

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Vimeo Killed the Video Star: Burial and the User-Generated Music Video

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The title I have used here does indeed allude to ‘Video Killed the Radio Star:’ the 1979 hit single by The Buggles that may very well lurk in the background of other sections within this book. With regard to this chapter’s content, the implication might be an obvious kinship: where – as with the video’s role within The Buggles song – user-generated content platforms such as Vimeo are seen as propagating media that are capable of usurping more established formats or channels. However, the unofficial music video – the precise focus of this chapter – almost corrects a misunderstanding that is the central premise of ‘Video Killed the Radio Star:’ the supposition that the visual music promo is a technological development that obliterates the simple pleasures of audio. After all, without the actual music, there really is no music video: it is a format that is responsive to and also incorporates an existing music recording. Despite this, the video content of music video has been perceived as relegating the aural component to secondary place via the kind of argument that insists that the world is somehow becoming increasingly visual.

The idea of technological developments within the music industry as destructive and therefore untrustworthy is certainly not a new one. For example, it can be traced back to the campaign against canned music within 1930s theatres and the Keep Music Live slogan of The Musicians’ Union through to ‘Video Killed the Radio Star’ and later critiques of music video’s