

# THE EVOLUTION OF MUSIC TELEVISION

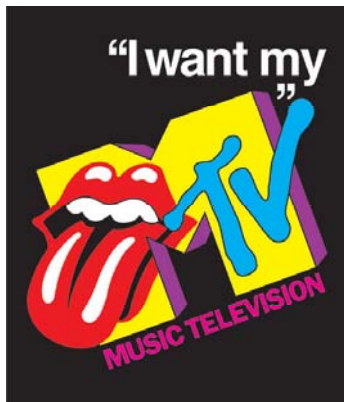


A LOOK BACK AT MUSIC TELEVISION

MTV NOW

WHY THE CHANGE?

HOW HAS THE PUBLIC RESPONDED?



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## A Look Back at Music Television

There are ten and a half hours of actual music videos in a typical day of MTV programming. This may seem like a good balance of music videos and the other various reality programming, however, the hours when music videos are showed are hardly the primetime hours. It consists of a long block from 2:30am to 11:00am, an hour at 5:00pm, and another one at 7:00pm. The rest of the programming consists of various reality shows. MTV hasn't always been saturated with shows like Real World, Road Rules, Laguna Beach, and Pimp My Ride. It started as a station with regular top 40 music video rotations. Just like a radio station, MTV had long blocks of music videos and "vee-jays" that provided witty commentary in between videos. This obviously paints a much different picture than the MTV of today.

In 1981 John Lack, the primary visionary of music television, corroborated with Robert Pittman, a program director for the Warner Cable Corporation, to pitch the idea of a twenty-four hour music television station. The station would mainly target a young audience, consisting mainly of teenagers and adults in their early twenties. Over the

years MTV morph into the station it is today. Andrew Goodwin developed a three-phase theory for MTV's evolution. The first phase consisted of its birth and radio-like programming. This is when music videos were showed around the clock with very little other programming. Then around 1983 MTV directed its music videos even more towards the young audience making it predominately rap, dance, and heavy metal. However, they also developed Video Hits One, or VH1, to complete phase two. Phase three was when they shifted to more of a regular television channel with actual shows like Real World, Beavis and Butthead, and music award shows. Today there are even more shows that are very much molded after Real World. Shows like One Bad Trip, Laguna Beach, and True Life, saturate MTV primetime hours.

Although there is some backlash for the lack of music videos on MTV, the trend seems to be working. The channel is typically watched in 78 million homes in the United States. Even though there aren't many music videos on MTV anymore, it is definitely working for them. Stations like VH1, Country Music Television (CMT), and BET have followed suit with other programming besides regular music videos. MTV has, in essence, created two different genres of television. They were the first to bring music to regular television programming, as well as giving birth to the reality TV revolution, with the Real World. Regardless of your opinion on the matter, MTV continues to be a very successful business with great ratings every week.

Kyle Kittelberger

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## Why the Change?

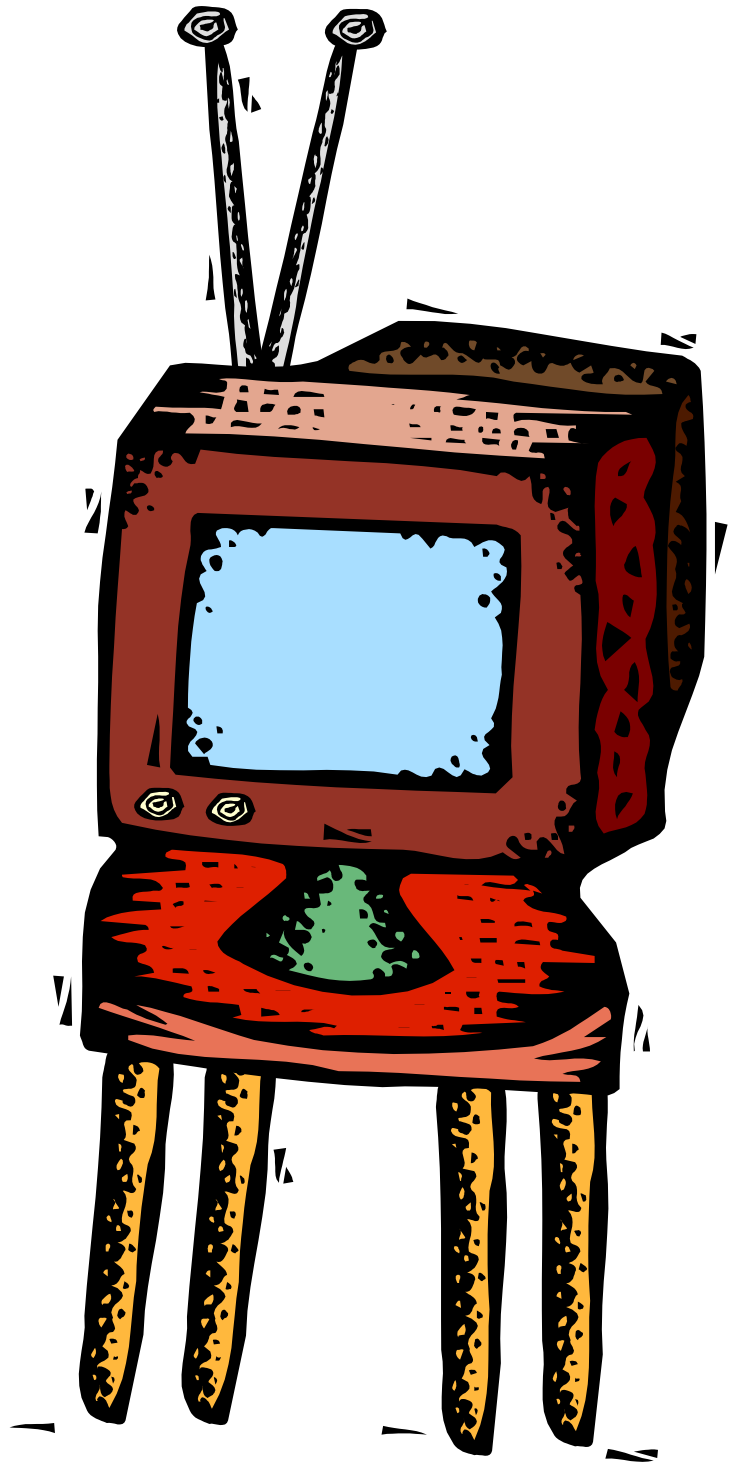
If you have watched MTV or VH1 in the last five to ten years, than you should be pretty familiar with the formula that has been developed by these networks. MTV in more recent years has become overrun with more and more reality shows and shows loosely based on the music and entertainment industry in an attempt to appeal to the younger generation. Likewise, VH1 has become a place where old and young people alike can watch music and entertainment based programming that connects to people across generational gaps. The interesting thing about these networks is that it was most assuredly not the intention of these networks to be this way. MTV started humbly enough back in 1981 as a network that purely showed music videos. It was a new fresh, hip network that the younger generation could consider its own. Shortly after the development of MTV, VH1 was developed to appeal to an older generation that would listen to adult contemporary and soft rock genres that would be hard found on MTV. The original formats of these networks are very different from the formats that are employed by these networks today, but why have MTV and VH1 changed so much from their simple music video formats of the past?

The simplest and most important answer behind why this change has occurred is because in the world of television if you are not moving forward and changing with time than you are just standing still, and standing still will kill a network. Television networks need to stay ahead of the audience to survive, because if they are not ahead than the audience will switch the channel over to another network that is ahead and has what the

audience wants. That is the main reason why the change has occurred for these networks over time. The ratings for both networks began to decline in the mid-eighties, so the network executives decided that it was time to start changing, because up to this point very little change had been made to the programming. MTV and VH1 started to move away from just music television and began showing sports, news, sitcoms, cartoons, game shows, documentaries, and other shows that fit into the more traditional mold of television while still staying fresh and maintaining its target audience. The audience responded to these changes and the ratings climbed for both networks.

Through the years, as the non-music video shows became more and more popular, the networks started to develop more and more programs that did not involve music videos until they spread across the networks and almost entirely took over. This is the current state of those networks, because this is the format that the audience responds to the most and the format that brings in the highest ratings. Music videos are still shown on these networks, but not even close to the way that they were in the early years. Music videos are just not as valid a form of entertainment as in the past. Back in the eighties the networks could get away with just showing music videos because there were not as many options for the viewers to pick from. But in today's society, with cable and satellite television, there are so many options on television that the networks need to have a variety of programming that appeal to all kinds of people to be competitive. There are specialty networks out there that show just music videos, or are at least supposed to, such as MTV2 that is available for a price through most satellite or cable companies, but MTV and VH1 have changed through the years because they found the changing formats to be

more profitable. In modern times, it is all about profit and MTV and VH1 have done what it takes to stay profitable and successful.



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## MTV Now

MTV is supposed to stand for music television. It is supposed to be a non-stop music channel, however, it is not. If you were to watch it now you would find very few music videos. First off, when you turn it on all you see is new reality shows and game shows. What is it that the viewers want? You used to be able to watch music videos all day long but now you can't unless you wake up really early or stay up really late. If MTV wanted to overpopulate the channel with non-music shows then why don't they just create a new channel for them? Reality television is taking over the screen these days with shows such as; Laguna Beach, Newly Weds: Nick and Jessica, The Osborne's, and Real World just to name a few. Along with the dramatic swing of shows they are becoming very lenient on what is worn. Many of the hosts and guests wear next-to-nothing while on national television. Is this appropriate for young viewers? Honestly, people that I have talked to say that they have quit watching MTV for these reasons. They only want to see the new music videos and the artists and that's not at all what the station is about. Granted they give the viewers what they want to watch but how can you go from music all of the time to little shows like; Punk'd, Pimp My Ride, Cribs, Boiling Points, and Room Raiders. To sum it up, reality shows are taking over MTV as well as other channels devoted to music videos.

By Meghan Kemerer

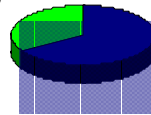
## How has the Public Responded?

Over the past few weeks I have been distributing surveys to 100 students here at Bowling Green State University. Students were asked what music channel they watched the

most,

Change Back to the original way 33%

what



66% Keep the same

their

favorite show from that channel was and why and if they would changed their Music television channels back to music videos and music related shows. An astonishing 66% of the students responded they would rather have their reality shows on MTV and VH1, rather than the old school way of Music Videos.

Why you might ask? Because the simple factor of entertainment comes into play. Sixty-Eight of the students who listed MTV as their favorite channel they also told us that their

Students who watch VH1 more 12%



78% Students who watch MTV more

favorite

show was

The Real

World. A close second were shows like Viva La Bam and Jackass. Since the start of Real World in the early 90's, people have wanted more than just music videos. Student Meagan Kelley said, "I get tired of listening to music all the time. I like having a variety" People get tired of watching music videos all day long. And I'm pretty sure MTV and VH1 found this out because they have joined ABC, CBS and FOX in having a ridiculous amount of reality shows to watch. Although they have kept countdown shows

and the occasional late night music video spree, the majority of viewers like this new change and the likelihood of their format changing are slim.