

Video Mods

Music videos and video games!? Must be 2003.

- Let me take you back to sweet 2003:
 - Evanescence releases the absolutely banger Bring Me Back to Life
 - Beyonce releases her debut solo record
 - In da Club by 50 Cent
 - It's Five O'Clock Somewhere by Jimmy Buffett and Alan Jackson
 - The LOTR trilogy is being wrapped up, How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days, Holes, Bruce Almighty, The Lizzie McGuire Movie
 - Arnold Schwarzenegger is elected governor of California
 - The Do Not Call List is invented
 - The US invades Iraq
 - Saddam Hussein is captured
 - Freedom Fries

- The MTV landscape at the time
 - Some of the popular shows at the time included Room Raiders, The Osbournes, Punk'd, Viva La Bam & TRL had not yet been cancelled a mere 12 days after Obama had been elected in 2008
 - There were still music videos at the time, but we're all seeing a trend here right?
 - What if I told you there was that there was a little show that mixed both Dave's favorite thing and his least favorite thing together?

Video Mods

- In December 2003 a show called Video Mods aired its pilot episode. The synopsis of this show was simple: turn video game characters into musicians.
- This was purely just music videos that were rendered in the video game engines at the time.



-This was what we call branded entertainment commissioned by the video game company Electronic Arts (EA).

-The pilot episode contained characters from EA's games at the time:

- SSX 3 - The Black Eyed Peas "Let's Get It Started"
- The Sims 2 - Fountains of Wayne "Stacy's Mom"
- Need for Speed: Most Wanted - TI "Do Ya Thing"

-The pilot episode airs in late 2003 and then radio silence... until 2004! MTV2's head of programming Alex Colette commissions four new episodes to be aired in the Fall

-The episodes were popular enough that more episodes were animated by IBC Digital & Electroshock and released in 2005.

- Now's a great stopping point for any questions or maybe we can do some type of guessing game on what bands/musicians had their music used for this show?

Game(s)	Band/Artist	Song
<i>NBA Street V3</i>	Beastie Boys	"Oh Word?"
<i>Medal of Honor: European Assault</i>	Yellowcard	"Only One"
<i>SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle for Bikini Bottom</i> ^[note 1]	Blink-182	"All the Small Things"
<i>Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith</i>	Franz Ferdinand	"Take Me Out"
<i>Death, Jr.</i>	My Chemical Romance	"I'm Not Okay (I Promise)"
<i>Destroy All Humans!</i>	Sum 41	"Pieces"
<i>Darkwatch</i>	Good Charlotte	"Predictable"
<i>Dungeon Lords</i>	Hoobastank	"The Reason"
<i>Fight Night Round 2</i>	Ying Yang Twins	"What's Happnin'"
<i>Fight Club</i>	Lil Jon and the East Side Boyz	"Get Low"
<i>Half-Life 2</i>	Breaking Benjamin	"So Cold"
<i>The Sims 2</i>	Fountains of Wayne	"Stacy's Mom"
<i>BloodRayne 2</i>	Evanescence	"Everybody's Fool"
<i>Outlaw Golf 2</i>	The Darkness	"I Believe in a Thing Called Love"
<i>Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude</i>	The Black Eyed Peas	"Shut Up"
<i>BloodRayne 2, Jade Empire, Tribes: Vengeance, and Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude</i>	The Vines	"Ride (The Vines song)"
<i>Tribes: Vengeance</i>	The Von Bondies	"C'mon C'mon (The Von Bondies song)"
<i>Dawn and Dusk</i>	Evanescence	"Bring Me to Life"
<i>Lineage II</i>	The Killers	"Mr. Brightside"

<i>Need for Speed: Most Wanted</i>	T.I.	"Do Ya Thing"
<i>BloodRayne 2, Jade Empire, Tribes: Vengeance, and Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude</i>	New Found Glory	"All Downhill from Here"
<i>Star Wars: Battlefront II</i>	Foo Fighters	"DOA"
<i>SSX 3</i>	Missy Elliott feat. Ludacris	"Gossip Folks"
<i>SSX 3, The Sims 2, Tribes: Vengeance, and The Urbz: Sims in the City</i>	The Black Eyed Peas	"Let's Get It Started"
<i>Jade Empire</i>	Christina Milian	"Dip It Low"
<i>Juiced</i>	Jimmy Eat World	"Pain"
<i>Silent Hill 4</i>	Taking Back Sunday	"This Photograph Is Proof (I Know You Know)"
<i>Indigo Prophecy</i>	Queens of the Stone Age	"Little Sister"
<i>Dance Dance Revolution Ultramix 3, Dance Dance Revolution Extreme 2, Karaoke Revolution Party</i>	Ciara featuring Missy Elliott	"1,2 Step"
<i>SSX 3, The Sims 2, Unreal Tournament 2003, Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness, Sonic Heroes, Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell, Tony Hawk's Underground 2, Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy, Crash Bandicoot, SpongeBob SquarePants, Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude, and others</i>	VG Unity	"Stand and Choose"
<i>SWAT 4</i>	The Used	"Take It Away"
<i>X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse</i>	Unwritten Law	"Save Me (Wake Up Call)"
<i>Sid Meier's Pirates!</i>	The All-American Rejects	"Dirty Little Secret"
<i>Marc Ecko's Getting Up: Contents Under Pressure</i>	Jane's Addiction	"Mountain Song"
<i>L.A. Rush</i>	Twista	"Hit the Floor"
<i>Everquest II</i>	Avenged Sevenfold	"Bat Country"
<i>The Sims 2: Nightlife</i>	Weezer	"Beverly Hills"
<i>Guitar Hero</i>	Sum 41	"Fat Lip"
<i>True Crime: New York City</i>	Fat Joe	"Get It Poppin'"

Production Notes specifically on the SpongeBob Blink-182 video

Well, that's quite a story. The video you have seen in terrible lo-Rez and of hazy fever dreams was created in less than 48 hours by a very small team. Video mods was a crazy schedule, we had about one month of total production time per episode and a small team. Most mods had about 2 weeks of time allotted to its production cycle and we had 4 mods per episode to generate. Some were made like a live action video ala "band live performance" and those were designed to take less time so more time could be spent on ones that had more cinematic flair. (Example of this was the Beastie Boys video where they performed and directed)

Sponge Bob was one of them we spent more time on. The crew was excited to do this but then the issues popped up. The THQ game had a very unusual game engine. Most of the environments and characters were not whole meshes. The data dump we got from THQ was messy and cryptic. Nothing was named by logical names but had an internal code that their game engine would know and assemble the characters with. Facial animation wasn't blend shape based but some sort of object replacement vertex system. So just getting the assets out of the game into something animatable in took more time than usual.

Mocap didn't work for these characters and it was decided early on it was going to be all Keyframe based. So time was spent keyframing lip-sync and Patrick and Sponge Bob playing Bikini Bottom style guitars and starfish shaped drums.

MTV's was contractually required to get approval from Stephen Hillenber (Sponge Bobs creator) That did not go well. Our almost 90% finished video was not approved. We were told that Stephen said "Sponge Bob does not Sing" and "Sponge Bob does not play guitar". We all were dumb founded, as the show and movies clearly this was not the case. "Goofy Goober" anyone? No time to fight or argue, MTV's instructions were abundantly clear. No singing, no instruments.

In the space of less than 48 hours, we redid the video recycling as much as we could from the first video. Removed the lip-sync and instruments and made it into a dance contest. Animators constructed a bunch of looping animations to cycle and fill out a crowd and made some dance cycles for the hero characters. We got the show delivered on time. (QOTSA's "Little Sister" video was also made in only 2 days as a late addition)

Why does true art have to be destroyed?

- After its 2005 run Video Mods sadly came to an end.
- MTV never cleared the music rights outside of their television airings. Because of this a majority of the episodes and their respective music videos are considered lost media.
- Video Mods has unfortunately joined other prominent lost television media such as early Doctor Who and the episode of Sesame Street where the Wicked Witch came to visit
- I've linked in this astute report a Youtube channel that has some of the original Video Mods videos
- Additionally, there is a small community that has continued to create these styles of music videos, but I warn you that the je ne sais quoi of the real thing is not quite there
- I want to leave you with some of my personal recommendations, which are of course linked, of which videos to begin with:
 - Sum 41 "Pieces" (Destroy All Humans)
 - This one really pulls at the heart strings.
 - Franz Ferdinand "Take Me Out" (Star Wars Episode 3)
 - Lineup: Anakin Skywalker on vocals, Obi-Wan Kenobi on bass, Mace Windu on guitar & Yoda on Drums
 - This one's so simple, but if you know the song then you know it's down tempo to start with and then when it picks up and gets dancey platforms come down to reveal backup dancers, the camera pulls back to show an audience of fist pumping clone troops, and BOOM pyrotechnics.

- Yellowcard “Only One” (Medal of Honor)
- This one’s such weird mash up of an early 00’s power ballad mixed in with the fascination with WWII at the same time.
- I think the whole theme they’re going for is for you to feel like the characters are singing some sort of soldier’s poem. It’s honestly brilliant.



Closing remarks

The idea to talk about Video Mods came to me when I saw a TikTok that aptly described a bit of my childhood using the text “POV: it’s 2005 and you’re watching MTV” over the aforementioned Franz Ferdinand Star Wars video.

What I didn’t expect while watching through every surviving Video Mod was the nostalgia of such a silly idea in the first place. I strongly recommend anyone who was getting into music, like me, in 2005 to go a watch these videos. Even if you didn’t know about this at the time there’s a bit of this that is so intrinsic with the era that it came out that I guarantee you’ll feel something.

And if you’re like me you’ll have a smile on your face the entire time.

References

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- TikTok Video
 - https://www.tiktok.com/@brodie.wankenobi/video/7132608077404310830?_r=1&t=8Ux2bEafziN&is_from_webapp=v1&item_id=7132608077404310830

LISTEN TO THE EPISODE:

[DFTA.SHOW/EPISODE/VIDEO-MODS](https://dfta.show/episode/video-mods)



**DON'T FEED
THE ARTISTS**