



EVENTS

BUG 64

Welcome to a brand new episode of BUG at BFI Southbank, and another edition of outstanding work from the world of music videos, presented by Adam Buxton. This is the 64th episode of our show – which proves that in a constantly changing world, there are still a few things that you can rely on. Adam is of course, the ruler of the BUG universe, and although he has not been doing it for 70 years, it feels like it to him. So, you can look forward to the usual good stuff, including his incisive take on recent events – such as Louis Theroux’s music video debut – and possibly some other things that have happened.

But we start the show with esoteric math-rockers black midi and an extraordinary visual to accompany the song *Sugar/Tzu*, from their latest album *Hellfire*. This is the first of two videos in this show by American director Noel Paul, who brings the outlandish, stream-of-consciousness lyrics of vocalist Geordie Greep to life as a bizarrely surreal boxing match, where visceral brutality collides with dreamlike absurdity. This lurid display of pugilistic prowess is introduced by a rhesus monkey (with Greep’s mouth) and interrupted by a child with a loaded gun.

black midi are becoming firm favourites at BUG for the unrestrained creativity of their videos, following in the footsteps of similarly open-minded British bands down the years – including alt-J. That band’s fourth album, *The Dream*, has arrived with more intriguing visuals, including the video for *The Actor*, directed by London-based Saskia Dixie. Featuring Hannah Mason and Lewis Walker, this presents contemporary dance as tragi-comedy, as Mason discovers Lewis’s prone body in an empty room and attempts to revive him. It’s a mesmerising display of the dancers’ talents, choreographed by the director and the performers.

The BUG audience was first introduced to the work of remarkable Montreal-born animator Cole Kush back in early 2020 when his weirdly off-kilter CGI-animating style was applied to a video for Mac DeMarco. Now Kush brings back the eery hyperreality for Mexican-Californian singer-songwriter Cuco, but adds more styles into the mix, including AI-driven elements, to illustrate the various sources of anxiety in Cuco’s life for the sweet, laidback *Caution*.

Then we have one of the more talked-about videos of the year so far, for the Florida-born rapper Jaylah Hickmon – aka Doechii – directed by LA-based director and choreographer C (aka Sarah) Prinz. Drawing on the cutting edge of dance and fashion she is a favourite collaborator of many top names in American pop and hip-hop, from Kanye West to Chloe x Halle. In the video for *Crazy*, Prinz has courted controversy and challenged taboos with her presentation of mass female (near-) nudity and gun violence, riffing on iconic videos, such as Childish Gambino’s *This Is America*, and presenting a bold take on female beauty from a female perspective. Whether or not you agree that it is genuinely groundbreaking or even think it’s exploitative, the bravura of the imagery makes it unforgettable.

That’s followed by a hugely innovative vision of a near-death experience, for the British alt-dance duo Sad Night Dynamite. It was created by the Toronto-based director Lucas Hrubizna, who has made a series of five interlinked video shorts using cutting-edge Volumetric Capture technology to showcase work from SND’s album *Volume II*. The band members were filmed

performing in a VolCap studio in London and effectively turned into 3D models that could then be placed within the dark and creepy world built by Hrubizna.

Another band with a tradition of making great videos is, of course, Radiohead. Comedy has rarely played a part in their remarkable canon of work, but a distinctive form of dry humour is abroad in the video for *If You Say the Word*. Norwegian director Kasper Hæggström handles a spectacularly absurd premise with deadpan precision: a trio of farm hands are off to the English countryside to catch grazing creatures, who happen to be men and women in business suits. Rounded up, the docile creatures are sent back to their natural habitat.

Our second video directed by Noel Paul is a narrative for transgender indie rock artist Ezra Furman, about a night out that goes badly wrong. The video for *Forever in Sunset* also unshowingly presents a tale where the protagonists are trans-gender, with terrific performances by Elizabeth Scopel and Daphne Always as the pair drawn together when the former becomes hurt in a barroom accident. A story in a gritty setting with a heart of gold.

That's followed by a barnstormer for Australian DJ/producer Dom Dolla by South African theatre director-turned-film director Emilie Badenhorst, featuring a pair of disaffected teens who meet while working menial jobs, and urge each other to ever-greater feats of outrageousness. Badenhorst gets terrific performances from the non-professional actors who play the protagonists – who were also a real couple, and offer undoubted, palpable on-screen chemistry. So be warned, this one contains sexy scenes.

Fashion photographer, director and all-round cool dude Frank Lebon has repeatedly made intriguing work in music videos, championing analogue techniques and visual mischief over slick production values. Now he is back with his first video since 2019's *Can't Believe the Way We Flow* for James Blake, for New York rock band Pretty Sick which tells a mini-fiction of the band's enormous fame and issues with scary fans, involving a video shoot within the video and a cameo by Lebon himself.

London-based Hungarian animation director Balász Simon's talents are being increasingly recognised in ads and TV – he created the titles for the BBC's coverage of the last year's Winter Olympics. But he has returned to music videos to create a mesmerising work for US electronica duo Odesza with the quality of an animated painting. Simon employed motion capture, 3D animation and a combination of digital brushstrokes and hand-painted elements to tell a stirring tale of an old man's impossible quest to reach the golden light on top of a distant peak.

Andrew Adolph, the rapper professionally known as Shakewell, has made several videos with Dan Streit, director and colleague of the previously mentioned Cole Kush – they co-founded the company Grin Machine – and contributor to the wacky comic universe of Tim & Eric. This includes the video for *5 Ways*, where the rapper assembles a team of oddballs, each member having their own remarkable talent, to menace his mortal foe – none other than Eric Wareheim, of Tim & Eric – in a fabulous subversion of some classic action movie or superhero tropes.

That is followed by Dan Streit's most recent video, for US alt-pop star Joji, which takes a very different, darker perspective on a similar milieu. Here his protagonists from the American working class are overtly aggressive and outwardly alienated. *Glimpse of Us* touches upon the phenomenon of the Incel movement and its disturbing manifestations, and manages to create a story within the unpromising format of lo-fi home video footage, edited at breakneck speed. It's a counterintuitive move with Joji's slow ballad, but it works.

And finally, we have an oldie and a very fine video, from the late 90s. That was a golden age of music video creativity (and music video budgets) so the greatness of this video for David Bowie's *I'm Afraid of Americans*, from 1997, and featuring Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails, is perhaps more evident now than it was then. Crucially, its central theme – the American obsession with guns – which manifests itself in Bowie's hallucinations on the bustling streets of New York, is easily as powerful now. It's UK directing duo Dom & Nic's only video for Bowie but arguably his best music video of the Nineties, and has now been remastered in pristine 4K, 25 years after its original release. A fine way to end our show – the last regular outing of BUG in 2022. But we will be back in November with a special show – keep your eyes peeled for more details – and with BUG 65 in early 2023...

BUG title sequence

Director: Miland Suman

black midi – Sugar/Tzu

Director: Noel Paul

Producer: Manoela Chiabai

Production Company: FRIEND

Record Company: Rough Trade Records
US/UK 2022

alt-J – The Actor

Director: Saskia Dixie

Producer: Tom Viney

Production Company: Pundersons Gardens

Record Company: BMG
UK 2022

Cuco – Caution

Director: Cole Kush

Producers: Dan Streit, Christopher Rutledge

Production Company: Grin Machine

Record Company: Interscope

Doechii – Crazy

Director: C Prinz

Producers: Eli Raskin, Nance Messineo

Production Company: Field Trip

Colour: Dante Pasquinelli at Ethos

Rec co: Top Dawg Entertainment
US 2022

**Sad Night Dynamite – Volume II
(Black & White)**

Director: Lucas Hrubizna

Producers: Laura Northover, Rosie Brear

Production Company: Blink/Blinkink

Record Company: Various Artists Management
Canada/UK 2022

Radiohead – If You Say the Word

Director: Kasper Haggström

Producers: Dom Thomas, Morgan Clement, Daphne Do

Production Company: Object & Animal

Record Company: XL Recordings
Norway/UK 2021

Ezra Furman – Forever in Sunset

Director: Noel Paul

Producer: Raven Jensen

Production Company: FRIEND

Record Company: ANTI Records/Bella Union
US/UK 2022

Dom Dolla ft Mansionair – Strangers

Director: Emilie Badenhorst

Producer: Didi Exelby

Production Company:

Couscous/Romance Films

Record Company: Sweat It out
South Africa/Australia 2022

Pretty Sick – Human Condition

Director: Frank Lebon

Producer: Nat Baring

Production Company: Back That

Record Company: Dirty Hit
UK/US 2022

Odesza ft Ólafur Arnalds – Light of Day

Director: Balázs Simon

Producers: Josef Byrne, Máté Barbalics

Production Company: Blinkink

Record Company: Ninja Tune
Hungary/UK 2022

Shakewell - 5 Ways

Director: Dan Streit

Production Company: Grin Machine

Record Company: G59 Records
US 2021

Joji – Glimpse of Us

Director: Dan Streit

Producer: Andy Ruse

Production Company: Stink Films / Grin Machine

Record Company: 88rising
US 2022

David Bowie – I'm Afraid of Americans

Director: Dom & Nic

Producer: John Madsen

Production Company: Oil Factory

Record Company: Virgin Records
UK/US 1997



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www.adam-buxton.co.uk

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THE BUG TEAM:

Chris Blakeston, Stuart Brown, David Knight, Louise Stevens, Miland Suman, Phil Tidy

For general information about BUG, contact Louise Stevens
louise@bugvideos.co.uk

For regular updates, check out
www.bugmusicvideos.com www.promonews.tv
www.twitter.com/BUGmusicvideos
www.facebook.com/bugvideos

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Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk

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