

Transmedia expansion in music video: study cases for visual albums in the current music industry¹

Expansión transmedia del video musical: casos de estudio de álbumes visuales en la industria musical actual

Expansão transmídia no videoclipe: estudos de caso de álbuns visuais na indústria musical atual

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ANA SEDEÑO-VALDELLOS²

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3897-2457>

The visual album represents a new communicative artifact originated with the logic of the transmedia context in its expansion of the music video clip format. Three case studies are analyzed, using multimodal analysis to know the meaning and contribution of visual materials, looking for elements of intertextuality and repetition of motifs and visual patterns for the realization of a storytelling. The conclusions point to three different paths in the construction of a self-expressive representation of the artists, thanks to a visualized performativity and materialized in a greater intertextuality and use of cultural appropriation.

KEYWORDS: Visual album; music industry; transmedia narrative; music video.

El álbum visual supone un nuevo artefacto comunicativo originado con la lógica del contexto transmedia en su expansión del formato videoclip musical. Se analizan tres casos de estudio, empleando el análisis multimodal para conocer el significado y aporte de los materiales visuales, buscando elementos de intertextualidad y recursividad de motivos y patrones visuales para la realización de un storytelling. Las conclusiones apuntan a tres caminos diversos en la construcción de una representación autoexpresiva de las artistas, gracias a una performatividad visualizada materializada en una mayor intertextualidad y uso de la apropiación cultural.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Álbum visual; industria musical; narrativa transmedia; video musical.

O álbum visual representa um novo artefato comunicativo originado na lógica do contexto transmídia em sua expansão do formato de videoclipe musical. São analisados três estudos de caso, utilizando análise multimodal para conhecer o significado e a contribuição dos materiais visuais, buscando elementos de intertextualidade e recursão de motivos e padrões visuais para a realização de uma narrativa. As conclusões apontam para três caminhos diferentes na construção de uma representação autoexpressiva dos artistas, graças a uma performatividade visualizada materializada numa maior intertextualidade e utilização da apropriação cultural.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Álbum visual; indústria da música; narrativa transmídia; vídeo musical.

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² Universidad de Málaga, Spain. valdellos@uma.es

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INTRODUCTION: MUSIC VIDEO AND CULTURAL CONTEXT AND TRANSMEDIA PROJECTS

The transformations of the contemporary audiovisual sphere (such as the increase in music consumption through social networks like YouTube or Instagram, with a more visual component) are taking place on the path of intermediality and transmediality, which complicates the description of a single materiality of cultural messages. Yet the fact that this process of acceleration on audiovisual hybridization is a new context, music video is already a model of this aesthetics since its inception in the 70s.

Music video was born as a dynamic art form in which the visual and the music are combined, reaching a unique effect that would be impossible without the interaction between them. It is a fascinating mix of iconic materials, creating unlimited possibilities for artistic expression, thanks to syncretism (Chion, 1993) and the aesthetic techniques of synchrony. Its centrality as a format is a key term for understanding the image/text concept as already outlined by Mitchell (1994) in his *Picture Theory*.

After the global crisis of the recording industry in the 90s, due to the digitalization of the musical support, popular music has had to rethink itself in order not to perish. From an intermedial perspective, music video offers many possibilities for musical identity management, in an increasingly complex music industry. It is a fact that the new business model of the phonographic industry –the transition from physical to digital model– is changing the relationship of producers and creators with content, it's redirecting attention to them and turning them into celebrities. Similarly, transmedia strategies dominate the production logic of audiovisual formats, with a growing channeling of consumption across platforms or *platformization* (Van Dijck et al., 2018).

First, with YouTube and now with TikTok, music video remains necessary for the multilateral and transmedia promotion of music: through these formats, users get involved in creating content in relation with the artist's visual universe and share it, making it viral and results exponential. This supposes a first form of expansion of music video in its transformation inside the logic of digital ecology (Jirsa & Korsgaard,

2019) and its post-television era (Sedeño-Valdellos et al., 2016). All these tools involve a set of business initiatives spread across all types of media or channels; they enable a comprehensive media presence and a multiplication of performances, incursions, and moments of access to the viewer's attention.

As an unexpected result, these changes have led to a trend towards greater autonomy for the musical artist, who had always complained of a secondary role in the industry. The return to individual song distribution and individual listening has also been driven by the expansion of individual listening platforms and devices. Therefore, songs or tracks have recovered the reign of success; they act like atoms that can be exported to audio or video formats.

In other words, the consumption of music has gone from the album to the single, and has changed to mobile devices such as tablets or smartphones. They have unified the ways that this song-content could be received and improved the visual component of the music, inevitably related to the song: In concerts, the user generated videos become mediations that extend the experience from the single event to the outside –family and friends–. The cellphone has also consolidated a platformization for the music industry. Deezer and Spotify soon invented their own mobile app and currently listening to music almost always means having an image or video on the screen in the meantime.

Consequently, artists tend to the creation of a public image of celebrity –with a special communicative and transmedia management– a complete cultural experience, that Goodwin already defined as star-text (1992), and Auslander (2019) and Arne Hansen (2019) as “musical personae”:

“I understand the musical persona to be a specific kind of social self-presentation, in Goffman's sense, in which musicians engage when appearing before their audiences in any medium. The constituent parts of a musical persona can be described using Goffman's vocabulary for the elements of self-presentation: setting, appearance, and manner. These elements appear in performances framed in three ways: as musical performances, as performances in and of a specific genre of music, and as events taking place within a particular socio-cultural context” (Auslander, 2019, p. 106).

To that end, artists move from specialization in a discipline to immersion into various cultural tasks. The receptor acquires the protagonism as an active role in this production and reception, serving the logic of circulation and economy of the messages. The process of convergence of all media around a cultural objective, together with a general communicative context for artists, enables the creation of a long-term public image and allows the development of their celebrity.

Visual album allows another way of promoting record works: before they were sold through two/three singles, now an attempt is made to extend the life span of the records, generating consolidated worlds of meaning such as “storytelling or global mental representations” (Herman, 2009, p. 197).

We are witnessing a growing number of visual albums in the music industry, caused by a hybrid media context where transmedia strategies are more common: they make possible to organize messages and nurture a personal or star-text narrative for musical artists.

The most important goal of this article is to explore visual albums in popular music by analyzing a few examples and to clarify its nature as a means to expand music video as a promotional tool. The difference in this context represents that the visual album is an expansion in length of the music video: before, one or two music videos are produced in a music album, now, all the songs on the album become visual productions—music videos—.

Likewise, the term expansion as featured in visual albums, means multiplication of music videos and exhaustion of all possibilities for making videos, unlike most albums in music history, which only have several videos as singles. Projects such as *Dirty Computer* by Janelle Monáe, *El Mal Querer* by Rosalía and Beyoncé’s three visual albums (*Beyoncé*, 2013; *Lemonade*, 2016 and *Black is King*, 2020), are cultural texts, composing storytellings and narratives through “rhetorical figures of repetition”, or visual patterns, as a new way of understanding the star-text and stardom (Goodwin, 1992; Harper, 2019).

The intentional sample for the analysis is motivated by their variety as modalities and a special visibility of specialized criticism, combined with an interest for women in this shifting popular music industry and context: Rosalía’s *El Mal Querer* is an incomplete work, Monáe’s *Dirty*

Computer is composed by intermissions or episodes with dialogue and, finally, Beyoncé's *Black is King* has two formats: a film and a visual album itself. These three examples are described as a way of drawing a broad panorama of the visual album.

From a methodological perspective, cultural analytics and analysis of multimodal discourse have been selected as research spaces (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2009); also, we could encompass the work within the perspectives of the semiotics of culture. This focus allows us to address the common meaning of all textual materials (picture, sound and text) globally. We have resorted to the procedure of viewing and recording significant elements at different visual, sound, and narrative levels of the units of analysis: the albums by Beyoncé, Janelle Monáe, and Rosalía. The approach to visual patterns was analyzed by Balló (2000), very close to iconographic analysis, with the aim of finding characters, scenarios, objects, and gestures that repeat each other; they package music videos in visual albums.

THE VISUAL ALBUM

Studies in sociology and musicology have focused on successful trajectory analyses like those of David Bowie (Sedeño-Valdellos, 2009), PJ Harvey (Gardner, 2016; Burns & Lafrance, 2002) or Lady Gaga (Davisson, 2013), artists who knew how to combine all the artistic facets (both mediatic and audiovisual, public profile and musical side) in their musical careers. They managed their public image using music videos and all kinds of visual performances. As we said, transmedia logic in cultural production is transforming the relationship with the music fan, offering many ways to enter a personal narrative world that is constantly expanding and can be developed. The visual album is one of those cultural artifacts that is planned as a transmedia communication strategy; it produces an innovative way of mediating and directing, in the case of the musical artist, his personality and his fame.

At this point, its precedents should be emphasized. Concept albums were well-known devices in the industry in the seventies, music projects in which pop artists proposed a themes-based narrative, which is no longer limited to simple lyrics, or words, but aspires to long-

term sustainable narratives. As Shute (2013) argues “they try to take advantage of the energy of popular music, and at the same time stretch the scope of their musical style, to incorporate extended themes and arguments”.

Sgt Pepper’s Lonely hearts Club Band by The Beatles (1967), Bob Dylan’s *Blonde on blonde* (1966), and *Dust Bowl Ballads* by Woody Guthrie (1940) were the first albums with an innovative and total proposal that brought together the musical project and the cover design, including the lyrics of the songs. It’s a creative cross-fertilization between photographs, designers, record labels and musicians at the service of a musical idea, with difference according to musical scenes, subcultures and genres (De Ville, 2003; Thorgerson, 1982). Moreover, *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* by David Bowie (1972), *The Wall* by Pink Floyd (1979), *Year Zero* by Nine Inch Nails (2007) or *Mylo Xiloto* by Coldplay (2011), adapted this formula during the following decades.

As an evolution, the visual album brings a more evolved format, like a general storytelling and metanarrative, which is part of the tradition of popular music research for greater authenticity, in which the performative part (concerts), traditional media (visual formats) and new media (social networks, online media) come together to produce a complete narrative (Burns, 2016; Jeffery, 2017). This media ubiquity channel is the most appropriate ecosystem to connect to today’s audience/consumer of popular music and its genres. Some reknown visual albums are *Rings Around The World* by Super Furry Animals (2001), *ODDSAC* by Animal Collective (2010), *Valtari Mystery Film Experiment* from *Valtari* by Sigur Rós (2012), *Hi Custodian* by Dirty Projectors (2012), *Runaway* by Kanye West (2010), *K-12* by Melanie Martinez (2019), *Electra Heart* by Marina and the Diamonds (2012), *The Odyssey* by Florence and The Machine (2016), *Double Dutchess* by Fergie (2017), *Black Water* by Maruv (2018), *Purpose: The Movement* by Justin Bieber (2015), *blue* by iamamiwhoami (2014), *When I get home* by Solange (2016), *Mis Planes son Amarte* by Juanes (2017), *Kisses* by Anitta (2019) and *Reconstrução* by Thiago Iorc (2019).³

³ This is only a list of some visual albums known by the author, but the list is increasing day by day.

The visual album *Biophilia* by Bjork, is a visual album that radicalizes the experimental component. With an extreme artistic reference – a mix of songs, games and music videos– develops the interactivity of the format. The user/fan needs are what improve their musical learning and they can enjoy an online version and an interactive version (Dibben, 2014).

There are several methods, but they all combine visual, sound and textual material with the correspondence of a track from a sound album with a visual piece to compose “audiovisual product that is directly related to the music of an album by the same artist” (Harrison, 2014, pp. 16-17). Harrison (2014) defines it as a “large audio-visual expressions related to film or music video that showcase music from an audio album” (p. 10) and in general it can be configured as an audiovisual track for each audio track or displayed continuously as a movie. In a visual album, there is a tension between movie and music video, between the whole length of a movie—at least similar to the sum of all singles– and the episodic unity of a video for one single track. It can count on the addition of episodes, introductions, epilogue and all sorts of micro-tracks, even to the point of forming whole movies.

These visual texts have a double condition: they are extensive as a whole, like films or medium-length films, but simultaneously divisible into chapters. As a result, they get a message very compacted in motifs, visual associations, and quotations that are forever ready to become viral and shared on social networks. In fact, Cara Harrison (2014) found mechanisms that unified the messages, such as repetitive patterns of motifs and uses, scenographic objects, props, characters and places, which were visual leitmotifs. The idea around a visual motif generically gives a name to a theme, idea or visual resources that evokes the viewer’s knowledge and visual culture.

They display a double component, a reference to previous visual works and another of originality. As Chandler and Munday (2013) argue, a visual motif is “a theme [...] whose purpose is to represent or symbolize a person, object, place, idea, state of mind, supernatural force, or any other ingredient in a dramatic work” (para. 1).

CASE STUDIES

Black is King by Beyoncé

An example of this extended competence of music video in regards to a musical project through visual representations is the set of transmedia works/projects of Beyoncé (Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter). After *Dangerous in love*, *B'Day* and *I am...Sasha Fierce*, her album *Beyoncé* (2013) displayed an innovative format in the history of music, with all songs accompanied by music videos (Cupid & Files-Thompson, 2016).

Secretly produced and released without any preceding promotional strategy, the second album, *Lemonade* had already been structured by its titles around an emotional story within different episodes with music videos and voice-over interludes based on Warsan Shire's poetry. This suggests a political motivation according to Vernallis (2016), Tinsley (2016) or Meltzer (2021). Authors on feminism in academic settings interpret it as a personal approach, with a storytelling linked to feminism, "based on the journey of each woman towards her self-knowledge and healing" (Dubboff, 2016). Crenshaw (1993) and Durham (2012) explain how a black woman builds and negotiates her corporality with some visual formats such as music videos. Similarly, the visual album seems to have become a suitable format for artists with ambitions for stardom coupled with a social engagement, as a secondary objective of their artistic development.

Going beyond its seismic character in the industry, with a promotional design that combines sports and television events –such as Superbowl– and the maximum lack of information before the release, *Lemonade* proposes an immersion in Beyoncé's universe, and some vindications of black people in USA, with issues such as problems with public security forces. The project was planned in an unprecedented way to be a commercial and artistic success. "In this context, the merchandising, the songs, the videos, the performances must always be considered first and foremost as an advertisement for Beyoncé's commercialized materiality. The fans are essentially buying into Beyoncé" (Fairclough, 2018, p. 127).

The commitment to the African American community becomes particularly explicit in her third visual album, and latest to date, *Black*

is King. Regarding its generic description, *Black is King* inherits its storytelling from *The Lion King*. This is a film developed by Disney in 1994 and produced by them again in a 3D version in 2019. The collaboration between Disney and Beyoncé involved the development of a project with a musical side, *The Gift* –musical themes accompanied by video images– and *Black is King* –a film based on voice-over interventions by characters. In this way, both strategies are available: some symbols are associated with musical material, and some visual content is linked to narrative possibilities:

‘[F]ilm world’, which is a ‘singular holistic, relational, and fundamentally referential reality’ that possesses sensory, symbolic and affective dimensions for the audience. Film (or music video) worlds are identifiable worlds separate from our own, but connected to it through a borrowing process (Yacavone, 2015, p. 20).

There is a common element with the artist’s two previous visual albums in the long and complex narration. The voice-over (by James Earl Jones) creates a discursive unity between videos, allowing for a spatiotemporal heterogeneity in the editing. With this specific thread of interrelation, *Black is King* becomes both sequential and episodic at the same time, as is common in myths and other African narratives, and takes advantage of the latter’s ability to be instantly recognizable and assimilated by the viewer, through costumes, dances, visual compositions, and settings.

Following this introduction, we would like to explain some of the visual patterns within this project. First, we should emphasize the use of water and its overall symbolism. In “Bigger”, the sea, waterfall and lake put in the background the actions of anointing and cleansing a baby in the background. Later, Beyoncé appears walking and painting the face of a child about five years old, in a parallel montage with shots in which her daughter appears. The Semitic and African-inspired wardrobe interchange colours (blue, white, red), although white predominates and becomes recurrent for the singer to cover her hair.

Closely associated with this video is “Otherside”,⁴ where she immerses herself in the Biblical story of Moses –largely living in the collective memory– who was abandoned by his mother in a river. The allegory of the rite of passage or transformation is at the heart of the history of *Black is King*: the child, who ran away, recovers a small clay idol while swimming and returns to occupy his throne and assume his responsibilities. An old shaman woman gives back his power after having repainted its face with white ointment. He accomplishes this transformation with an ascent through a kind of metal tunnel, like a Savior Messiah. “Water”⁵ and “Nile”⁶ videos share almost all the sets and arrangements, as well as this aquatic background: the mystical almond raft, surrounded by red flowers, on which Beyoncé stands, tells the story of the abandoned Moses. These visual compositions also link “Water”, “Nile” and “Find your way back”.⁷

The birth/motherhood cycle (in “Bigger”⁸ and “Otherside”) and mourning/death cycle (“Nile”) are completed and shaped not only in a narrative or dramaturgical way, but also by the visual clues of the use of the white colour, in both clothes and her body. The reflection on the representation of motherhood proposed by the artist and her creative team, would need more space than available in this paper.

Another visual pattern, present in almost all these videos, is related to the representation of the individual body concerning the collective body, before a scenography which is often an artificial background. The body is treated here as a sculpture, either in its individual version, with Beyoncé as the protagonist, or in its collective version, animating visual compositions as *tableaux vivants*. Thus, a second leitmotif concerns the body of the Afro-American woman, with a double attribution, alone and in group. Cultural studies (for example, popular music studies and postcolonialist brands) analyzed physical references to black women in audiovisual texts, and concluded on their ongoing

4 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxK0v3V4udk>

5 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykvzDsIGFIM>

6 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3taB60J1rU>

7 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejsbqUhCGrc>

8 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwAUAdCntGM>

objectification and its effect on the creation of stereotypes. However *Black is King* offers a femininity that departs from this reference (Kraaijvanger, 2018).

First of all, it is interesting to note the emphasis placed on the female body which continues in this album and which is a trademark of Beyoncé. In this case, the production and narration attempt to highlight the materiality of the body (or bodies): the body is a way to tell the story through various phases. Many children are painted, anointed and worshipped with white paint by characters from the community. However, the most repetitive presence, the common thread of the enunciation, is a man in blue makeup and a naked chest. It's a character taken from the Gullah tradition, who appears in "Find your way back", "Nile" and "Already".⁹

Unlike the sexualized body of Beyoncé presented in *Beyoncé* or *Lemonade*, BIK presents static visual compositions that put it in new spaces: in "Find your way back" she looks like an animal camouflaged in the trees, in Water and Nile she appears in a boat as a mystical almond... This static treatment leads to a sculptural representation of her physicality, which brings her closer to the idols or sacred images of many traditional cultures. In this sense, there are multiple characterizations in which the artist appears with costumes inspired by African designs and symbols, like a second skin. This can be observed more than once in "Already".

The sculptural and pictorial body is the source of numerous iconic moments in all BIK's clips. In addition, many of them serve as promotional material not only for the work of Beyoncé, but also for magazines and social media content, such as Instagram or for those of the designers involved, as Samaha (2020) describes.

On the other hand, dance is an essential element in the discourses of popular music, especially mainstream, and it could be expected to be part of the visual universe as a resource of synchronicity between image and sound. By and large, dance is also related to a materiality intrinsic to the video that connects music with visual content in the construction of meaning, beyond lyrics and semantic message. In

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agCgvFTJeRs>

dance, the music intensifies its performativity, especially when the choreographic steps describe cultural traditions or employing them as a tribute to dance heritage. Moreover, in dance, the artist's body establishes a position of complete presentation –speech and action are equated (Defrantz, 2004)– just as in the performative of vocal playback. Hence, Beyoncé choreographs are constructed in detail, employing specific steps from the multitude of African dance types: the *Poco* dance is present in “Don't jealous me”¹⁰ and the Nigerian *Kpakujemu* in “My power”.¹¹ The viral capacity of these incursions into dance tradition is recognized by the artist, who has employed similar techniques of copying and explicit quotation in the controversial video “Countdown”¹² (Harper, 2019; Manley, 2018). A plethora of videos produced around dance in Beyoncé, tutorials especially, populate the web, such as A-Z Dance's series on African dances.

El Mal Querer by Rosalía

This work has launched the singer from Barcelona to stardom, judging by the international success of sales and impact in the media. Rosalía was born and raised in Barcelona, of the Catalan rumba's cradle, a cultural crossbreeding phenomenon during the seventies that united rock, Cuban rumba and flamenco music. The *El Mal Querer* storytelling reproduces, through its structure, the stages of the classical hero's journey: Rosalía herself has asserted it was her intention, when adapting the medieval Occitan novel, *Flamenca*.

As a distinctive element of the visual album *El Mal Querer*, not yet finished, it could be considered a peculiar strategy for producing and releasing the content. The videos are: “*Malamente*”, “*Pienso en tu mirada*”, “*De aquí no sales*”, “*Bagdad*” and “*Di mi nombre*”,¹³ and almost

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UogQe3EXzhi>

¹¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCzeVj4x_Hs

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XY3AvVgDns>

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rht7rBHuXW8>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_4coiRG_BI
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vy4IZs8fVRQ>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2WOIGyGzUQ>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUBMPaj0L3o>

all produced by the Catalan production company, *Canadá*. This album is characterized by several features that emphasize its intermedial and transmedia nature, developed in Sedeño-Valdellos (2020). Firstly, the music videos' literary, musical and visual hybridization is connected to the artwork, by Philip Cusic: we can see a tendency for establishing a visual performativity in all the formats related to the work.

Cultural appropriation involves a complex aesthetic proposal of gestures, dance steps, and visual motifs drawn from the classic iconography of Hispanic tradition –the bull, the motorcycle– and many sites on the urban periphery of Spanish culture that characterize videos within rap and hip-hop genre. They give unity and visual coherence to the album, as it has already been reviewed (Sedeño-Valdellos, 2021).

There is also a strong reference to coherence between the choreographies of the concerts and the ones contained in the music videos. Musicians have always differentiated between live and mediated performances, but with Rosalía's pieces, they are in constant dialogue, an attribute that is not exclusive to the artist but permeates live shows of popular music, e.g. Madonna's or Lady Gaga's. The performance component of the choreography is both powerful and physically demanding, which dictates that Rosalía uses non-direct sound for certain parts of the choruses. The immediate result is placing more emphasis on the performance than on the vocal interpretation, and an increase in the authenticity of the experience.

Hence, her live performances and concerts have gained great viralization capacity in social networks. They have also spawned an extraordinary number of quotations, and professional and amateur imitations, instigating new re-appropriations and cultural uses, such as in the case of *Los Morancos Oficial* (2018).¹⁴

Dirty Computer by Janelle Monáe

Janelle Monáe has released four concept albums in her career: *Metropolis: Suite I (The Chase)* (2008), *The ArchAndroid: Suites II and III* (2010), *The Electric Lady: Suites IV and V* (2013), and *Dirty*

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9L3dwNAsbxw>

*Computer*¹⁵ (2018), all produced by the Wondaland music label, where many African-American artists are signed. Throughout her album *Dirty Computer*, Monaé immerses herself in a futuristic story through nine concept and performance videos, in which she plays a leading role in action narratives and choreographies.

This project stands out for its insistence on innovation as a format and in its name, baptized as an emotion picture: a mix between music video, film and advertisement, according to its creators, among them, Janelle Monaé. It sets the story in a big biotechnological company, where identities and memories of queer, gay and pansexual people are erased. It presents situations in interior and exterior scenes, mainly using groups of performers in a relaxed and upbeat atmosphere with people of all races and social statuses. They interact affectionately, performing choreographies in duos and in groups throughout various sets.

In contrast to the dark, aseptic and solitary spaces that the body encounters in the interiors of this technological multinational, the exteriors and interiors of pleasure and leisure occupy frames full of bodies. As other bodies surround the individual, sociality and identity are played out in a group... The latter are powerful moments, like *tableaux vivants*. In some episodes, which could be called “memories” or “recollections”, we can see the singer in the center of the frame, surrounded by dancers or performers, in repetitive visual configurations. All together build a great fresco of a black universe of pleasure and freedom, a narrative utopia that some authors claim Monaé has produced for all black people (Bates, 2021).

Through the figure of the android, *Dirty Computer* creates a kind of poetics of technology, an artistic aesthetic of Black people and their future. As Monaé says: “The android is the new black. The android is the new gay. The android is the new woman. Someone who is often marginalized [and] discriminated against” (HOT 97, 2013).

¹⁵ <https://vimeo.com/268498567>

CONCLUSIONS

The music industry has changed in these years, to a large extent following a readaptation to technical possibilities, initially unfavorable for it, due to digitization, to later develop exponentially and hybridize with all the audiovisual and entertainment industries. With a growing need to catch the attention of the audience, music projects have had to rethink themselves in order to survive in today's market.

Therefore, as a measure against this uncertainty, notions of identity and celebrity dominates popular music culture. The music video industry is undergoing continuous transformation, still essential for multimedia promotion of music and maintaining its central role in the platformization of content and the current transmedia ecosystem. In response to growing audiovisualization in contemporary culture, the music industry has created visual albums, like a global proposal for a musical work, album, and career, which goes beyond the limits and boundaries of a movie, picture, or video.

This work was primarily intended to demonstrate how visual motifs provide unity and coherence in visual albums and in narratives for musical personalities, in other words, for music artists. Videos of visual albums by Beyoncé (*Black is King*), Rosalía (*El Mal Querer*), and Janelle Monáe (*Dirty Computer*) allow the artists to construct their own storyworlds. They try to consolidate atmospheres, and visual motifs and compositions in response to lyrics, music parameters and music genre, as a proposal that builds a self-expressive representation of the artist and is a mixture of themes, plots and other codes of visual structure (use of colour, clothing, locations...).

The use of visual motifs allows the creation of visual content that is based on a unitary tone of emotion: through them, there is a visualized performativity, where corporeality is transfigured into an image. Its centrifugal strategy allows the dispersion of visual content towards other mediation windows (social networks, live shows and performance) of musical artists. Its parts or episodes generate a large number of visual references to other previous texts, other music videos. These visual figures maintain and perpetuate the circulation of texts.

As a result of the hybridization of two models, Beyoncé has created a variety of visual motifs with *Black is King*: one is more narrative, focusing on the world of *The Lion King*, and the other is performance-based, focusing on the representation and design of the artist's personal and social identities.

On the other hand, the mechanisms of cultural appropriation multiply in messages as intertextual as *El Mal querer's* music videos: they explode with meanings and senses, creating new distribution channels in search of new audiences. In *Dirty computer*, dancing bodies are another element that contributes to the construction of meaning in visual albums. Monáe has created a fresco on sexual liberation, and she has chosen to build a queer identity in the African-American community and to continue with her activist objectives of denouncing certain dangers related to technology.

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SEMBLANZA

Ana Sedeño Valdellos

Is PhD in Audiovisual Communication and Professor in the Department of Audiovisual Communication at the University of Malaga (Spain). Her research deals with music in relation to audiovisual media and audiovisual practices in the contemporary scene from an historical or educational perspective.