



EVENTS

# BUG 62

Now, where were we? Ah yes. A mere two years and three months after the last time we did this, BUG is back at BFI Southbank with a brand new show of outstanding creativity from the world of music videos. And it's great to be back, even if it means trying to squeeze in everything that's worth seeing from the past two years and three months into the next 100 minutes or so. It is an impossible job, but someone has got to do it. That someone is, of course, Adam Buxton. If anyone can, he can.

Appropriately, we launch the show with a visual blockbuster. The video for veteran French producer Mirwais by Ludovic Houplain, of animation/design outfit H5, confronts the way we live now in a surreal bombardment of banner advertising along an arrow-straight highway. Houplain directed the Oscar-winning animated short *Logorama* in the early Noughties, which he created using 2000 logos and mascots, and he revisits and updates its themes to comment upon everything in our world today that leave us on the brink of catastrophe. 'Although they show the same content, *2016—My Generation* is the antithesis of *A Clockwork Orange*,' says Houplain. 'Where Alex, the hero of Kubrick's film, directly experienced a continuous flow of images as a torture, 50 years later it has become a leisurely activity.'

The video for UK electronic duo Audiobooks' *Lalala It's The Good Life* has rather less serious aims, but in its own homespun way, it's just as mesmerising. It's directed by Brighton-based creative collective Rottingdean Bazaar – that's James Theseus Buck and Luke Brooks – working with longtime associate Annie Collinge, to create a highly original performance. Large-scale photos of the band (and various objects) have been printed onto fabric, and then manipulated in various ways – shaken and wobbled, puppeteered and vacuumed, to create an hilarious approximation of a performance for this chaotic track.

He may have a lower profile than some UK rappers, but London-based Jeshi has been making excellent music videos, with some of the best up and coming directors in the UK, for a while. Now he has collaborated with one of the most promising of that group, Will Dohrn – whose previous work includes an UKMVA-winning video for IDLES. In the video for *3210*, Dohrn tells multiple stories in real time by employing an inventive technique that has its origins in the pre-cinema days of the late 1800s, and the pioneering photographic work of Eadward Muybridge. Photos that portray recollections from Jeshi's past are captured again by a constantly moving camera to create the effect of Muybridge's invention, the zoopraxiscope.

The deadpan comic style of Norwegian director Kasper Haggström was introduced to BUG audiences with his video for Welsh electronic artist Kelly Lee Owens' *Throwing Lines*, back in 2018 (also an UKMVA award winner). The pair were reunited in summer 2020 for *Corner of My Sky* – featuring the lugubrious vocals of John Cale – and joined by another Welsh legend, actor Michael Sheen. In true Haggström style the video has a brilliant comic conceit – which gives Sheen the platform for a marvellous performance. Haggstrom's great idea, and measured direction, gives no hint to the fact that he had to jettison another concept and come up with this one, as a vehicle for the already-booked Sheen, just a day or so before the shoot.

A BUG show often has some involvement by Thom Yorke – this is no exception. This time we have chosen a video for The Smile, his latest project with Jonny Greenwood and Tom Skinner. The video for *Skirting on the Surface* was directed, shot and edited by Mark Jenkin, the BAFTA award-winning director of lo-fi Cornish-set drama *Bait*, and created in the same tactile way as that film – shot on black and white 16mm film which Jenkin then processed himself, at home, leaving all manner of ghostly marks upon the film stock itself. Jenkin's filmmaking style really complements Yorke's unique brand of screen charisma: he plays a miner, working deep underground, in a real Cornish tin mine, toiling for a surprising purpose.

The shock and horror of the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been strongly felt by many who make British music videos and commercials. Producers and directors have flocked there in recent years to get greater scale and production value for their budgets from first class Kyiv-based production services. Now, Ukrainian producers and crew who regularly work on 'Western' music videos are on the frontline and elsewhere. The next video is not filmed in Ukraine, but Moscow, but it also shows how Putin's malign shadow impacts on people's lives – in this case, the LGBT community in Russia. Directed by Latvian-born Andjez Gavriš, this is a love story told through dance – by two men in two different locations. Gavriš surmised that this simple but affecting idea – developed by Russian ad agency Voskhod on behalf of the beleaguered Russian LGBT Network – was best served as a music video and he found the track by Russian group Sansara to provide its soundtrack. It took months to raise finance, and then cast the film, with several actors too fearful to get involved. The production itself was beset with openly expressed homophobia from members of the crew. However, ultimately Gavriš's work is an artistic triumph. Since release last year it has won awards worldwide and a wave of support everywhere, including within Russia. The strength of its message riled the authorities enough for them to crack down further on the LGBT Network. The organisation can no longer operate from within the country and it was denounced as 'gay propaganda'.

There is also a simple moral message attached to Bear Damen's video for James Blake's *Say What You Will*, and in a series of enjoyable vignettes the Dutch director demonstrates the truth of the adage that 'comparison is the thief of joy.' In fact, there's a lot of joy to be had here, as Blake struggles with the knowledge he will never be as popular or successful as Finneas (Billie Eilish's brother, co-writer and producer, now an artist in his own right). Largely this comes from Damen's direction and the LA setting, where the far-fetched idea seems way more believable. And then there's the pitch-perfect performances of Blake and Finneas – particularly Blake, who is something of a revelation. Who knew that he could act comedy?

Back in those strange days of 2020, music videos went through various phases of the 'lockdown video' phenomenon, as filmmakers found increasingly inventive ways to create music videos without gathering on film sets. So it's only right that we show arguably the ultimate example of the lockdown video – which also happens to be the work of one of BUG's favourite directors. Keith Schofield reunited with Duck Sauce to make something even more scurrilous than the one for *Big Bad Wolf* a decade ago. Freed from the constraint of making a live action video for *Mesmerize*, Schofield lets his fertile and provocative imagination roam in what is essentially an animatic for a video that never was, or ever would be – involving clubbing, celebrities, sex, drugs, timecards, Wikipedia, a thought-provoking philosophical discussion about the

merits of Simulation Theory – and buttholes. It's probably the ultimate Keith Schofield video.

Our next foray into animation could hardly be more different – it is beautifully-crafted work, painterly in look and design, folding realism into surrealism and defying simple narrative explanation. The video for German DJ/producer Boys Noize and US singer Kelsey Lu is the work of a collaboration of animators, led by 3D director Danica Tan, Paris-based 2D director Danaé Gosset, and the Brooklyn-based studio Art Camp – directors Santiago Carrasquilla and Jos Diaz Contreras. The mesmerising and surreal storyline involves Kelsey Lu and her oddly sinister alter-ego, converging on two speeding trains in the desert.

Puerto Rican rapper Residente is renowned for his political activism. In the remarkable video for *This Is Not America*, directed by French director Gregory Ohrel, he addresses the corruption, and violence that has beset his country and South America as a whole. Residente and Ohrel portray key moments in South American history as metaphorical tableaux in a series of powerful and sometimes distressing scenes – including the assassination of Chilean folk singer Victor Jara during the US-financed military coup in 1973. This is not only a critique of the US's destabilising influence, but also addresses *This Is America*, Childish Gambino's sensational polemic on the fear governing Black lives in the United States, released in 2018. The riposte to Glover is not only that he mistakes the US for America, but that the oppressed have the will to resist and fight back. Produced by Doomsday Entertainment – the same company that made *This Is America* – this has attracted serious debate and commentary, from reaction videos to more scholarly opinion pieces.

British modern composer Max Cooper has made music that has inspired a raft of remarkable visuals in the past few years. But maybe none more remarkable than those created by artist and 'machine learning specialist' Xander Steenbrugge, who has used AI tech to create the animation for *Exotic Contents*, based upon lines from the writings of German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Key phrases provide jumping off points for the different 'chapters' of the piece. What is evident from the controlled randomness of the results is how Steenbrugge has cracked open the door to the untapped and probably unfathomable potential of AI in area of creativity.

East London troubadour Hak Baker has chronicled his life and upbringing on the Isle of Dogs through his songs and a number of exceptional videos, several directed by Will Robson-Scott. They collaborated last year on the video for *Cool Kids*, a largely autobiographical coming of age story of a teenager – a good kid who wants to be a cool kid, and gets out of his depth. Filmed on the Isle of Dogs, Robson-Scott's use of a body rig worn by his lead actor Shak Benjamin, intensifies the experience of the cautionary tale. So when things go horribly wrong, you really feel his pain, in this gritty and perceptive video.

Finally we have the latest in a series of visuals exploring the surreal comic universe of Swedish-based Bosnian DJ/producer Salvatore Ganacci, and fellow Sweden-based Bosnian Vedran Rupic. Ganacci's distinctive look and impassive persona has been the starting point for off-the wall hilarity in Rupic's brilliant videos for *Horse* and *Boycycle*. The latest is for *Step-Grandma*, a weird retelling of a Grimm fairytale, with Ganacci as the irresistible bad guy – he's the interloper into the cosy home of an old lady with dementia. So even in this fantastic surreal comedy, there's social commentary here too if you want to find it.

And that's our show. We'll be back at BFI Southbank later in the year so keep an eye on our social channels for news about those.

## **BUG title sequence**

*Director:* Miland Suman

## **Mirwais – 2016 - My Generation**

*Director:* Ludovic Houplain @ H5

*Prod co:* Les Productions, 50/50, H5, Partizan

*Rec co:* 1000 Lights Music

France 2021

## **Audiobooks – La La La It's The Good Life**

*Directors:* Rottingdean Bazaar & Annie Collinge

*Prod co:* Blink

*Rec co:* Heavenly Recordings

UK 2021

## **Jeshi – 3210**

*Director:* Will Dohrn

*Prod co:* Ground Work

*Rec co:* Because Music

UK 2022

## **Kelly Lee Owens ft John Cale – Corner of My Sky**

*Director:* Kasper Haggström

*Prod co:* Object & Animal

*Rec co:* Smalltown Supersound

Norway/UK (Wales) 2020

## **The Smile – Skirting The Surface**

*Director:* Mark Jenkin

*Prod co:* Bullion Productions

*Rec co:* XL Recordings

UK 2022

## **Sansara – We Will Become Better**

*Director:* Andzej Gavriss

*Story:* Eugene Primachenko

*Prod co:* Daddy's Film, Spot Film

*Commissioner:* Russian LGBT Network; Voskhod

Latvia/Russia 2021

## **James Blake – Say What You Will**

*Director:* Bear Damen

*Prod co:* Couscous

*Rec co:* Polydor

Netherlands/US/UK 2021

## **Duck Sauce – Mesmerize**

*Director:* Keith Schofield

*Prod co:* Caviar

US 2020

## **Boys Noize & Kelsey Lu ft Chilly Gonzalez – Ride or Die**

*Directors:* Art Camp, Danaé Gosset, Danica Tan

*Prod co:* Art Camp/A No Tricks Production

*Rec co:* BoysNoize Records

US/France/Germany 2021

## **Residente ft Ibeyi – This Is Not America**

*Director:* Gregory Ohrel

*Prod co:* Doomsday Entertainment

*Rec co:* Fusion Media Group

France/US 2022

## **Max Cooper – Exotic Contents**

*Director:* Xander Steenbrugge

Netherlands/UK 2022

## **Hak Baker – Cool Kids**

*Director:* Will Robson-Scott

*Prod co:* Somesuch

UK 2021

## **Salvatore Ganacci – Step Grandma**

*Director:* Vedran Rupic

*Prod co:* Business Club Royale

*Rec co:* Refune

Bosnia/Sweden 2021



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*With thanks to:* BFI Southbank

*Post-production by:* LEAP

*Design Creative by:* Limited Edition Design

*Website by:* Fabrik

*Event Management by:* Ballistic Events

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Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email [prognotes@bfi.org.uk](mailto:prognotes@bfi.org.uk)

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