot lengths were featured more often in creative MVs than in performance-based MVs (Sedeño-Valdellós, 2015). While his fast editing can be related to the fact that short cuts can make us more aware of the beat and instrumentals. It is common practice for the editing to emphasise the segments of the song and the flow of the rhythm. (Vernallis, 2004).

*As for the editing like, do you like take into account much of the sonic qualities of the song like timber and rhythm and tempo and...? (Interviewer)*

For sure, for sure. [...] Sometimes, I would cut really to the frame, it would be very drastic editing, I mean very frenetic editing. [...] The rest is really about thinking if it's gonna be like a very... if I'm gonna respect the rhythm that is fast, if I'm just gonna ignore that music is very fast and I'm just gonna go into slow motion. And it depends on what I was telling in the beginning. What layer of the music I'm gonna go for that can define the editing where the cuts are gonna be. [...] Like sometimes you need a break on the music video to have an extra scene or another way of editing to breathe a little bit, to use the bridge to really breathe a little bit. (Vasco) (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

The testimonies of the artists illustrate how they engage with the qualities of a song. Each visual artist has a unique visual idiom and a way of implementing it that is influenced by the context of the MV, the song's auditory elements and their own aesthetic preferences. This predominantly manifests itself in meta-messages conveyed through colours, cinematography and editing. In the MVs, it is evident that synch points are established through connections of lyrics, image and music, as has been illustrated by Chion (2019).

### **4.3 Collaboration among Creatives**

The way visual creators discuss ideas amongst each other and the musicians is an important factor of the creative process. It influences certain choices and helps them in many ways achieve the goals they have in mind when producing an MV. For some, collaboration amongst creatives is even one of the pinnacles of creative work and a rewarding experience on its own. However, having to collaborate can also be endured as counterproductive depending on whether their own vision of the project matches with the other artists and if they are willing to compromise, should they encounter opposing ideas. On the other hand, they can opt to push through with their ideas, when they are convinced of their own artistic expertise. Therefore, this theme deals with the manner in which visual artists exchange ideas with other people involved in the MV production. Whether this is of major or minor significance in their process depends on each individual's preferred work style. They can

entirely depend on themselves with the creative process and opt to work alone or acknowledge that interference from the outside is occasionally an indispensable advantage.

### 4.3.1 Exchanging Ideas

As a director of photography (DOP), Fabio exchanges ideas the most with the director and they start to collaborate from an early stage: “Although, normally music videos director and the DOP, I think they kind of join forces from an early...” (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024). He describes the tasks that come up when he is working together with a director and what his functions are within this dynamic. He has to support and inform the director, make their ideas be technically achievable, and assimilate everything in the end.

My main functions as DOP in music videos are to advise the director into the technical direction that they want to go with certain aspects of the visual part of the film [...] and then bring in some of your opinions as well, where this technique could be pushed even further or where this technique could marry with that visual reference and kind of readjust. Or with them together understand what the core of their technicality means and what they're going for and then use that... your knowledge to kind of make it more [...] to make it kind of glue together better, if that makes sense... (Fabio)

*Like cohesive? (Interviewer)*

More cohesive exactly thank you. So take all these techniques and make them more cohesive. (Fabio)

[...]

So, I'll just kind of come together with the director to understand better what they're actually after. And then shift the course in some way and influence them into finding the film that they actually wanna have. [...] Sometimes the understanding their aesthetic. [...] So it's basically being the biggest... one of the biggest supporters for the direction. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Making decisions on the cinematography is truly a collaborative effort for Fabio. He says directors, nowadays, start off with a strong concept on which he either adds his own ideas or he executes the director's plan without interference.

*How do you approach selecting these kind of techniques that you want to incorporate? (Interviewer)*

I think most times it comes from the director, it comes from a conversation with the director or the input, the treatments [...]. So they kind of start the conversation and then knowing what you have from them, you go and do your own research of stuff that you've seen, that you like, that you think makes sense for this. (Fabio)

[...]

I think that's also what directors do now, so they come out really strongly right off the bat with like a really strong visual concept that is already full of these ideas. And then you kind of just take them and you're like 'wow, okay, this is cool already' like 'maybe we can try this this way or try that that way'. And then sometimes, it really depends. Sometimes, you're just executing what was already a great idea and sometimes you're adding stuff in, or sometimes you're fully collaborating from the start in like finding the story together with the director or the finding the look together with the director. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

After the process of reconnaissance and imagining shots that go well with the music, he reconvenes with the team and the director to discuss their approach to the cinematography in relation to the settings and the song: "Then, obviously you go back to the meet, you have a meeting and you look at the song again." (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024).

DOPs and colour graders are more attuned to each other's respective responsibilities in an MV production than directors and colour graders, since they share the same knowledge and jargon on colour theory. Therefore, colour graders are more inclined to discuss with DOPs than directors, Fabio says. This issue got mentioned by colour grader Woodiwiss who stated that many collaborators on an MV do not speak the exact language of a colour grader (Vernallis, 2023).

Then also for colour graders, sometimes they're more used to do it with DOPs than with directors, because then you can be more specific on what you're talking about and some directors are less experienced than communicating technically in colour. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Sometimes, there exists a disagreement in how things should be approached between collaborators. Then a challenging moment arises where you will either have to compromise and accept the other person's ideas or stick to your own idea. Fabio talks about an instance where he has executed the decision of the director over his own preferred cinematography. Likewise, Rita has had to concede to the music artist's wishes as they did not entirely correspond to her visual interpretation of the music. This is in contrast with how Nina Ljeti has described her collaborative process with music artists. She states that she does not have to compromise on her ideas, because she is able to infuse her own trademark style with the ideas of the music artists (Ljeti, 2024). Naturally, this will not be possible for every visual artist or every project.

And then maybe artists that don't really share the same vision as you do.

[...]

So I think lighting wise, it was a bit of a challenge, because we... he wanted this very white look but it also meant that things would be very flat and uncinematic in my taste. Like lacking contrast, because we were lighting overhead. So that was a bit of a tough one for me to kind of figure out and accept that faces would just be kind of white and flat, but I think in hindsight, I think it worked out quite nicely. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Sometimes the end result doesn't really transmit that [coherency between the audio and the visual], I think. Sometimes the artist has a like very defined image of what they want and, maybe for me that doesn't go with the music, but I mean if that's what they want like I am... I kind of have to do what they feel is right.

[...]

Maybe there's some artworks I look back and I'm not as happy with, cause sometimes you want to do like what the artist wants, but you're not entirely convinced of it and you just have to let go. (R. Goulão, personal communication, March 1, 2024)

Conversely, Vasco has been given creative freedom on occasion to shape the visual identity of a music artist, because they were relatively new to the music industry.

*So like if you receive the music, how do you start from the moment you get involved?  
(Interviewer)*

Sometimes, lots of musicians gave me like all the freedom and this would be good in a sense, better than the others, of course. But because some bands as they were like new, they didn't have like a visual path for the band. So kind of I had to create through the music videos, but they would be visually so they will put sometimes this in my hands. (Vasco) (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Vasco has come across moments, involving the collaboration with music artists, where they might have their own ideas of what they want the end result to look like. This will not always match with the vision of the visual artist. Vasco expresses that one of his approaches to MVs involves the initial contribution of the music artists and the ensuing predicament when their proposal does not stroke with his artistic vision. In those instances, he might try to sway the music artists to move on with his idea, because he feels a sense of responsibility towards upholding the music artist's image.

That's when the band already comes with the idea, that's the trickiest part, because sometimes the idea is not so good. Sometimes it's good and I use it and I remix. So I'm also sometimes responsible for making sure that artists are well portraits [portrayed]. So in a sense of... sometimes they come with an idea that maybe is not gonna match the song, because all they want visually this, but this doesn't match, because maybe the song asks for more... something more simple. You don't put like some shots of seems to be like an orchestral playing or some kind of character that's not gonna match. [...] (Vasco)

*Do you need to convince them to like use your idea, like your vision? (Interviewer)*

Yeah, I think it's like convincing, talking like respecting the ideas, but tell her that we have to be honest in this part, because if I'm not honest in that part then they are the ones that can get damaged, because they gonna be the ones that's gonna get exposed. (Vasco) (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

On the other hand, the visual identity of the music artist might already be extensively articulated and offer a convenient reference point for the visual direction of the MV.

It also depends, because in some artists that already come with the fascinating world behind them [...]. And there's other ones that's like... is less fascinating [...] and you have to push more the creativity to push the artist up. But sometimes it's like this, they have already some background that you can film. They are already living in a place that is very cinematic and they have like intense lifestyles that you just can follow the character. (Vasco)

*Do you also feel like you sometimes need to balance conveying a certain message of the artists or the music and like with your vision of what you want to... your artistic expression, what you want? (Interviewer)*

Yeah, it has to be like in a sense democratic, because I don't want to like push their ideas down or maybe I use a little bit of the those ideas. [...] But some ideas were really they were bad in the sense that I would say [...] like 'let's try to go another side, I think it's not gonna look good'. It's some ideas you really like decide not to go there or some ideas like bands think that they are new ideas, but I already saw them in other music videos and I think that's too much used. (Vasco) (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

There exists also cases where the music artists do not have any specific idea in mind, as Rita noted when she was working on cover art. Once they see the end result, they either express satisfaction when it fits their music well or they do not completely relate to the artwork that Rita made.

Sometimes they don't have anything in particular in their minds, but then when they see the finished product they're like 'this is exactly it, like it fits'.

[...]

*Have you ever faced like challenges when making an album cover or poster? (Interviewer)*

Yeah, sometimes. Usually it's not a very difficult process, because I think usually I can get like the communication with the artist and things flow pretty easily. But sometimes it can be very hard when the... especially when the artist doesn't know exactly what they want and you try to propose concepts or you have visual proposals and they don't identify themselves with what you're producing, but they also cannot pinpoint what they would want different or... Sometimes it's quite difficult. [...] Usually I draw like a limit to artwork iterations. (Rita) (R. Goulão, personal communication, March 1, 2024)

Fabio has expressed discontent on the editing work of someone else which was not realised to its fullest potential, in his opinion. He adds that he has little to no control over how the editor performs his work, but he admits that editing can be an arduous task from personal experience, which helps him acknowledge the effort of other contributors. He mentions how he is involved in the editing process and that his advice can either be taken to heart or discarded, which he seems to be at peace with. However, most of the times the other contributors are appreciative of input.

But that kind of stuff is always out of my hands, to be honest, because it's... I'm not... I'm feedbacking on the edit, but I'm not making the final decision on the edit, but also I know how hard it is. Like I'm cutting a music video myself now that I shot with a friend and I absolutely hate it and I wish I knew what to do better with it. [...] I'm involved in the editing process where I watch the cuts and I give my feedback [...] So I'll have like a whole feedback that I give to the director, but the director then can take it and use it or clean his or her ass with it, that's up to them really.

[...]

They [directors and editors] listen to you, they wanna have your opinion, your feedback. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

One can be content with the work that another member of the creative team delivers which at the same time alleviates the pressure of having to oversee the whole production by themselves. In this instance, Fabio was happy with the work done by the colour grader.

Then we had a really, really nice colour grader. So that also helped with things, make things look really, really cool. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Fabio discusses the importance of collaboration for any film production and states that every creative person has the desire to make a collective effort towards the best possible outcome. Furthermore,

everyone has a valuable point of view and knowledge which makes it vital to be able to listen to other people from the creative team for input. He stresses the significance of communication and mentions how he manages this efficiently by communicating in a way that is comprehensible for everyone in the industry. For Rita, efficient communication with the music artist is essential in the creative process in order to know exactly what they felt when making their music

I think collaboration is the base for any film, any endeavour in filmmaking. I think that's the pillar, it is collaboration, is communication, is the exchange of ideas and the respect then of how to communicate properly. And it goes for all departments, at all the times it's really about collaboration. It's not... no man, no woman can do their film on their own, it's definitely that and if they do they're gonna have a very hard time. Because creatives are dying to just collaborate that's what they're there for, they're there to express what they know and how they feel about certain things. Everyone has a... every head of department has a good feedback to give you, has a good input to give you as a director. So you should listen to them.

[...]

Then there's... before 'Eye Candy' and before 'Shot Deck', I would just screenshot stuff from films and that's how I would present directors: 'I think the mood of the scene should be a bit more like this, a bit darker, a bit more contrast-ier'. I think at the end of the day, it's very important to always communicate within the visual medium, that's the way that everyone will understand. So... and the way of doing that is to keeping your... an updated database. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024; Mehringer, n.d.; *SHOTDECK*, n.d.)

I think it's very important that you have like a good communication with the artist, more than the label. I think having a good communication with the artist and really trying to get like what does the person think, or sometimes consulting the musician, the artist, in the process, try to get a feel like 'look, I'm thinking about this or this or what do you think of this'. I think it's very important (R. Goulão, personal communication, March 1, 2024).

Performing each separate role in an MV production before such as a DOP, has made Vasco appreciate and understand the work that these people do and allows him to efficiently communicate with them.

I now know how to respect each place in the in the filming, like respect the director of photography, respect the art direction, respect the styling, eventually. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Vasco addresses some instances where he has elaborate meetings with every department of the creative team including the music artists themselves. He will also try to coordinate with the graphic designer of the album cover to create a visual cohesiveness between the different media, which at first did not match in terms of colours. Ultimately, Vasco has evolved to collaborate more with the creative team.

We have like big meetings with everyone, not just me. [...] But with Clã, I would talk also in a big meeting with a band, also the designer of the covers will be there, also the stylists. So we were... they're all working to get like a coherence between all the materials. So whoever was doing the cover..., I would make the video and then I realized it first video: he was designing very colourful covers and I was very like not colourful video. So we had a meeting for the next video to be more colourful, to combine with a colour and then we agree with some colour schemes, like I would use more orange, for example. So we would go after that and we would discuss with the bands and then the band was actually very welcoming with ideas, but was a nice process of having more creatives involved, everyone involved.

[...]

Maybe I will talk to a crew that does art direction to help me out with this, because they can bring something else to the film. Or bring a stylist so I don't have to bring my own clothes. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

### **4.3.2 Work Style**

The way in which people can cooperate with each other also depends on their own preferred way of working in relation to others and whether this can include and match other people's opinions. There are times when creatives just prefer to work alone in order to keep a close eye on everything and make it exactly according to how they have visualised the MV. Even though working solo has its perks, it is also accompanied by downsides, mainly having to manage all the separate tasks on your own. Vasco gives prevalence to do things on his own terms in order to have full control over the process, this inadvertently means that he will have to do various tasks of the MV production pipeline alone.

I am too close to the making, filming, producing then editing. I really connect to things that I do and that's why I'm demanding, but I enjoy to have like this kind of control over the phases than to trust my images to another directors or editor, is tricky. I trust my friend João [he has formed a director duo with him] that I send him the footage that I can be surprised when he sends me something back. He's one of the persons that I really trust. For the rest, I mean, I'm used to be in the process already be editing in my mind. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Doing things on his own terms also makes it possible for Vasco to improvise during the process. This would be impossible when working with a bigger crew, because everybody needs to know what to do at an earlier stage in order to function properly.

It really depends. There's really ones that I really organized shot by shot and they're like really methodical, like "White Haus – No Mistakes". [...] Methodical, because the music says 'No Mistakes'. So I had to be like the character, being inside the video almost feeling what this person feels. In the process have to be perfect, because I cannot commit any mistake. So [...] the process gets into me and sometimes not like fixed... Okay, when it involves a lot of people more. The scenes have to be there, everyone has to know what to do, but I like sometimes to be independent or with a small team, so I can really, even in the day sometimes improvise, because we have to adapt. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024; Mendes, 2013)

Vasco does his own editing as well which he enjoys doing at home. One of the reasons is that he knows the background behind each shot and how much time it took to shoot it. Subsequently, he understands the significance of each shot to himself which another editor might not comprehend. A similar statement had been made by MV director Sophie Muller, who is in charge of every aspect in her own MV productions and who prefers to do her own editing, because she does not think the editor will understand her thought process (Muller, 2021).

For me the funniest part to do is post [post production]. I mean, I like all the processes, but editing is the fun, because I can be at home [...]. I get to that point where I know how much each shot took to be prepared and I respect this time and that's why I have to use the shot. I will be like five hours or ten hours working on the shots, it has to be on the editing. If I give the shots to editors, they are not gonna see all these efforts so probably just gonna cut it. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Nowadays, Vasco has progressed in his career and has developed a sense of responsibility towards his production team. In turn, this affects his work style where he now leaves less up to chance and offers more assurance for the people involved in the production.

It's methodical you want everything organized. That's normal... then you have more people that depend on you, it's part of the respect the team also, attempt to organizing things.

[...]

I think that the ways that I used to make music videos now apply less, maybe apply to people that are also starting. Because I feel like now a responsibility about paying well the crew, developing a little bit more of the concepts, having a little bit bigger production.[...] If I come back to music videos [...] have to be that one that's getting more people involved, to

get in better conditions for everyone, because I feel like responsible in a way that I could not ask favours like I did like by ten years ago or five. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Although, there exist benefits to working alone for some, it also has its downsides considering time management and having only yourself to turn to and this has inspired Vasco to cooperate more on his next projects.

I will be the one that would cancel my own ideas. So it was [...] tough to do everything, you just argue with yourself basically. It's good to like talk maybe to Fabio, 'hey Fabio, do the directional photography' and although everyone gets their own work, gets me more relaxed. So next music videos, if I go again to make music videos, that has to be more like with a team. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Getting along well with the music artists is a fundamental condition for Vasco's ideal working environment, as he likes to continue working with the same musicians multiple times. Additionally, music video productions are a great unifying event for him where he involves people he knows and tries to establish a good working atmosphere and have fun in general. He builds relationships with the people he works with and puts significance on being able to work with people he can call friends. Vasco's relationship to music artists is similar to that of Emil Nava who reportedly dedicates himself to the music artists and in turn gets the chance work with them for a longer period in which he starts to feel more at ease to experiment (Rogers et al., 2019)

I always establish a connection with the with the bands, because we usually would work for several music videos or they would be my friends. So I would involve my other friends, my family also. So for me music video would be like a way to get everyone together involved and that's why I said it was very fun because of that. Also because of the familiar environment, even during the shooting we would all have dinner together, we would make it as a small commemoration. That's the best part when I go to work, I like to have fun. It's... I don't like to go to a tense environment. (Vasco)

*So you usually have like a connection with the people you work? (Interviewer)*

Yeah definitely, that's right. That's why with the bands it's very special, because obviously I will be putting a lot of time on this music videos and I would have to also like a person that I'm... like the band that I'm getting involved. And for example João Vieira from 'White Haus', I made like six, seven music videos for him and I still work with him the next project, because we are friends. (Vasco) (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Vasco explains how he utilises his connections, such as family and friends, in his MV productions to foster a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere on set. He emphasises how MVs, to him, also revolve

around a sense community and that it is a gratifying experience. In this particular example he is talking about an MV he directed in his mother's hometown.

Once again we have a lot of fun like eating there, like pizzas for everyone [...]. I asked the other director where that I work with to jump into the suit and be the character. My girlfriend to help me out with the production logistics, my sister also. Talking to people around the village to also be characters or to give us like some locations. [...] I actually went back to the village and shot like a pop music video with two of the biggest pop singers in Portugal. I brought them to a small village, everyone was like also getting involved. We got a lot of extras, help from everyone in the community. So everyone went out of there with our hearts fulfilled about the experience that we had.

[...]

I think that's music videos are really about also that, like you go talk to people, you go and ask like kind of 'Can I film here? Can you be on my music video?' And people like say [...] 'I actually like this artist, let's do that' Like so that's why the process is also that, a lot of phone calls and a lot of friends.

[...]

I remember that I have a friend that... he used to live in this house, but it was not his. He was just taking care of it and I remember in just that house, that was so big, we shot at least three to four different music videos.

[...]

Even the some bands for example have like [...] 'We want to shoot on the rooftop' and talk to all the neighbours 'Can we shoot here? Can we use the rooftop?' It's really about directing with the people that's the most fascinating parts like this, 'okay, we have this idea, let's make it real with whatever we have, but let's make it'.

[...]

So it's like creating a community.

[...]

There's always like an exchange or like really small money or kind of favour exchange or there's always something. I don't like to ask and abuse... (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

It is evident that collaboration in the industry is an essential part of the creative process and can inform many of the choices that are made. The ideas and visual identities of music artists might work in the visual artist's favour by guiding them. However, that is not always the case and they could have a different vision for the MV or cover art. The visual artists will have to decide whether they listen to themselves or to the demands of other people involved in the process. Even though cooperating is not always the preferred *modus operandi*, it does alleviate and offer valuable insights when each creative person of the crew brings in their own expertise. For this, efficient communication is always of significance which might work better between particular jobs, because of their shared jargon.

## **4.4 Personal Identity**

Any past experience that the creative people behind an MV production have had, either relating to their profession or not, potentially influences the way they view the world, approach projects, get inspired and develop their careers. Their way of thinking is what makes them creative artists and this is unique in each individual, as is their personal identity. This theme explores how their personal identity and experiences shape the way they approach any production and how it guides their visual decisions. Furthermore, the personal development in their creative and professional lives are driven by their personal goals and how MVs play a part in it.

### **4.4.1 Prior Experience and Inspirations**

Fabio started out as a director where he realised that he is actually interested in image compositions. Then he did a master program at the NFTS in the UK and got into cinematography. In this period, weaving visual symbolism into his narratives occupied more of his creative process. He went on to occupy various positions making MVs, commercials, a series and a documentary. He mentions how the process of making a documentary influenced his perception on any cinematic production.

I started off as a film student, I guess, and I was actually focusing more on directing so in the beginning I directed a couple of short films. [...] I realized that my interest was more into image and image building and image making. [...] I've done also a personal documentary with my partner and that was also very different experience, because it was just us with the camera, telling a story without all the crew behind and all the pre-productions and all the means. It's just like kind of being in the moment and finding a story which is very rewarding as a filmmaker-storyteller and I would say that also kind of shaped my path a bit on how to look at things with fresh eyes.

[...]

I was very much into semiotic back then, actually, or at least in finding symbolism and like

kind of expressing symbolism and telling stories through symbolism. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Vasco grew up seeing his father's visual aesthetics as a photographer. He started out studying exact sciences, but wanted to engage in more people-oriented studies and to be able to express his creativity. Therefore, he ended up studying film in Coimbra. Vasco started out doing videos for music festivals and through that obtained a way into the MV industry. Throughout his career, he obtained knowledge about different traits and, thus, is able to view the MV production from multiple perspectives. Eventually, Vasco gained experience in making documentaries which helped him approach MV productions in an interdisciplinary way.

Of course, I have this background, my father being a photographer. So be exposed to these images, his characters, his framing. So I have like this culture visual culture from him.

[...]

Exchange to more humanities, right. Humanities, so going to more psychology like, history, more subjects that will be interesting, a little bit more human than mathematics. But I think mathematics gave me the background about methods organization and budgeting, I guess. Budgeting is very important. [...] Then I guess like we always liked creativity and... but I just was suppressed by the mathematics. It's fun to like work at some creative creativity. You will live life with more fun.

[...]

Then I needed to study something more into the arts, so I studied cinema in Coimbra. I was three years there. [...] The university was good, because I practice. Practice, I think, is very important. Some people ask of course... universities is great to meet people at my work in the future. It's good to get some references from history of cinema. [...] Which kind of way that you want to film. I think it has to be as to with experience to create this path, because you can... I want to be like this director, maybe you just want to be like a creative version of you. How can your personality go into creative work.

[...]

Music videos are quite a lot of my life actually. It was like most... music videos represents my beginning. [...] I did a lot of music festivals, that's how I started to make music videos like through music festivals.

[...]

First music videos should be 2012.

[...]

When I started to make music videos and documentaries at the same time, I think that they came across each other in the way of using the natural light without having fear and try to portrait the scene even with natural lights this time. I think it was a good crossing.

[...]

What I'm used from beginning is like to document documentary style kind of shots from the first music videos that I made.

[...]

As I was used to produce, direct and still direction of photography. I combine all of these functions then, of course. [...] I now know how to respect each place in the filming, like respect the director of photography. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Fabio expresses his fondness of particular cinematographic techniques he uses, when I asked him about the influence of trends on his work. For these techniques he draws parallels between the industries for commercials and MVs, because commercials have to be instantly visually engaging which sometimes counts for MVs as well.

There was a lot of trends of slow shutters, of working with film, of slow zooms, of whip pans [shot where the camera pans at a speed that turns the image into blurry streaks] and that kind of stuff. I'm always like 'yeah, I like that'. That's the kind of stuff I want to see in commercials and music videos. Or rigging a camera onto objects and having that kind of POV perspective of stuff in commercials, I love that. Or seamless transitions, or rainbow rigs [an installation that lets the camera rotate around a subject at a fixed distance] stuff like 'yeah let's try all of that stuff'. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

There's an abundance of things that can ultimately serve as inspiration for a visual artist. Even though creatives mostly strive for originality, they essentially need a reference point to draw ideas from and build upon. Fabio says the approach to the visual aspect of an MV takes quite some research, looking through online databases for inspiration. Fabio mentions how the catalogue 'Eye Candy' serves now as one of the most prominent reference guides for filmmakers. Other catalogues he regularly makes use of include 'Shot Deck' and 'Cameraman' which he uses to supplement the references he gets from the MV director himself. On top of that, he draws inspiration from his peers in filmmaking and trending visuals or techniques, however he does not shy away to critique the artistic value of these sources at times.

There's a lot of tools nowadays, a lot of pages that are of condensing all the best work. Now there's one specific called 'Eye Candy' which is like the biggest reference point for filmmakers.

[...]

I think most times it comes from the director, it comes from a conversation with the director or the input, the treatments, the kind of the lookbook for each project. And then, the references that the director wants to bring into this project and then, knowing what you have from them, you go do your own research of stuff that you've seen that you like that you think makes sense for this. There's always these databases of work that you can go check stuff like 'Eye Candy' or 'Shot Deck' or you know your own references, your own music videos or the things that you've seen, the music videos that were in 'Cameraman' last year, or just the community that you follow like your Instagram saves, like the stuff that you've seen that is really interesting. We're quite lucky to have all these databases that condense all this work and you just kind of skim through it. It's like 'well, this technique is great I like this. We can use this for that moment' and I think that's also what directors do now.

[...]

I think we are highly inspired by what surrounds us.

[...]

Before 'Eye Candy' and before 'Shot Deck', I would just screenshot stuff from films.

[...]

I think they influence they influence me a lot yes, if I like them. I mean I've also seen trends, I'm like 'that's fucking stupid or I don't like that', it doesn't touch me in any way.

[...]

There is a trend of trying to make one-take sequences. I've seen a lot of that in music videos where it's like it's one take which I enjoy to a certain extent. I don't find it absolutely necessary unless it's really well done. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Naturally, Vasco has a different repertoire of sources to draw inspiration. He has an emotional connection to the 80s, because it represents his childhood. Therefore, he often gets inspired by relics from this era and likes to use them in his MVs. However, his number one source of inspiration is the locations he comes across in his everyday life and for which he already starts visualising how to use

the space in a video. Usually, he is captivated by the architecture of the locations where he wants to shoot an MV. Other inspirations he mentions include films he has seen and his peer André Tentugal (*André Tentugal*, n.d.).

Even a car or TV or special objects from the past and from the 80s, for example. I mean it's the time that I grew up, so it's normal to go and get some references and take us back to our childhood.

[...]

The most important base of inspiration that will be places, places more than like objects, more than anything else. [...] It would be like the main inspiration, because some locations I see and then and I really want to shoot something there and [...] I put them in music videos exactly because architecture for me... and like when you see a movie or music video you know that's what most of the thing is like the scenario of like the character occupies a little bit of the scenario but the scenario is one of the most iconic things in the... and the use of architecture is one of the most important things, because there is already there. [...] For example about Berlin, it was a city that I really wanted to shoot this austerity of the buildings, because also like the colours of the buildings that I wanted to shoot.

[...]

I could actually see the city as an inspiration and I would make a lot of shots random on the city of course people, characters.

[...]

I like Porto in a very specific phase of the 80s, 70s buildings when it goes more into the past.

[...]

I remember [...] this film about this character that wakes up and is out of focus. So it was another reference to the character that will be out of focus that will be pixelated.

[...]

I have a friend 'Andre Tentugal' here from Porto. He makes like already passes thousands and thousands of music videos, but he is very great. I mean, he's one of the references. Well, one of the first people that gave me jobs. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

The artistic style of an artist eventually becomes something to recognise them by and is an important factor in any process. Anonymous is talking about instances when it shows that filmmakers have found their own visual trademark. For instance, when they implement a specific technique which spans throughout all their work.

When you start exploring them you get to see their... they have very specific techniques. Nick [Roney], for example, [...] he's always putting himself in the middle of the creative process. He's always one of the protagonists of his music videos. I mean, he talks about his parents from his own point of view, always humorous, but he's always in the middle. [...] It's kind of similar to what happens in cinema when you see that certain filmmakers have always the same interests. I mean, it's only natural. [...] It's a very visual medium, you can see the difference, the similarities between their work.

[...]

The most interesting how you can see certain themes and certain visual repetitions in their works and I think that comes out in the in the videos we do. That's probably the greatest discovery of that, seeing how coherent that body of work is through the years.

[...]

It's curious that he [Colin Read] always goes through similar ideas, this is the same director.

[...]

I was exploring his work and he always works with match cuts. (Anonymous, personal communication, May 28, 2024)

The past experiences of these artists influence how they make artistic choices which can be based on the inspirations they have come across and the professions they have occupied, and thus inform their perspective when they get to work on music. Their process of making meaning of a song and translating it into artistic choices being tied to their past experiences, is in line with Cohen's (2013) statements on people deriving meaning from media based on their prior experiences.

Fabio's academic journey, including his master's program at the National Film and Television School in the UK, significantly influenced his approach to music videos, particularly in terms of image composition and cinematography. His formal education deepened his interest in visual symbolism, which has played a role in how he crafts narratives within music videos. Additionally, Fabio's experience making documentaries shaped his perception of production, helping him adopt a more spontaneous and intuitive approach to visual storytelling. Vasco, having been exposed to photography through his father early on, developed a predisposition to visual culture. His academic experience in film studies helped him establish his own style through a broader

understanding of cinema history and practical experience. Vasco's interdisciplinary experience, especially his documentary work, has allowed him to incorporate natural light and a documentary-style approach into his music videos, manifesting itself in his abundant usage of long, steady shots.

#### **4.4.2 Personal Development**

Many artists in the industry consider the music video phase of their career to be about experimenting and finding their own style. Additionally, they consider MVs to be an artform, even though others, such as the record label, might say MVs exist purely as a means for advertising. These expectations of what an MV could be for the creative artists lead to the fact that the period when they are producing MVs is one of personal development and a stepping stone for their future careers. For both Vasco and Fabio MVs serve as a place for experimentation where it is allowed to still be learning about the craft. Fabio states that an MV is a form of art and that record labels do not share this view with him, something that has also been noted by Vernallis (2023).

I think the music video generally is the playground, let's say. That's where you're putting all your... it's basically like what do you desire to do and experiment and play with.[...] Where music videos are playground, films and shows are the whole craft.

[...]

That's the fun, music videos is to try and elevate the medium into an art form.

[...]

It's only the makers of the artistic part of... the artists in this whole industry that care about how it will look and that's cause that's what they're working towards, right. They wanna make films ideally, they wanna... they have respect for the art form, but where the money comes from they don't care. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

I think is like the best way to begin, is through music videos. You can visually experiment, stories, narratives, techniques. I think is a great phase of a lot of creativity and working with different styles of music also was very good. This way I could have a wide range of experiences.[...] it was very good learning process, the best I think.[...] It was a very important phase of my life, music videos.

[...]

We were all there learning, so it was some first experiences even from the band. So they said like 'Okay, let's do it, let's... this is a process we are learning'. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

The purpose MVs serve in the visual artist's eyes influence what type of end result they want to achieve and, thus, influences their personal goals that might be intertwined. For example, Anonymous says that MVs revolve around providing entertaining visual stimuli for the audience. Moreover, Anonymous believes that MVs are about creating exposure for the creatives in their work field.

Music videos have been around for I don't know 50 years maybe. So they're exploring new forms of making them about to, because they lost a lot of relevance. But it's always about giving eye candy to people. I think they're always trying to catch the attention.

[...]

10 million people are gonna see your work. So they do it mostly because of the platform and they can move really most of the time it's slowly upwards... (Anonymous, personal communication, May 28, 2024)

For Vasco, on the other hand, experiencing enjoyment and producing something meaningful and of good quality are his goals when making an MV. Although, he recognises that MVs serve as a stepping stone into other filmmaking careers for most creatives. Fabio discusses how he got recognised through his work on the MV 'Solipsism' and it offered him an opportunity to be part of the production team for a Portuguese TV show. Vernallis has corroborated this phenomenon of directors starting out their career in MVs and, subsequently, moving on to commercials and cinema (Vernallis, 2023).

It became kind of a competition, who had the best music video and for me that's not the point when I... when people start like kind of competing for them as... kind of loses the sense of all of this. I was really making this for most of the time fun and of course good results, important, but the process is always more fascinating, is the stories behind the video sometimes.

[...]

I think in Portugal you start doing music videos and then you expect to go and jump into commercials or TV-series I think it's like a normal path. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

I think that music video also kind of marked the shift in my career, because it was that music video that got my attention from this director in Portugal that I then went to shoot a show. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

A desire to keep innovating and improving is something that Vasco recognises in himself. He mentions how his inaptitude in specific skills shapes the formation of the end result. However, he tries to stay up-to-date on advances in technology and tools surrounding the filmmaking industry. He has the ambition to develop his work ethic and systemise it further. Furthermore, he is eager to learn from each phase of his career and says that it will shape his future endeavours.

Something that I usually... you do with like in 'Premiere' instead of 'After Effects'. I'll try to achieve some effect, but really in the sometimes clumsy way. Like it's clumsy technique, but it was the techniques that I knew so.

[...]

I feel like we are living in a transitional phase, so I'm just checking what is happening, trying to know all the tools to create things with AI.

[...]

But then it's methodical. You want everything organised, that's normal. Then you have more people that depend on you. It's part of the respect the team also, attempt to organising things.

[...]

I think that we really have to jump from phase to phase. there was good phase of music videos. Now I'm more into documentaries, commercial, maybe next one is gonna be more short films. So I'm really curious, it doesn't have to be stop. I think all the phases are important to develop a language that all of this mixed together will give me what I'm gonna be in the future. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

The visual style of Vasco has developed over time through what he describes as 'phases' in his career. He has transitioned mainly in terms of colours, lighting and editing, because after a while he gets weary of it. This has also resulted in him expressing dissatisfaction about some of his earlier work.

I know this is the orange time this is the green time, this is the red time.

[...]

So it was kind of an abuse of camera movements also, that phase.

[...]

I play more with the sun, because I got bored about putting lights in some place or just putting light to the roof and eliminate everything. [...] It's more entertainment for me to play with the light now, a lot of natural lights.

[...]

I jumped from creating loops in the beginning with characters to do the loops with the architecture. That also interesting was kind of an evolution of the technique applied to architecture.

[...]

I think I was more complicated in the beginning. [...] I got more simple editing also, because I also became more calm, I guess.

[...]

I have my phase of grey, almost I would shoot with the grey weather, so if we decided to cancel or delay the shooting. But then of course I got tired of this, because then I discovered the shadows and the shadows and lights. It's nice to have contrasts and I noticed that also. If I would take my music videos from the past, I put like saturation in all of them, because I had this phase that I would vanish the colours. I don't know why, I guess it was the look of the time. [...] I get stressed now looking at those videos. [...] And is one of the things that I regret from the past. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Another instigator for knowing what works for an artist artistically and professionally is simply discovered by experiencing pleasure in what they do. Fabio addresses the enjoyable experience of making the two worlds in 'Solipsism': "So that was a lot of fun definitely." (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024). Furthermore, he expresses joy when he talks about MVs that he is satisfied with like 'Barco Vazio' by Anda Pacheco and 'Odyssey DC' by Napaea (Aschauer, 2024).

I've done one [Barco Vazio] recently that I really enjoyed as well. I really like the style of it as well which was very moody, very dark.

[...]

I've done another one before that I really liked as well for this band called 'Napaea', 'Odyssey DC'. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Vasco receives the most pleasure from working together on an MV in an amicable environment and places a lot of value on having fun. Additionally, he very much enjoys the editing process and scouting for locations to film.

So for me music video would be like a way to get everyone together involved and that's why I said it was very fun, because of that. Also because of the familiar environment even during the shooting we would all have dinner together, we would make it as a small commemoration. That's the best part when I go to work, I like to have fun.

[...]

I think that that also is pleasing, the method of going on investigation for locations. I think that's one of the best things.

[...]

I like all the processes, but editing is the fun. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Being dissatisfied with oneself and one's own work is not uncommon among creatives and it is a sign that the person is inclined to improve regarding that aspect. Fabio talks about his frustrations when it comes to editing. Whilst, Vasco expresses his dissatisfaction towards the pop MVs he has made that do not stroke with his values for MV-making.

Also I know how hard it is, like I'm cutting a music video myself now that I shot with a friend and I absolutely hate it. And I wish I knew what to do better with it, but I'm just kind of editing it myself and hoping to get some positive feedback, but I don't think it's very good. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

When I started to make more pop videos, I knew that I was like in the wrong path, because I won't even share them. Like they didn't make any sense for me. [...] Sometimes, I would have idea for a pop music video in like 20 minutes, 10 minutes or something like based on formulas. I don't think it's good to work based on formulas. It takes all the charm off of the... all of this creative process. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

The need to be original can be an internal motivation amongst creatives to make MVs in a different way than what has preceded them. Vasco expresses his disdain for making MVs according to a common set of guidelines as for any pop MV. Fabio indirectly expresses his desire to be original by stating that he is not always influenced by what is trending at the moment.

I mean shooting something that I know that I already saw 30 examples of this kind of videos, I feel like ‘do I want to keep going? Am I doing something unique?’.

[...]

Serving some pop purpose of selling a lot of albums and there has to be this kind of characters there. These characters have to be dressed like this, so that just come with so many rules that you already want to know like ‘Okay, so I’m just gonna reproduce some basic ideas’. [...] Let’s make it like the industry demands and loses only with the charm of the process, the charm of liking actually the music. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

I’m not sure if I’m fully influenced by the trends. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Lastly, Fabio states that limitations in a way provide a stimulating working experience in which visual artists learn to achieve their vision one way or another.

Most filmmakers are learning to make stuff fully from improv [improvisation] like from limitations, from compromises. It’s all about compromises. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

It is clear that the personalities of the visual artists are a driving force for their decision-making either in a creative or professional context. Their way of approaching any project stems from the experiences they have had in their lives as much as what they aim for in the future. The drive to develop their personalities, creativity and work ethic in relation to MVs are fuelled by a multitude of factors including the purpose of MVs, experiencing joy, authenticity, self-criticism and a desire to grow. All of these goals match perfectly with the manner in which MVs are generally treated, namely as a playground for experimentation and self-cultivation.

## **4.5 Decision-making and the Creative Process**

All the preceding themes are in some way correlated and amalgamate into this overarching theme about how decisions by the creative artists ensue and what factors influence their creative process. Three modes of decision-making have arisen from the thematic analysis. Firstly, the visual artists behind MV productions choose to make decisions spontaneously based on whatever appears to be the right thing to do in the moment or depending on what circumstances present themselves in the moment and force the hand of the artist. Secondly, their decision-making goes through a meticulously preconceived plan that sometimes hinges on the desire to make the all creative output be well-adjusted to each other and form a cohesive unit. Lastly, they make decisions randomly, reportedly without any clear intent behind it. Furthermore, there exist a multitude of approaches any

artist can take to a project that depends on where their priorities lie on a case-to-case basis. The creative process gets informed by a number of factors that are of great if not the greatest significance which include the quality of the song, the demands of the public and an insufficiency in budget and time.

#### **4.5.1 Spontaneity**

Spontaneous decisions regarding the cinematography come to Fabio during filming where he either follows the ambience of the song or goes along with what feels visually correct at that moment.

Sometimes it will just work in the moment as well where you see a person going somewhere and you know that that will look better that way.

[...]

Sometimes, it just also happens that you kind of have a general idea and then you go in and you pick up on the mood of the moment. You know that this moment of the song is important and it should specifically be like this. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

In response to getting asked how Fabio reacts to musical features, he says this: “It comes also on the moment that we're actually doing that specific part of the song. [...] Sometimes it could be that it's already pre-thought of and sometimes it just comes on the spot.” (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024).

Vasco prefers to be autonomous in order to have the freedom to take a break and decide to change things in the moment of shooting. Other times, he only thinks of a concept for the MV when he already has arrived at the location where he is going to shoot the MV.

I like, sometimes, to be independent or with a small team so I can really, even in the day sometimes, improvise because we have to adapt. I remember that one of my first two music videos, we shot till 15:00, 16:00 in the afternoon and then I took some moments to think about what we need. I went for a walk alone now for some minutes and I realized that I wouldn't use anything that was there, so I came back.

[...]

Even sometimes, we'll book the tickets and I would have the idea for the concept there.

[...]

I'm gonna go to London and try to arrange jobs there. I'm gonna figure out the music video there. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

It happens that the creative team is dependent on whether circumstances are favourable for them to produce the MV. Whether they are able to acquire the exact props, environment or weather the way they had envisioned it, can be out of their control and this often asks for a spontaneous response. Fabio mentions an instance where he was relying on the weather and eventually just went along with the locations they found during the shooting of the MV. On another occasion, Vasco was in New York and he, unintentionally, was able to shoot footage of huge spotlights pointing towards buildings and clouds from an election day. Subsequently, he could advantageously tie it into an MV he was working on, featuring a girl using a flashlight in Porto.

Kind of incorporate the beautiful landscapes that we found. We're hoping, initially, to shoot in snow, so that was gonna be way more cool and way more white. But then we were hoping that Austria would be snowy in January and it didn't happen or it happened two days after we shot. But then it was so it would be so shitty to work in the conditions [...]. And we just kind of moved around different locations around Vienna, ended up in this beautiful lake and it was just like kind of working with the transition of a day and kind of piece in together a whole journey until the morning after or the end of the day.

[...]

It needed to be flat it needed to be overcast [...] And to shoot that in Lisbon, it's very tricky to actually have days like that. So we were lucky, we were actually shooting on a very rainy day. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

I would shoot with the grey weather, so if we decided to cancel or delay the shooting... [...] That's why in the beginning I used to shoot just in the grey weather, because I will shoot outside, but without much equipment. That I would have like the cinematic look.

[...]

Talking to people around the village to also be characters or to give us like some locations or some objects. [...] I remember one time that I was looking for a specific car and I saw a car like passing by in Porto's streets. [...] So I started to run after the car, when I arrived to the car and then she opens the door is like 'oh, I really love your car, I was thinking if I can borrow, rent for music video'.

[...]

I remember that I have a friend that... he used to live in this house, but it was not his. He was just taking care of it and I remember in just that house, that was so big, we shot at least three to four different music videos.

[...]

I also use the fact that in those days in New York there was like the... what do you call the... it was the election so they put like big projectors that project lights on the clouds. [...] plus the girl on the rooftop still in Porto with the flashlights, was some visual effects. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

#### **4.5.2 Though-out Planning**

Mapping out what visual technique will be used where before the act of executing it, gives room for ensuring a cohesiveness in visuals. During the production process both Fabio and Vasco might reconvene with the crew and discuss the visual coherence in a meeting.

To make it kind of glue together better if that makes sense... (Fabio)

*Like cohesive? (Interviewer)*

More cohesive exactly, thank you. Yeah, take all these techniques and make them more cohesive. (Fabio)

[...]

You're listening to the song and you're kind of imagining 'this happens at this part of the song, that happens in that part of the song and this part of the song we're here', and then obviously you go back to the meet. You have a meeting and you look at the song again and the locations that you've seen and the references that you have for each location and then you decide the shots where they come in. That's a well-thought process. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

So we were... they're all working to get like a coherence between all the materials. [...] The way that the band dresses and the characters, scenarios, everything has to match. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

In his head, Vasco is already planning out how the edit will emerge from the shots he is filming at that moment. For some MVs, Vasco has stated to prefer a preplanned approach to the scenes.

I know that ‘okay, this is gonna work out, maybe this shot in that shot’ and is a process that finishes with editing. [...] I’m used to be in the process already be editing in my mind.

[...]

There's videos, of course, that have like different planning like ‘okay, the scene after the scene after the scene’. So it's more organised. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

### **4.5.3 Random Decisions**

It can occur that decisions for the visuals are not based on any pre-existing thought or idea and also do not have any reasoning behind them. For example, Vasco has randomly chosen to film specific settings or use a particular colour palette.

Sometimes I remember being shooting some things in the street randomly and then would come back home and I would think like ‘okay, I need more of this kind of shots’.

[...]

Like one guy gave us like an orange motorcycle, because that video has to be orange.

[...]

Can be a little bit random or more colours that I like to work. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

### **4.5.4 Approaches to a Music Video**

The way any visual artist tackles a new music project is based on their preferences. Vasco mentions he has in total six different approaches to an MV: based on lyrics, objects, the instrumentals of the song, a preconceived narrative, location, or an idea from the music artist.

When I get the song different paths... this kind of three different paths like instrumental, lyric, or some objects, or fourth one some story that I had already and also there's a fifth, that's when the band already comes with the idea. [...] The most important base of inspiration that will be places, places more than like objects, more than anything else. Lyrics and like places, because I used to travel a lot and, for example, I would see a place and I would say like ‘I would like to shoot here a video’ and then I would go and I could create a story that will fit in this scenario. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Frequently, Vasco makes use of his archive of footage that he has shot before and inserts it in his MVs as he sees fit. This means that the shots from his archive were never filmed with the intention for that particular MV.

I used to use a lot of shots for my archive that I would be filming randomly and use them in music videos. [...] There's no scenes planned, sometimes it's just bits of footage that I have, for example.

[...]

I shot this in Porto, but the wide shots are in Hong Kong. Sometimes, to give like scale to the video, I will be use footage from other places.

[...]

I remember that I had shots from like some Italy, Bulgaria, Portugal in general. [...] but to just random places. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Fabio states that in his approach to an MV, he thinks about the best way to bring the most out of a song combined with the things he really likes. However, his primary concern is always to conceive the visual aesthetics first and the technical aspects it brings with it.

You try to really think ‘what's the best thing that I could do for this song?’ and ‘what's the thing that I'm really passionate that I really want to try, want to play, medium, symbolism, theme?’ and just try and kind of do something that makes justice to that.

[...]

And make it visually stunning, ‘cause that's kind of the approach for music videos: ‘visual first’. I would say most times.

[...]

Then would you consider that you are more focused on the... to make the narrative or how the visual aesthetics will be or maybe like conveying the certain type of emotions, the right emotions? (Interviewer)

I think mostly visual aesthetics. I mean, I think emotions will also convey in visual aesthetics. (Fabio) (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Bringing in interdisciplinary skills to an MV production is not uncommon. Fabio has opted a few times to approach the lighting of the MV like someone does in documentaries.

I think the approach there was a bit more like documentaries, like we didn't... we barely used any lights on it also. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Rita can have a mix of approaches to a single artwork, in this instance she focused on the mood, the concept and the story of the song. Additionally, she mentions that there are plenty of artists who combine design and videography.

It came like from the music like from the atmosphere, but also from the concept, like it was a very kind of inspired of it in this story as well.

[...]

There's a lot of artists that kind of merged making videos and the design parts as well. I can think of Michel Gondry. (R. Goulão, personal communication, March 1, 2024)

Occasionally, an MV can be conceived from a narrative point of view. Vasco says he sometimes matches a narrative, he had already developed, with a song when he hears it. Likewise, Fabio has worked on productions where the narrative took the overtone.

I really want to make this, I really have the perfect story for this. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

But it [MV for “Barco Vazio”] was more of a narrative, it felt more like a narrative, like a short less than a music video, necessarily.

[...]

Sometimes you're fully collaborating from the start in like finding the story together with the director or finding the look together with the director, really depends. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

One of the most used methods for actualising an MV or artwork is through a concept. Anonymous has witnessed that most MV directors start off with a base visual concept for their MV and then need to develop it further throughout the MV, otherwise they might obtain a repetitive end result.

They usually get a concept that works really well, a concept that they can explore visually. I mean, if you look around most of the music videos that are in any way creative, they have a strong core, have a strong concept. For instance, James Blake just released a music video

by Oscar Hudson who was the camera from the point of view of the car looking inwards the people in the car. That's the concept of the whole video. I mean, you can see how that guides the whole music video and they usually do it that way. The thing is when you get to a point two or three minutes in, the concept becomes something that is dull, because you can repeat it for four minutes, but if you don't expand it then it becomes something that is monotonous and so they often find ways to expand on their concept. They always go from that initial strong visual idea most of the times. (Anonymous, personal communication, May 28, 2024; Hudson, 2023)

Fabio started out with a concept for the MV 'Odyssey DC' by Napaea. Meanwhile, Vasco frequently already has a concept in mind and he is merely waiting for the right song to come along.

I've done another one before that I really liked as well for this band called 'Napaea', 'Odyssey DC', I think. There we really also had a concept, very basic concept of like this person walking somewhere. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

I would start to create a concept. Sometimes, a concept would be like something, some idea that I already have in the past and I was waiting for the music to come to me. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

In Rita's experience a conceptual approach is on one hand introduced by the music artists and other times by herself. However, she always inquires the music artist in question about their feelings during the making of the song or album, an approach that she shares with Sophie Muller (*On Making the Things You'd Want to See*, 2021).

Sometimes the musician already has like a very tight concept for the whole album and they want to convey that feeling in the artwork as well. [...] Sometimes they don't have a clue what they want to portray and they just have like a general feeling like 'I was feeling this when I composed this music' and then I try to find like a bigger concept to encapsulate the whole thing like with the artwork and the music.

I always question the artist like 'what were you thinking when you did this?' or 'what was your move?' or 'were you thinking about something in specific?'. (R. Goulão, personal communication, March 1, 2024)

Most of the time, Vasco initiates his creative process by choosing a location where he wants to shoot the MV and only, thereafter, thinks of all the other aspects of the MV, such as the narrative and the colours. He states that it is more effortless to build a narrative around a location that he will use. Other times, he works out a concept at the site which is inspired by the location he is filming at. Likewise, Fabio gets inspired once he gets to know the locations.

I would see a place and I would say like ‘I would like to shoot here a video’ and then I would go and I could create a story that will fit in this scenario. [...] All of these places already have these scenarios there and for me to be easier to adapt great stories.

We need to go and shoot there, this location is great. Let's bring a character there and let's make something there and I would come up with a concept. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Where you're setting out to work on a specific theme and to explore this certain theme and obviously you go in and you see the main locations where things are happening and you get to know the people, you get to know the spaces. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

#### **4.5.5 Song Quality**

The quality of a song, in the eyes of the visual artists, determines the amount of effort they are willing to put into the project and serves as an instigator for creativity. As preparation for the work, Fabio and Rita listen to the song. For Fabio, the quality of the song matters greatly and he states that it is difficult to produce a good MV when the song is not to his liking.

I always try to listen to the music beforehand, sometimes it's not possible, because... or they just have like little snippets or... But whatever I can get, I'm happy with, because it always helps.

I listened to it like three or four times in loop all day and try to get in that mood and I try to take away whatever feeling I get from it or whatever ideas come from it. (R. Goulão, personal communication, March 1, 2024)

You definitely listen to the song, of course.

[...]

It's hard if you don't have a good song. It's very hard to have a good video. You can have a good video, but it's really tough, I mean, and sadly you get a lot of bad songs. [...] But definitely there is a lot of bad songs going about. Well, I mean it's a subjective thing. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Likewise, the song is very important for Vasco's creative process and he discusses that good songs, in his opinion, make him excited and already initiate his creativity to flow. On the other hand, if the song he is working with is bad, the result will noticeably be of a lesser quality. This is often the case

for him with pop songs, because the lyrics do not have any significant meaning to him and, thus, leave him uninspired.

Respect a lot of the sound, you know how important is the song, because I spent most of my years connected to music and depending on music to produce the videos.

[...]

I'd like to have like a really good music to work with.

[...]

Sometimes I was waiting for just a good song to make a music video, because I would receive ones that would make me actually excited and then they will be the ones that I would be like 'I really want to make this. I really have the perfect story for this'.

[...]

For example, I work with the 'White Haus' and this band really creates great music. When I hear this music for the first time, I can catch all the references. [...] Some music really comes with life and already comes with all the inspiration that I need. If I don't like the song, it's gonna be counterproductive, because I'm gonna be hearing a song that I don't like, so it's gonna already be painful in a way. [...] If I don't like... it happened already that I work with music that I didn't like and you see the results. I get less involved, ideas are more basic and I put less effort also.

[...]

Clã is considered like a pop... a popular band, but they have great content of their lyrics, you enjoy working on with that lyrics. If you go to another pop songs that's... you just missing the girl... I mean, of course, there's like creative ways to you know solve this, but then the music is like so strict that you don't feel like that much inspirational, that you want to put your great ideas in there. Just this video that people will be gonna see that they don't gonna appreciate actually. I don't think if you want to like go into deeper meanings or deeper stories and the artist is just singing like just random stuff like basic stuff, kind of this affects you and then it become a little bit more lazy. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

#### **4.5.6 Tailoring to the Audience**

Besides the presented approaches to an MV, the inevitable wishes of the audience who are going to see the MVs and the artwork have to be considered. Making the MV interesting for the audience

throughout the whole duration, is one of the biggest challenges according to Fabio. It implies that the demands of the public to be constantly stimulated are present in the minds of the creative artists. Rita, similarly, has the idea that the audience is visually drawn in more rapidly than sonically and this reflects in her approach to make appealing visual artwork. However, it does not take precedence over matching the visuals to the music and the musician's wishes. According to Anonymous, one of the key aspects of MVs remain to be visually interesting. Vasco experiences this need to be visually exciting in MVs all the time as well. He expresses his dissatisfaction, namely in the pop music scene, of having to be visually interesting in order to compensate for the low attention span of people nowadays. Additionally, it is frustrating to him that the appreciation received for his MVs does not measure up to the effort he puts into the end result. The narrative of an MV does not seem to be the focus when talking about the demands of the audience, even though it was found that the majority of the audience's attention is directed towards the narrative. (Sedeño-Valdellós, 2015)

I think in music videos, you have to have even more references, because you're filling a bigger space of time. It's like three minutes and a half and needs to be interesting for all that time and that's the biggest challenge filming. [...] In music videos you gotta fill in some fucking time there and it's you know for people to see it. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Especially, like nowadays where everything is so visual and you're instantly drawn by something visual and you don't even know what's in it. It's also a big identifying thing for an audio artist I feel. [...] So I feel like the visual part has to be interesting and it has to call to you and like call you to want to know more and I always try to think of that like ... First, of course, does it relate to the music and is it a visual translation of the music and is it what the artist wants, but then I hope there's a part of me that also thinks about... like I don't wanna say like the commercial side, but I like to create an object that is interesting, and for people to get interested by. (R. Goulão, personal communication, March 1, 2024)

It's always about giving eye candy to people. I think they're always trying to catch the attention and in a way it works that way with the bigger artists as the alternative ones. The alternatives are always finding a way visually to grab attention, since it is such a short format. (Anonymous, personal communication, May 28, 2024)

Because the music video, you feel like you have to be in a rush right like you have to exchange and showing crazy shots every time.

[...]

Music video now is the attention span really, really short and I feel like sometimes you work in a music video for several months and then goes out, people watch it in the next hours, maybe that week is gonna be like shared, and then the... is lost in the internet. So it's kind

of... it's frustrating in a way that it vanishes so fast when we put so much work on this small format. [...] We have to comprehend that the patience of people are slowing down, the attention... Like I when I started to work with pop bands they... first thing is like 'first 15 seconds have to be great of the music video', because then people are gonna turn off the music video. Suddenly you have to force like some entry, intro for the music video that have to be like flashy and where everything happens, caught the attention of the people. But when we are slave of these rules, are already not acting naturals like too much calculations already. Pop musicians are more like this, they want more success, they want... they analyse all of these graphics. [...] But when I started to make more pop videos, I knew that I was like in the wrong path, because I won't even share them like they didn't makes any sense for me. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

#### **4.5.7 The Music Video Industry and Limitations**

The music industry imposes many challenges on its creative artists, usually in favour of higher turnovers and greater profits. Therefore, the two most prominent limitations that occupy the minds of the creative artists and influence their creative process heavily are constraints on time and budget. Fabio adamantly states that the state of the work environment is the biggest influencer on the quality of the work and even determines if the work gets to be done entirely. The limitations imposed on the creative artists dictate from the start how they plan and make decisions on the production of the MV.

*Are there like any specific challenges which arise for you when making a music video?*  
(Interviewer)

I think mostly it's time, time and budgets. I think that would be the biggest challenges. We would always wanna have a bit more time to perfect things, to do things better and more money to make it a bit bigger. (Fabio)

[...]

I think this definitely... this aspect of the industry itself being a very uncertain place for everyone, is definitely a good point to mention. I think we're always looking at the craft and then you forget that the structure that people are in is also influencing. Most of the times, it is the biggest influencer of how the work comes out and how good the work is. [...] And I think most of the directors and the DOPs that you'll speak to in Portugal, working music videos, they will tell you that they've always worked for free most times, that they've tried to stretch their budgets as much as they can...

[...]

We're not really starting our creative process from what we wanna do, but it's more from the limitations that we're imposed. And that's actually the biggest denominator of choices for both directors and DOPs, that's where your concept actually fully comes to life. It's like 'I wanted to do this, but I can only do this, so this is gonna be this'. One of the biggest decision points is economic reasons. [...] Most of the times, music videos only happen, because you get a deal with a rental house that will give it to you for free or for nothing and then you can do it. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

#### 4.5.7.1 Budget

Fabio and Vasco discuss the limitations in budget that they have faced whilst making MVs and how they deal with it. It has an impact on the creative output, since compromises have to be made in order to still be able to produce an MV. Vasco has, on occasion, had to supplement the MVs budget with his own money or he makes use of his connections to arrange things practically for free, a phenomenon also remarked by Vernallis (2023).

I would be putting basically my own money also on them.

[...]

I will be, in one of these moments, I will be investing more than the bands.

[...]

When you are like short money, the shots are more like close-ups, right.

[...]

It's like creating an the community, really about that and using a lot of as I'm seeing here that was like a phase that we use a lot of smoke machine in the scenarios. [...] Everyone was like asking me for this machine. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

In a short time with a small budget most of the times and everything happening at the same time and things have to be done next week and it's all like really 'pa-pa' really intense.

[...]

Unless you wanna do some specific crazy shots, that film will be maybe too expensive or too complicated or... and that's then all gonna measure out, depending on the budget.

[...]

So we'll just do in film and we'll shoot it, we'll do like four different setups and that's kind of poor, but I think it's a reflection of our budgets for sure.

[...]

Also budget restrictions we had very little budget, so just kind of tried to create some really nice frames and some nice setups. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Rita corroborates that creatives in the music industry generally do not make much money. She remarks there was never a big budget in her time working for the Porto-based record label 'Monster Jinx'. As a consequence, Anonymous and Vasco have stated that MV directors frequently have to pursue more lucrative jobs next to their careers in MVs.

Music is not a very profitable business.

[...]

We were always like very low budget, so we kinda had to... we had like a lot of restraints. (R. Goulão, personal communication, March 1, 2024)

Most of the times they, the directors, move to film or to commercials. I mean, if they wanna make more money then they're gonna move to commercials. (Anonymous, personal communication, May 28, 2024)

I think in Portugal you start doing music videos and then you expect to go and jump into commercials or TV series. I think it's like a normal path. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

According to Fabio, there is not a lot of money allotted to MVs by the music artists, because they do not benefit sufficiently from it in the end. The magnitude of the budget might also be a result of which country hosts that particular music industry, however Fabio says that monetary issues in MV productions are present globally. Fabio states that the record labels are in a position of luxury and can spend as little money as they want on MV productions, because they do not care about the quality of the MV as long as there is an MV. Vasco mentions that the pop music industry has control over bigger production budgets for MVs.

But obviously artists don't wanna put so much money into music videos, because it doesn't really do that much to their careers anyway.

[...]

*I think it might also depend, like the budget, on which industry you're working at. [...] and I think they [music industries of other countries] also always have like very high budgets it seems for the music videos. (Interviewer)*

That's true, that's absolutely true. That's why every little boys dream is to leave Portugal. I mean, we do have a very particular industry, because it only works within this very small country. So it doesn't really export so much. [...] It doesn't go beyond it, beyond the limitations of the country unless it's the collaboration or unless it's a theme that is universal. [...] You know budgets are being cut everywhere for music videos and commercials and films.  
[...]

The medium, the industry has grown so much that... and there's so much content out there that they are constantly trying to make things cheaper, because they can. And most of the music video budget from 'Universal' here in Austria, for example are like 2.5k or something which is ridiculous. [...] 'Cause at the end of the day, it's true like labels and social media platforms or labels and marketing agencies they don't really care about the quality of the product, they just wanna have it. They just need content to put out, doesn't matter if it's good or not, because it will have the same amount of views, as long as the face of the artist is there. [...] It can be a iPhone video... (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Still there's like this thing about artists from the south that have like most likely more budget, because they are more into pop music, so that bigger budgets. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

On the upside, Vasco, Fabio and Anonymous all share the idea that creativity can prosper in these limiting circumstances regarding finances and time where Vasco even enjoys having to figure out how to make the production happen.

I do have like some kind of a [...] restriction of budget, time. You go and solve situations with the creativity, use more creativity on this and I think that was something that all through my years of music videos I really enjoyed. That was like a tiny game, to solve, combine all the tiny pieces of production.

[...]

We have to adapt. You have to see opportunities also. You have to combine all of these opportunities to make the best work possible and even if you have restrictions try to make it another way what you want. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

*Creativity gets like much higher when you have certain limitations like the budget and stuff, right?(Interviewer)*

Absolutely, yeah. That's what they say always and that's definitely very true. I mean, I think that's why in Portugal you can feel that, where people are so creative and most of the times, because they're so simple in their approach, because the budget restrictions they have to be. (Fabio) (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Because with alternative videos they are very limited in budget. They often have to come up with the strategies and creative resources to pull things off and that's where most of the creativity is really.

[...]

Working in a small production you have a lot of things that can be changed on the go and you can always find resourceful ways to pull it off. The big ones they have to have it all straightened out and I think the creativity from the alternative videos is unmatched really in the in the whole sphere of music videos. (Anonymous, personal communication, May 28, 2024)

This newfound and even imposed creativity leads to artists devising creative solutions to work around the limiting amount of money. I asked Fabio about the use of longer shot lengths in Portuguese MVs and he responded that one reason might be to compensate for the extremely low budgets for Portuguese MVs. It was noted before by Sedeño-Valdellós that creative MVs have a longer ASL, which she attributed to establishing a clear aesthetic throughout the MV (Sedeño-Valdellós, 2015). However, it might actually be a result of the tight budget, according to Fabio. Furthermore, Fabio shares instances where he and his crew were essentially using make-shift camera set-ups in order to cope with the small budget.

*I was mostly looking at people here from Portugal who are in the music video business and I think like one thing that stood out to me, was that they like to use much longer shot lengths than what I was used to. I don't know if this is something you see as well? (Interviewer)*

[...] Because our budgets for music videos in Portugal are like ridiculously low. So where our industry is one of the most creative, I would say. Because in the sense of like stretching and stretching a budget. So like for many times, I think people think we have to find a way to stretch this moment as much as we can and stick to it, because you don't have money for... nor time for 20, 30 different setups and in 15 locations which normally like a big budget music video will probably have. I don't know 20k, 30k and it will be like I don't know five, six studio setups, two exteriors, day and night and then you don't have to stretch things. You can just like do really good short segments and make the music video interesting, but in Portugal it's like 'okay, we have this one location and we have one day'. (Fabio)

[...]

So we just built like a little circular platform where she was sitting in the middle and I was in the edge of the platform with the camera on a tripod and then someone was pushing that platform. Oh and I had an F7-head [a type of camera rig], so it allowed me to do like 360-spins, but manually. It was a very low budget setup, actually.

[...]

I think in that music video that you mentioned [Solipsism], we were very creative definitely and we've made a lot of great techniques with nothing, really. With like a piece of wood and a couple of wheels, for example. Just kind of improvised. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Vasco states, in a different manner, that he is open to using new tools like AI as a way to circumvent the small budget and add onto the production value. His settings often feature locations in the open air, because it does not cost him any money. Furthermore, he illustrates an example of his reasoning for making the main character pixelated in his MV for 'No Mistakes' by White Haus which he conceptualised through convenience, symbolism and inspiration.

Even for music videos, like even the generated fill. I can make a shot that is like a small shot, like a medium scale and then suddenly I can make the entire wide shots and we are already in a scenario that we will never afford it, but thanks to these tools that -by now is of course in Photoshop, it's gonna be soon in Premiere also- you can really like step up with your productions.

[...]

I used to make more... most of my music using exterior scenarios, because they will be kind of for free.

[...]

*I saw this one White House – No Mistakes, I really liked it. Was it like... I was wondering about the pixelation of everything if there was like a specific thought or meaning behind it?*  
(Interviewer)

Of course, of course. That will... first it's a combination of different things like the fact that he lives in the computer world and is mainly the pixel is the king. Then I remember (...?) this film about this character that wakes up and is out of focus. So it was another reference to the character that will be out of focus that will be pixelated. And also being pixelated,

helps out to clean the fact that I did chromakey [greenscreen] at home. So it's a combination of different ideas and limitations that made me come to this concept. (Vasco) (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)



**Figure 4.5** White Haus' "No Mistakes" (2013). The main character of the MV is pixelated as a result of convenience, inspiration and symbolism. (Mendes, 2013)

A smaller budget has enabled Vasco also to rely more on the experimental nature of MVs, in a sense that it demands less pressure to make it perfect, as is often the case for commercials.

I manage what I did for music videos, because it let me this kind of freedom to experiment. Less responsibility, less involved money, because commercials if you do like some mistake you pay high price basically. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

The quantity of the budget has inevitably lead to the inability to carry out the work that the creative artists want to do. In Vasco's case, he has had to let go of the ideas the music artist might bring forward themselves.

That can reflect then on communication, on expectations of directors, how they want things to look which might lead into frustration of not being able to achieve the grand vision of things, because we only have this much. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Maybe I use a little bit of the those ideas, [...] also because the budgets were not ever great. [...] It was different, was like adaptation from both parts and see what is realistic in a way of... they come with references that can cost like, I don't know, many thousands of euros

and then we have to say like ‘okay, let's do this, but let's adapt to the... our reality of production’. That's adaptation from both sides.

Then sometimes, I had the perfect story for this, but the band didn't have the budget. Sometimes you'll make it and sometimes I would be just... [...] Sometimes it was very hard, some music videos were left behind, some great ideas. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Fabio expresses his hope for changes in the music industry in respect to financial management. He argues that the state of the music industry is a self-perpetuating cycle: even though visual artists are given small budgets, they refuse to compromise on the quality of their own creative output, which the industry, in turn, recognises and exploits.

Definitely the industry should be a little bit more giving, there should be a lot more money being invested in the marketing of artists [...] and they should be allocating it then wisely. [...] Or if they are happy with just having a video of an artist against a white drop, singing the song then that's what they would get for 2K and that's that, but no one wants to do that. So we keep kind of feeding into the malfunction of this industry. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

#### **4.5.7.2 Time**

Visual artists in MV productions also have to deal with tight deadlines frequently which, ultimately, might mean that certain aspects of the MV production process have to get cut off. For example, Fabio has, at times, been unable to perform his job on the colour grading simply because of the time restraint.

Sometimes [...] if it's too fast then you get cut off the... that process as well. It has happened before. (F. Mota, personal communication, May 17, 2024)

Vasco often experiences that he has to make an MV quickly within a set time frame and he will have to make swift decisions on the spot. Vasco mentions how an insufficient salary as an MV director leads to insufficient time to work on his MV, because he had to take on more jobs to make ends meet. One of the ways in which Vasco used to get around the time constraint, was by implementing looping sequences in the edit.

*So you were saying that you... that the schedules were tight... (Interviewer)*

I mean, sometimes, yes. [...] Mostly also because of the budgets. Budget were not so good, so I had to, of course, combine with other works. I could not be just making music videos for living. (Vasco)

[...]

‘Okay, we have three hours, let's make a music video in three hours.’ I have many cases that we have to do like improvise the music video really fast.

[...]

The first one's videos are based on a lot of looping. [...] So a lot of looping and well this kind of rhythm that is... also saves you time, in terms of, you don't need that many shots if you like loop something. (V. Mendes, personal communication, June 12, 2024)

Rita points out an instance where there was not enough time for her to coordinate with the creative team behind the MV to make her artwork and the MV visually cohesive.

I think if you have the ability of thinking it all as a whole. I think that would be preferable, but it wasn't the case. [...] We couldn't afford like the time to put everything together and think it through like that. (R. Goulão, personal communication, March 1, 2024)

Conclusively, the decisions of the artists are mostly done spontaneously, when desired circumstances are out of their control or the moment of creation gives them insights on the spot, or as a thought-out plan, because there is a need to make everything in the MV production run smoothly and to get a visually cohesive creative output. Occasionally, decisions are made randomly as the artist does not know why he has chosen for it. Several approaches are identified to be of significance to the creative process, which are focused on the concept, narrative, audiovisual connections and location. Whatever approach is chosen to be utilised depends per MV and per preference of the artist in question.

The way that the creative process takes shape is reliant on many factors of which the biggest ones are the quality of the song, the need to tailor to the audience and limitations imposed by the music industry. A good song, according to the visual artists, in terms of lyrics and sound, is essential for a productive morale and to inspire them in their process. Meanwhile, they usually, have to keep in mind that their creative output is meant as promotion for the music artist that is viewed by the public. MVs are a rapid medium in terms of consumption and duration and are originally made to market the music artist. This attracts an audience with a demand to be constantly visually stimulated. Therefore, the visual artists sometimes struggle to balance satisfying the ever-growing insatiable need of the public with their own visions for the MV or artwork. Lastly, the limitations the artists face when creating their projects is reportedly the greatest influencer on their creative process. They have to start thinking from what is possible to achieve within the boundaries that they are given which are related to the allotted budget and time. It has been a persistent issue that there is a lack of money given to produce an MV as well as to pay the workers. This has culminated into the fact that frequently artists supplement the productions with their own resources, be that money or equipment. One speculated reason for a lack of financial support from the music industry is that the music artists, nowadays, do not benefit promotionally from an MV that much. However, it is noted that music

industries in specific countries such as the US and specific genres such as pop music are more lucrative. This is certainly not the case for the non-pop music scene in Portugal. Furthermore, tight deadlines are a common obstacle in creative industries which results in not always having the room to fulfil each task in the pipeline to its fullest potential. On the flipside of said limitations, lies the fact that it fosters an environment that stimulates creativity which has been corroborated by artists such as Aubrey Woodiwiss (Vernallis, 2023) and Nina Ljeti (*On Finding Inspiration in Limitations*, 2024). Fuelled by the ambition for their own craft, the artists are determined to work their way around the limitations and still make the most of any MV.

## 4.6 Concept Map and Process Model

The interrelations between the themes and subthemes are demonstrated in a concept map in figure 4.6. According to the thematic analysis of the interviews, the practice of producing an MV production through the eyes of a visual artist can be described as the following. The process hinges on the creative method behind it and how their decision-making takes form within this context. The decisions can be categorised as spontaneous, thought-out plans, or in a lesser degree as random, which influences the direction and outcome of the creative work. Both the creative process and decision-making are highly dependent on the internal factor of who these artists are as people. Their personal identity, within the framework of their career in MVs, is a product of their background which in turn provides their personal catalogue of inspirations. Personal development is fuelled by their goals when making MVs which are defined by skill improvement, the worth of MVs as experimentation and an artform, self-improvement in favour of themselves and their crew, and career opportunities. Ultimately, the artistic style that visual artists develop is a result of their growth, inspirations and experiences.

External factors greatly determine the way a creative process takes shape as well. The necessity to design MVs for an audience is present in the minds of the artists, because of its nature in marketing. Furthermore, the quality of the song plays a role in their motivations and flow of creativity. The collaboration process is also a significant part of the creative journey, influenced by the preferred work style and involving the exchange of ideas that can lead to challenges in terms of dealing with opposing visions for the song. Limitations that are mostly imposed by the music industry itself, has become a major starting point from where ideation for an MV commences. The biggest concern for the artists is the sparse budget with which they have to realise the MV and this gets occasionally accompanied by tight deadlines. The final output is manifested through various approaches that are focused on using a location, a single concept or a distinguished narrative. Lastly, a significant aspect taken into account in creating MVs are the audiovisual connections where editing, cinematography, and colours are crucial elements used to visually convey the musical features and the lyrical narratives. The overall MV production process is thus an interplay of various internal and external factors that are fostered by the complex dynamic in which MV directors and visual artists operate to bring their visual narratives to life.

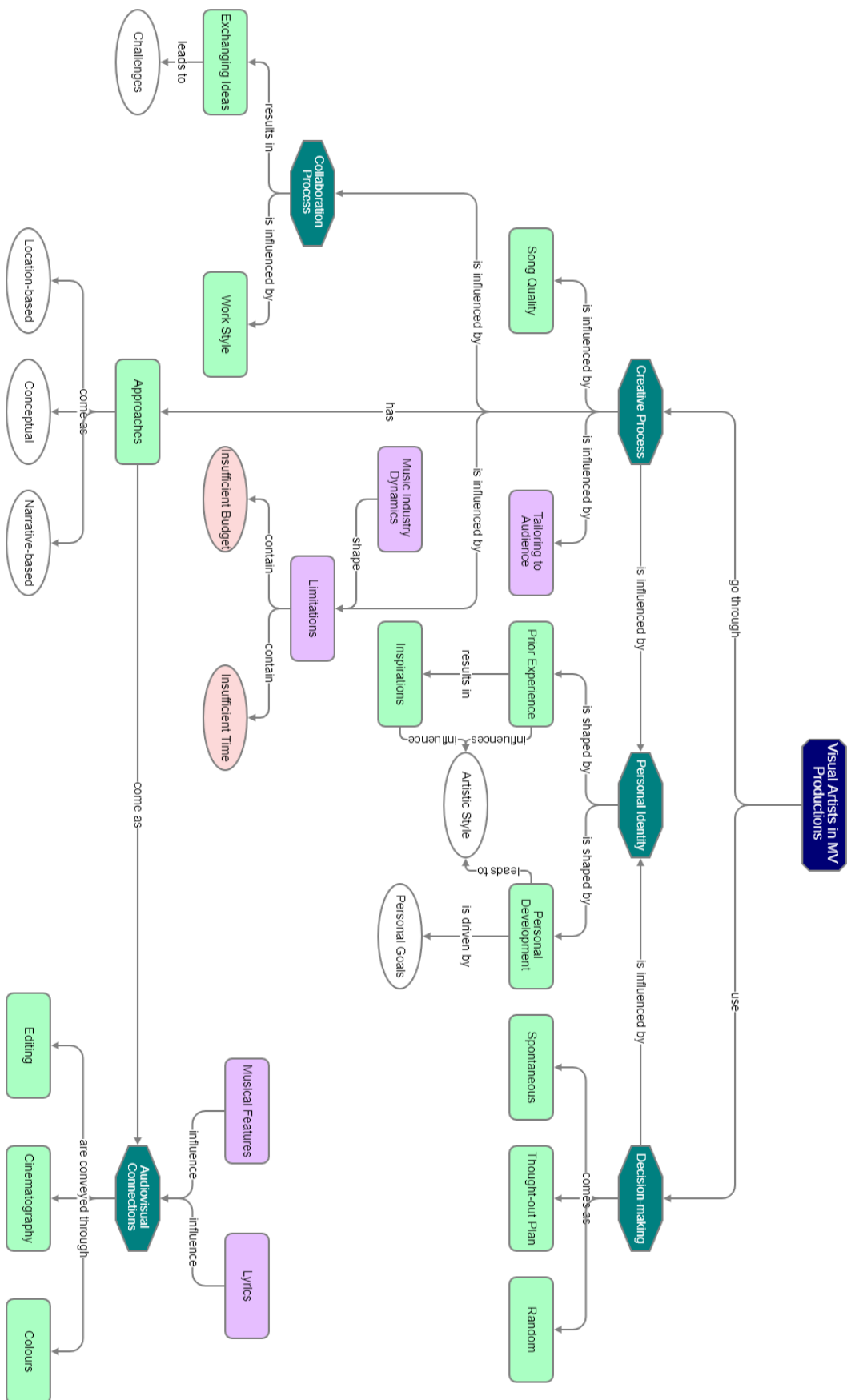


**Figure 4.6** Concept map visualising key themes and showing the relationships between objective (purple and red) and subjective (green and white) influences of the creative process in music video productions.

Following the concept map, a process model, see figure 4.7, is fabricated to make the findings of the thematic analysis more transferable and outline step-by-step the creative process involved in music video productions. It starts of with the input stage that is driven by the creator's personalities and external factors such as the limitations and demands of the audience. Furthermore, the quality of the song can determine whether the lyrics of the song are taken as a starting point for making audiovisual connections. Subsequently, the processing stage involves decision-making that is a process of reiteration together with the external influences and the collaboration with other parties. The choice for approach to the MV is part of the processing stage as well, that can lead to a focus on creating audiovisual connections for the MV. This results in an MV in the output stage by manipulating the editing, cinematography and colours based on audiovisual connections or the other possible approaches.

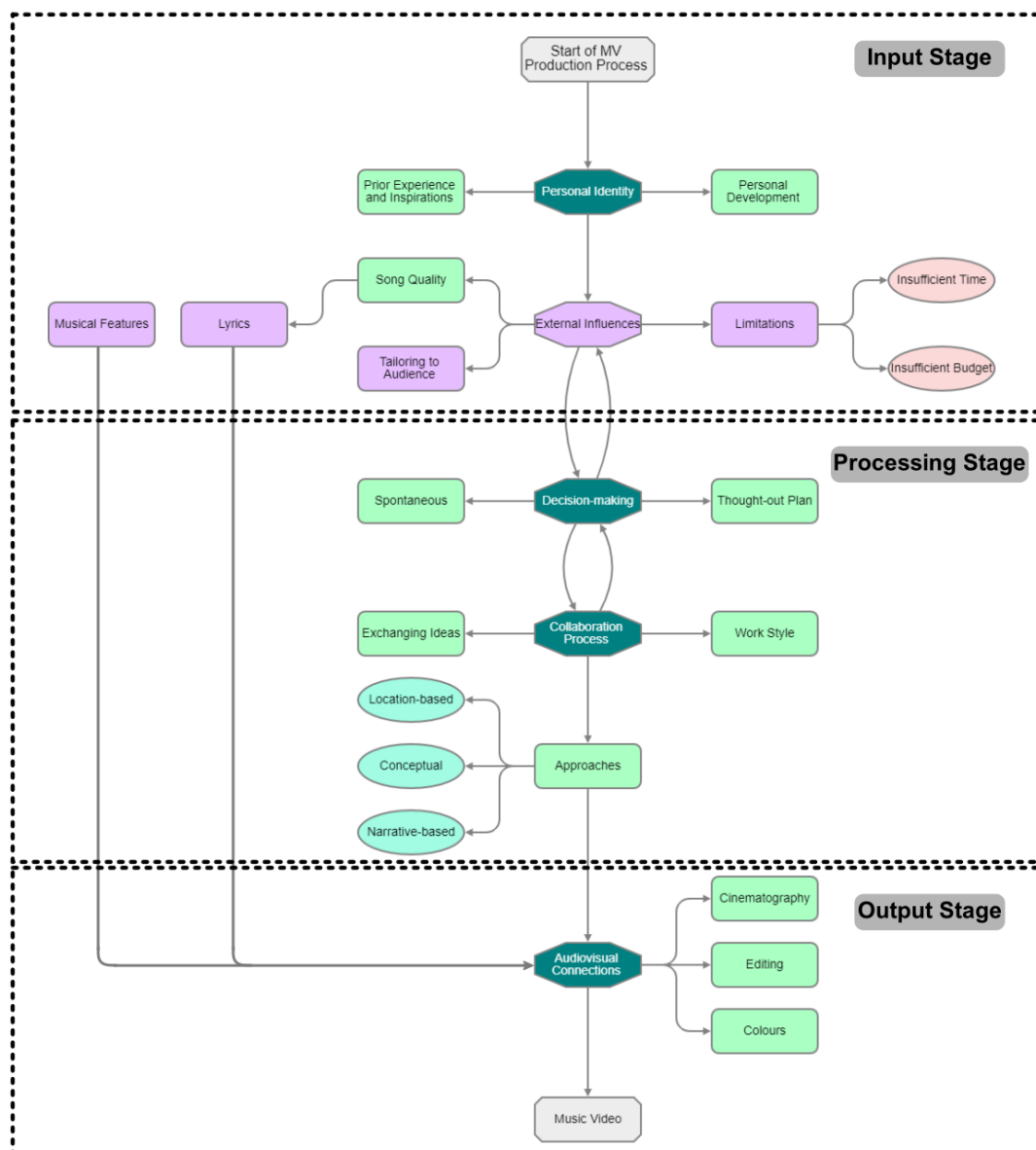


**Figure 4.7** Process model visualising the creative process of music video productions from the input to the output stage and detailing significant objective (purple and red) and subjective (green and blue) factors.

## 4.7 Comparative Analysis

This comparative analysis utilises a thematic analysis framework in order to identify significant themes from the perspectives of the global directors and contribute to the research objectives of understanding their experiences and creative processes. This method was chosen to facilitate a common reference point to compare with the thematic analysis of the interviews. The emerging themes are then able to be compared on a basis of different criteria, namely frequency, common grounds, exclusivity and contextual difference. This way a contextual distinction can be made based on geography, where music video productions of Porto are compared to productions worldwide.

The content analysis of ‘Director ID’s’ episodes feature interviews with global MV directors Nick Roney (Canal180, 2024a), Sean Pecknold (Canal180, 2024b), Kasper Hæggstrøm (Canal180, 2023a), Maxim Kelly (Canal180, 2023b), Adam Willis (Canal180, 2023c), Jamie Whitby (Canal180, 2023d), Pennacky (Canal180, 2023e), Sabrina Nichols (Canal180, 2023f), Jonny Look (Canal180, 2023g) and Brook Linder (Canal180, 2019), that took place in 2024, 2023 and 2019. The experiences of MV directors cannot be directly related to that of other professions in the field like a DOP or a graphic designer. It merely serves the purpose to triangulate the findings and identify patterns that are present in geographical contexts of the music video industry, regardless of which function the person in question occupies.

Through an interview with Anonymous, the idea and methodology behind the show has been uncovered further. The Portugal-based broadcasting channel is focused on alternative music, music videos and their artists, because they believe that creativity flows more richly in this part of the music industry, as opposed to the pop music scene. Anonymous said that this series exists to inspire a new generation of creators whilst showing what goes on artistically behind the scenes of an MV. One of the most important outcomes of the series for him is that the consistent artistic styles of MV directors become evident. The series functions by approaching MV directors worldwide, whom are chosen according to a set of criteria. Namely, the directors need at least five to six MVs that the editorial team finds interesting, visually strong or contains a distinguishable narrative. Although, an MV that relies solely on dashing visuals without any meaning behind it, will not suffice for this series. After having chosen the directors to approach, Canal180 sends them an email containing tailor-made interview questions and asking the directors to take cinematographic control over their own episode. One of the questions that almost always gets asked is how the directors take an idea and turn it into something visual and metaphorical, says Anonymous.

The personal identity of the directors in terms of what they like, what their inspirations are and what they have experienced throughout their careers, in addition to a conceptual and narrative approach to MVs take the overtone in Director ID. Whilst the thematic analysis of the conducted interviews demonstrate that limitations of the music industry, a conceptual and location-based approach to the creative process, the collaboration process, their inspirations, and audiovisual connections in terms of colour are the most frequented themes. The topics that these two parties consider equally significant are their own personal developments artistically and personally during their music video careers, the desire to work more often with the same musicians, and their inspirations for MVs.

However, upon the reason for the frequency of a specific theme can only be speculated, since it is either a result of what the interviewees deem important or of the manner in which the interview questions are formulated and guide the interviewees' thought process. Through the courtesy of Anonymous, I was able to attain the interview guide sent to Nick Roney for his episode, for which Anonymous emphasised that each interview guide is nothing alike. Nevertheless, by comparing his interview guide to the three that I used, I noticed that Anonymous asks targeted questions on the basis of the director's oeuvre which can indirectly reflect a greater extent of their career. Whereas, this study's interview guides focused on my research questions that encompass their whole careers and occasionally an MV from their oeuvre was mentioned to uncover their approach to it. Furthermore, his questions for Nick Roney are largely dedicated to his inspirations, conceptualisations of MVs, experiences during the production phase and collaborative efforts. On the other hand, my interview guides concentrate on the approaches to an MV or artwork, the audiovisual connections between the song and the visuals, and the collaboration process. Admittedly, I used a semi-structured interview model allowing the interviewees the space to veer off-topic into themes that they think are worthwhile. I cannot determine how much freedom the MV directors experience when receiving an open-ended questionnaire through an email. Furthermore, the interviews of 'Director ID' are significantly shorter than the ones that I have conducted, therefore, it is harder to estimate the weight of each individual mention of a specific theme.

Besides the frequency, the themes that get mentioned by the directors of 'Director ID' overlap completely with those of the thematic analysis, with the exception of using humour that is fundamental to four out of the ten MV directors. Humour is used by these directors as a basis for a narrative or conceptual approach to an MV. Themes that are brought up by Portuguese artists and not by the global MV directors include using cinematography in relation to the song's qualities, how their preferred work style affects the collaboration with others, and random decision-making. There is one contextual difference present in the referral to a theme between the global directors and the Portuguese visual artists. Namely, the sources where they draw inspiration from is dependent on the artists' cultural background. It can vary significantly what type of sources serve as inspiration and how much they rely on it. The cultural background of each artist plays a role in shaping the type of sources they draw inspiration from, which influences both the thematic and stylistic choices in their music video productions. For instance, directors from different regions have exposure to distinct forms of media, art, and storytelling traditions that are prevalent in their cultural environment, such as cinema, literature and visual arts. These culturally rooted influences directly affect how they conceptualize the imagery and narrative in their work. Moreover, the work of the global directors is known by and often intended for a global audience with different cultural backgrounds. Meaning that they may prioritise inspirations from popular culture and current trends as opposed to the Portuguese visual artists who do not necessarily have to appeal to global audiences.

# 5. Conclusion

## 5.1 Key Findings

The objective of this study has been to tap into subjective experiences of artists who produce MVs with a focus on the audiovisual aspect of this media. By looking through the eyes of these creators, the study aimed to uncover what meaning can be tied into audiovisual communication within MVs and how these ideas come to the surface. This led to the first research question: How do the creative individuals behind the production of music videos select and interpret audiovisual elements? Furthermore, the study asked what contextual factors, either internal or external, interact with the individual experience of an MV production, resulting in the second and third research questions: What factors drive their creative decision-making process? How do these creative individuals collaborate with other key contributors throughout the music video production process?

The results indicate that there is an interrelated web of factors that contribute to the general experience of creating an MV from a visual point of view, as is depicted in figure 5.1 in a condensed version of the concept map. The manner in which creatives select audiovisual elements for their MVs is reliant on a number of factors within this web. First of all, it depends on the approach the visual artist will focus on, something that varies on a case-to-case basis. If the song that they are working with is of good quality to them, they can immediately get inspired by the lyrics and focus on making connections between them and the visuals of the MV through amplification. Besides offering a starting point for the imagery, the lyrics have also inspired the usage of colours. On the other hand, the chosen colours are a result of the feeling they get from the song. Furthermore, attention is frequently paid to the sonic qualities of a song either consciously or subconsciously. The rhythm, tempo and instrumentals inform the artists on how to structure the edit in terms of where to place the cuts and its general velocity, because they want this interplay to feel appropriate to them. In addition, instrumentals are often something that take the foreground in music and visual artist take this opportunity to highlight them either in the edit or through cinematography. Pitch and timbral qualities are more often factors that subconsciously influence visuals. The genre of a song is usually tied to a certain aesthetic, however the artists do not feel the need to adhere to this convention all the time. How the visual techniques and features of the song are understood by the artist is undoubtedly based on each individual's own identity and the context of each distinct MV.

The most common modes of decision-making in the creative process are either spontaneous or through a preconceived plan. Thought-out plans particularly arise when great significance is given to the overarching visual coherency. Occasionally, decisions are made without any deliberation behind it, however it is uncommon. Once again, the preferred way of making decisions will differ per person and even per moment. Internal factors play a big role in making decisions during an MV production. Their personal goals guide them in how they want to evolve personality- and career-wise. The creatives state that MVs are frequently a starting point in their career and the ideal place to experiment on their visual style and work ethic. There is always a desire to be original present that drives them towards seeking out projects that are in line with their values. Similarly, they strive for pleasurable experiences when making MVs and keep this in mind when choosing projects and collaborators, if it is in their hands. Often they have performed various disciplines within the field of media that can supplement their creative process by offering diverse perspectives. Ultimately, all that they have experienced throughout their lives becomes a grand source of inspiration to draw from. However, a major factor influencing the decisions in the creative process are limitations from external sources. The music industry is nowadays infamously known for poor budgets and tight schedules. This causes the creative artists to always take into account what is possible within the set boundaries. However, creatives have grown accustomed to this environment and even thrive in it creatively. This does not take away from the fact that there exists a substantial sentiment of dissatisfaction regarding the topic. Especially, in Portugal the environment is not financially sustainable for its artists which regularly drive them away from pursuing a career in MVs. Another universal factor important to media designed for marketing purposes, is the public. Artists sometimes fall victim to the needs of the audience who demand continuous and rapid visual stimulation, however it does not take the overhand in the creative process. On the flipside, there are artists who specifically enjoy to attend to the audience and present something visually interesting. In the end, the artists decide what their focus will be in the production process, around which the other aspects are based. This often ends up being a mix of numerous approaches and will differ per individual. Common focal points include the location, a concept, visual aesthetics and the lyrics of a song.

Lastly, the cooperative environment in an MV production is a consequential factor in the creative process of the artists and guides their decisions, now and then involuntarily. Most of the times, creatives have to depend on each other to fulfil their respective tasks with expertise. This can lead to productive instances where collaborating brings forth stimulating circumstances for ideas and efficiency, allowing them to achieve their visions for an MV. However, during the exchanging of ideas, it becomes clear whether or not their vision for the MV matches that of the music artist or of the other collaborators in the crew. Discussing with the music artist has the potential to give the most friction, because they and the visual artists come from different sides of the medium, i.e. aural and visual. Additionally, the visual artists are working to create something for the musician's self-expression, which makes it a more delicate matter to impose ideas upon and sometimes leads to the visual artists letting go of their own ideas. On the other hand, if they feel like their ideas are for the good of the music artist's image, they might opt to hold onto it and persuade them. For some, clear communication and an amicable atmosphere is key for a fruitful collaboration between the involved parties. Sometimes, creatives prefer to work by themselves in order to maintain full control over the

execution of different tasks along the MV production pipeline. This dynamic, specifically, exists between the direction and the editing, because directors know the effort and intention behind each shot they have made. It is something that they will not always want to entrust to another person. Admittedly, these are factors that depend on the character of the person in question. Even though the importance of collaboration amongst creatives is passionately outspoken, the willingness thereto will differ per person.

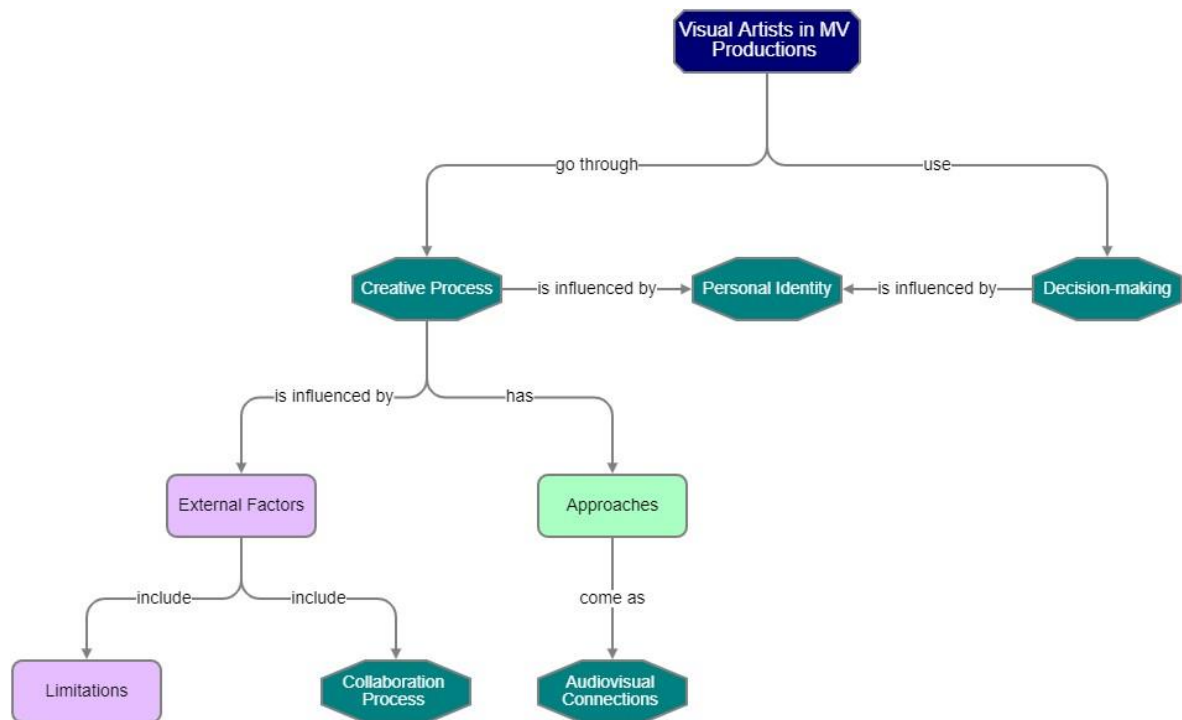


**Figure 5.1** Simplified concept map visualising key themes and showing the relationships between objective (purple and red) and subjective (green) influences of the creative process in music video productions.

Overall, the methodology of this research has proven to be efficient in achieving the aims of the research which were to uncover the experiences and thought processes of artists in MV productions. Through a phenomenological approach, this study demonstrates a suitable model for interviewing industry professionals and structurally analysing their responses in order to contribute academic knowledge to the field of music videos and its audiovisual characteristics. This study acknowledges its shortcomings in definitive conclusions, however its main purpose and achievement is found in laying the groundwork for future research on this topic, whilst providing a valuable concept map (figure 4.6) and process model (figure 4.7) for researchers and artists to turn to.

The concept map has practical applications for creators of MVs by offering insights into the key subjective, objective, internal and external factors that influence their creative process. It allows them to distinguish between these factors and evaluate how much emphasis should be placed on each component, for example aesthetic choices versus tailoring to the audience. In the collaboration process the map can be taken as a communication tool for the crew to have all the collaborators aligned on the approach to an MV. In media education the concept map offers a starting perspective for explaining the intricacies of the creative process of MV productions. Furthermore, academics

can refer to the concept map as a framework for analysing case studies on creative processes in this field and assess the impact of each individual factor.

The process model serves as a roadmap for structuring the production process of a music video from start to finish for its creators. Initially, they can create for themselves an overview of the factors significant to the input stage. During the processing stage, the workflow can be better understood and carried out as an iterative process between external influences, collaboration and decision-making. Moreover, for students starting out in film studies, the process model can guide them in constructing their first MVs. The input stage requires the students to identify each relevant factor before starting the production. Subsequently, the processing stage guides them in deciding on an overall approach to the production. Finally, the output stage makes them aware of the significance of audiovisual connections in music videos. Researchers can refer to the process model to systematically investigate the weight of each stage in the production and how changes in one stage affect the final outcome.

## **5.2 Limitations to the Study**

This study is restrained mainly by the sample group regarding the quantity and the uniformity amongst participants. Understandably, the quantity of interviewees is insufficient to draw any definitive conclusions from and they are more taken on an individual basis. Nevertheless, the process model heightens the degree of transferability to a wider group of people which the interviewees represent, the directors and DOPs in MV productions and graphic designers in music from Portugal, but there is no certainty to what extent this is applicable. Each interviewee occupies a different position relating to music videos of which Rita Goulão is the furthest removed. As a graphic designer for music album cover art, she shares similar experiences when it comes to translating the sonic medium into a visual one and dealing with the demands of the music artist. However, her experiences do not directly relate to the aim of the study which inquires specifically about the decision-making and collaboration within an MV context. Her insights into audiovisual communication are, nonetheless, vital for the understanding of this theme and offer nuance to the statements of Vasco and Fabio. Similarly, Anonymous does not witness MVs productions first-hand, but rather takes a distant perspective as a facilitator of discourse surrounding MV production processes. This has proven helpful to obtain access to a larger amount of testimonies from MV directors through ‘Director ID’ which in turn has opened the stage for a contextual comparison. However, his statements on subjective experiences in MV productions are a secondary source and cannot be held to the same level of significance as those of Vasco and Fabio.

As has been noted in the discussion, the regularity of themes present in ‘Director ID’ versus those in the qualitative interviews can be a result of the context of the interview. The two interviews are conducted in dissimilar manners which may guide the answers of the interviewees more into a certain direction. Furthermore, the nuance of some of the participant’s responses could have been overlooked in favour of finding generalised themes. This potential subjectivity challenges the replicability of the study. For now, we will have to take the results and conclusions as they are until further research on this topic has been done.

### **5.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research on the creative processes and decision-making in MV productions should build upon the findings of this study while addressing its limitations. Expanding the sample size will play a pivotal role to get a higher degree of transferability and infer more educated conclusions. Additionally, further research can opt to either focus on obtaining a uniform sample group to fully grasp the experiences of a specific function in MV productions, or use a balanced representation of functions, such as editors, producers and art directors, within MV productions to comprehend the dynamics of collaboration and audiovisual approaches to a greater extent. Supplementing the interviews with field work in MV productions from either Portugal or multiple locations, will present more nuanced results into how every aspect ultimately affects the outcome of the MV. Moreover, a comparative analysis between established artists and those at the beginning of their careers, or between independent productions and those funded by big record labels, could reveal valuable insights into how constraints such as budget, time, and market demands shape creative processes across various contexts. Lastly, a focus for future research can be on the relationship between the intent of artists to convey the intended messages of the song versus their own artistic expression. This topic was slightly touched upon in the study, however it was insufficiently addressed for further exploration.

## 6. Reference List

*André Tentugal*. (n.d.). Vimeo. Retrieved 9 September 2024, from

<https://vimeo.com/andretentugal>

Anonymous. (2024, May 28). [Personal Communication].

Aschauer, H. E. (Director). (2024, February 23). *NAPAEA - Odyssey DC* [Video recording].

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_SL4jDAobw4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_SL4jDAobw4)

Barbatsis, K. L. S., Sandra Moriarty, Keith Kenney, Gretchen (Ed.). (2004). *Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media*. Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410611581>

Boltz, M. G., Ebendorf, B., & Field, B. (2009). Audiovisual Interactions: The Impact of Visual Information on Music Perception and Memory. *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 27(1), 43–59. <https://doi.org/10.1525/mp.2009.27.1.43>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Brunotts, K. (2023, July 4). *What is a Downbeat in Music & How to Use It?* [Blog].

<https://emastered.com/blog/downbeats-in-music>

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.

[https://www.academia.edu/97136619/Alan\\_Bryman\\_Social\\_Research\\_Methods\\_4th\\_Edition\\_Oxford\\_University\\_Press\\_2012\\_](https://www.academia.edu/97136619/Alan_Bryman_Social_Research_Methods_4th_Edition_Oxford_University_Press_2012_)

*Canal180*. (n.d.). Retrieved 9 September 2024, from <https://www.canal180.pt/>

- Canal180 (Producer). (2019, September 19). *Director ID Brook Linder* [Video recording].  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Imlcwy0-1EQ>
- Canal180 (Producer). (2023a, March 9). *Director ID | Kasper Haggstrøm* [Video recording].  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfC9XTsY-\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfC9XTsY-_E)
- Canal180 (Producer). (2023b, March 20). *Director ID | Maxim Kelly* [Video recording].  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1kynNdpOK8>
- Canal180 (Producer). (2023c, March 30). *Director ID | Adam Willis* [Video recording].  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FMKRvBVS5g>
- Canal180 (Producer). (2023d, April 6). *Director ID | Jamie Whitby* [Video recording].  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnF9Id\\_Csw8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnF9Id_Csw8)
- Canal180 (Producer). (2023e, April 13). *Director ID | Pennacky* [Video recording].  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-D1T26FQpJU>
- Canal180 (Producer). (2023f, April 20). *Director ID | Sabrina Nichols* [Video recording].  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiBY7t9fVuY>
- Canal180 (Producer). (2023g, December 7). *Director ID | Jonny Look* [Video recording].  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zlo3s3DTfzU>
- Canal180 (Producer). (2024a, March 28). *Nick Roney talks about his music videos (ALMOST D\*ES)—Director ID* [Video recording]. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U\\_CXba\\_kuY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U_CXba_kuY)
- Canal180 (Producer). (2024b, May 17). *Director ID — Sean Pecknold* [Video recording].  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AA6dsYCwszQ>
- Chion, M. (2019). *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Columbia University Press.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/chio18588>
- Clover, T. (Director). (2020, August 25). *Fenne Lily—Solipsism (Official Video)* [Video recording].  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCrhT7clK-U>
- Cohen, A. (2013). *Congruence-Association Model of music and multimedia: Origin and evolution* (pp. 17–47). <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199608157.003.0002>

- Cook, N. (1998). *Analysing Musical Multimedia*. Oxford University Press.
- Dasovich-Wilson, J. N., Thompson, M., & Saarikallio, S. (2022). Exploring Music Video Experiences and Their Influence on Music Perception. *Music & Science*, 5, 20592043221117651. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20592043221117651>
- Director ID. (n.d.). Retrieved 9 September 2024, from <https://www.canal180.pt/story/director-id/>
- Fábio Mota DOP. (n.d.). Fabio Mota Cinematographer. Retrieved 9 September 2024, from <http://www.fabiomota.com>
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (2017). *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203793206>
- Goldberg, M. E., Chattopadhyay, A., Gorn, G. J., & Rosenblatt, J. (1993). Music, music videos, and wear out. *Psychology & Marketing*, 10(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.4220100102>
- Goodwin, A. (1992). *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture* (NED-New edition). University of Minnesota Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.cttt473>
- Goulão, R. (2024, March 1). [Personal Communication].
- Hermes, D. J. (2023). *The perceptual structure of sound*. Springer.
- Hevner, K. (1937). The Affective Value of Pitch and Tempo in Music. *The American Journal of Psychology*, 49(4), 621–630. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1416385>
- Huang, A. T. (Director). (2019, April 24). *FKA twigs—Cellophane* [Video recording]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkLjqFpBh84>
- Hudson, O. (Director). (2023, June 28). *James Blake—Big Hammer (Official Video)* [Video recording]. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g\\_qWhdxiR7k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_qWhdxiR7k)
- Jirsa, T., & Korsgaard, M. (2019). *The Music Video in Transformation: Notes on a Hybrid Audiovisual Configuration*. [https://www.academia.edu/42202939/The\\_Music\\_Video\\_in\\_Transformation\\_Notes\\_on\\_a\\_Hybrid\\_Audiovisual\\_Configuration](https://www.academia.edu/42202939/The_Music_Video_in_Transformation_Notes_on_a_Hybrid_Audiovisual_Configuration)

- Juslin, P. N. (1997). Perceived Emotional Expression in Synthesized Performances of a Short Melody: Capturing the Listener's Judgment Policy. *Musicae Scientiae*, 1(2), 225–256.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/102986499700100205>
- Keazor, H., & Wübbena, T. (Eds.). (2010). *Rewind, Play, Fast Forward: The Past, Present and Future of the Music Video* (1st ed.). transcript Verlag. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv371brsb>
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy In The Flesh: The Embodied Mind And Its Challenge To Western Thought*. Basic Books.
- Lin, C., Yeh, M., & Shams, L. (2022). Subliminal audio-visual temporal congruency in music videos enhances perceptual pleasure. *Neuroscience Letters*, 779, 136623.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neulet.2022.136623>
- Mehring, J. (n.d.). *Eyecandy—Visual Technique Library*. Eyecandy. Retrieved 9 September 2024, from <https://eyecannndy.com/>
- Mendes, V. (Director). (2013, December 18). *WHITE HAUS - NO MISTAKES* [Video recording].  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjkcUt2yoyU>
- Mendes, V. (Director). (2017, June 23). *LINCE - Puzzles* [Video recording].  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81A-QJHpTtc>
- Mendes, V. (Director). (2020, March 3). *Clã—Sinais* [Video recording].  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDFe4mVR2cA>
- Mendes, V. (2024, June 12). [Personal Communication].
- Middleton, R. (with Internet Archive). (1990). *Studying popular music*. Milton Keynes [England] ; Philadelphia : Open University Press.  
<http://archive.org/details/studyingpopularm0000midd>
- Min. (n.d.). Retrieved 9 September 2024, from <https://minwins.com/>
- MONSTER JINX. (n.d.). MONSTER JINX. Retrieved 9 September 2024, from <http://www.monsterjinx.com>
- Mota, F. (2024, May 17). [Personal Communication].

- Nava, E. (Director). (2016, June 17). *Calvin Harris, Rihanna—This Is What You Came For (Official Video)* [Video recording]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOkQ4T5WO9E>
- On finding inspiration in limitations (A. Gordon, Interviewer). (2024, April 18). [Interview]. <https://thecreativeindependent.com/people/filmmaker-and-musician-nina-ljeti-on-finding-inspiration-in-limitations/>
- On making the things you'd want to see (H. Ziegler, Interviewer). (2021, July 13). [Interview]. <https://thecreativeindependent.com/people/music-video-director-sophie-muller-on-making-the-things-you-d-want-to-see/>
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*, 2nd ed (p. 532). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pimentel, T. (Director). (2024, April 19). *Anda Pacheco—Barco Vazio* [Video recording]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ehrg5JEeuYw>
- Read, C. (Director). (2020, March 9). *Mild Minds—WALLS (feat. Boats) [Official Music Video]* [Video recording]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcmSD0k8NTs>
- Rhetorical Functions in Academic Writing: Providing support*. (n.d.). Retrieved 9 September 2024, from <https://www.uefap.com/writing/function/int.htm>
- Rogers, H., Perrott, L., & Vernallis, C. (2019). *Transmedia Directors: Artistry, Industry and New Audiovisual Aesthetics*. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781501339295>
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed). SAGE.
- Scherer, K. R., & Oshinsky, J. S. (1977). Cue utilization in emotion attribution from auditory stimuli. *Motivation and Emotion*, 1(4), 331–346. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00992539>
- Sedeño-Valdellós, A. (2015). *The post-television music video: Fields of experimentation in the digital age*. 31, 752–771.
- Shaviro, S. (2017). *Digital Music Videos*. Rutgers University Press. <https://www.perlego.com/book/400594/digital-music-videos-pdf>

SHOTDECK: *Fully Searchable High-Res Movie Images*. (n.d.). Retrieved 9 September 2024, from <https://shotdeck.com>

Simeon, E. (1992). *PROGRAMMI NARRATIVI E STRATIFICAZIONI DEL SENSO NELLA MUSICA PER FILM. IL CASO DI ENTR'ACTE*. Università degli studi di Trento.

Sun, S.-W., & Lull, J. (1986). The Adolescent Audience for Music Videos and Why They Watch. *Journal of Communication*, 36(1), 115–125. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1986.tb03043.x>

Vasco Mendes. (n.d.). Retrieved 9 September 2024, from <https://vascomendes.com/>

Vernallis, C. (2004). *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context*. Columbia University Press.

Vernallis, C. (2013). *Unruly media: YouTube, music video, and the new digital cinema*. Oxford Univ. Press.

Vernallis, C. (2023). *The Media Swirl: Politics, Audiovisuality, and Aesthetics*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv37c06v9>

Vines, B. W., Krumhansl, C. L., Wanderley, M. M., & Levitin, D. J. (2006). Cross-modal interactions in the perception of musical performance. *Cognition*, 101(1), 80–113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2005.09.003>

Welcome to *The Creative Independent*. (n.d.). Retrieved 19 July 2024, from <https://thecreativeindependent.com/welcome/>

Zettl, H. (2008). *Sight, Sound, Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics*. Thomson/Wadsworth.