



EVENTS

BUG 65

BUG title sequence

Director: Miland Suman

Little Simz – Gorilla

Director: Dave Meyers
Production Company: freenjoy
Record Company: AWAL/Forever Living Originals
US/UK 2023

Tierra Whack – Chanel Pit

Director: Alex Lill
Production Company: Left Productions
Record Company: Interscope
US 2023

des hume ft (Juicelover) – Onetwostep

Director/Animator: Jordan Clarke
Rep: Joyrider Films
Canada 2023

Viagra Boys – Troglodyte

Director: Cisse Efraimsson
Record Company: Year0001
Sweden/Netherlands 2023

Heart Failure

Director: Will Wightman
Production Company: Blinkink
UK 2021

Benjamin Earl Turner – Headspace/Bent

Director: Abteen Bagheri
Production Company: Joon Projects/Love Song
US 2023

Sleater-Kinney – Hell

Directors: Ashley Connor with Miranda July
US 2023

Hak Baker – Doolally

Director: Hugh Mulhern
Production Company: Riff Raff Films
Record Company: Awar Recordings
Ireland/UK 2023

Squid – The Blades

Director: Kasper Haggström
Production Company: Epoch Films UK
Record Company: Warp Records
Norway/UK 2023

The Chemical Brothers ft Halo Maud – Live Again

Director: DOM&NIC
Production Company: Outsider
Record Company: EMI Records / Universal Music
UK 2023

Kylie Minogue – Can't Get You Out of My Head

Director: Dawn Shadforth
Production Company: Black Dog Films
Record Company: Parlophone
UK/Australia 2001

METTE – Mama's Eyes

Director: Camille Summers-Valli
Production Company: Love Song / Division
Record Company: Sony Music Ent UK
UK/US 2023

AntsLive – Number One Candidate

Director: Tom Emmerson
Production Company: Emmerson Films
Record Company: Payday Records
UK 2023

BUG is back! A whole 12 months since we were last at BFI Southbank, your favourite night of big screen music video awesomeness, internet nonsense (good nonsense not the other stuff) has returned, with the one and only Adam Buxton at the controls. There is a lot of catching up to do in what has been an interesting year for music videos. With the irresistible rise of TikTok and endless demand for smartphone-friendly content, regular TV-screen shaped videos are now experiencing even more competition for eyeballs. In a world of ever-decreasing attention spans, video is now regarded (by record labels) as a 'longform' content, which needs to be even more impactful than ever. Well, plenty of good examples of that in the collection of work we are showing this evening.

We start with the artist otherwise known as Simbiatu Ajikawo, and she may be the most creatively exciting pop star that Britain has to offer at the moment. Certainly Little Simz's video for her summer hit *Gorilla*, was a statement to that effect – a sequence of brilliantly imaginative scenes that frame her performance of this superb track, created by one of the legends of the music video directing game, Dave Meyers. He has been directing some of the biggest videos around since the 1990s, and this one is up there with his most impressive work – not least as Simz proves herself at home in any scenario that Meyers can throw at her – which is a lot. It provides irrefutable proof that she is a world-class hip hop performer.

Creating a wildly off-kilter visual universe has been central to Tierra Whack's music – her first album *Whack World* was 15 one-minute songs each with its own video and was followed by the surreal *Dora* and one of BUG's favourite videos, *Unemployed*. Her new release *Chanel Pit* sees her making a splash with Alex Lill, a director known for creating high concept live videos for The Weeknd and others. This one is a one-shot video – or appears to be – filmed in a car wash, which Tierra travels through, without a car. She cheerfully endures the full-on full-service wash herself, while performing the song.

In Jordan Clarke's video for mysterious Vancouver-based project des hume, the Toronto-based animator reflects upon the influence of technology and, increasingly, AI, on our lives in a fast-moving, ingenious video where the familiarity of perpetual scrolling on a phone is transformed. The scrolling images on the screen become three-dimensional, and increasingly expanding boxes, the viewer invited to enter the digital space. Clarke packs the video for *Onetwostep* with visual ideas, employing 3D animation and AI prompts, adding the device of a digital overlord as sentient ooze, dripping through the online landscape.

At the other end of the animation scale, Swedish artist, animator and musician Cissi Efraimsson has employed old-school Claymation for Swedish-American punk rock outfit Viagra Boys and their anthemic demolition of online haters, *Troglodyte*. The band, led by charismatic heavily tattooed frontman Sebastian Murphy, are transformed into Ape-men, displaying their familiar louche rock 'n roll manner to the fury of a middle aged white male keyboard warrior who orders 'killer shrimps' online to teach those slackers a lesson. But who can resist the laid-back charm of Seb and the boys?

The next piece is not actually a music video at all, but a short film that is also... a musical. Obviously, no-one likes musicals (well, that's what everyone always says) but hang on... Will Wightman's film *Heart Failure* is also a very relatable comedy about the minefield of relationships and the pain of breakups – especially if you happen to be a Gen Z slacker. Wightman wrote the script and the music and lyrics as well as directed – which he made as his graduation film from Falmouth Art School (hence the cinematic Cornish location in which its set). This is a precociously good start to what promises to be a very exciting career.

In Abteen Bagheri's video for Benjamin Earl Turner, the LA rapper is running from the bad guys who want to riddle him with bullets at every turn. But luckily he has a special friend watching his back: Habib (played by Dane Dilegro), a 7 foot man-cum-rhino, who is Benjamin's constant and very able companion. With a gritty, 16mm film aesthetic (shot by DoP Kate Arizmendi) Bagheri has created an outlandish scenario that nevertheless feels palpably real due to resolutely non-digital 'creature effects' work. Turner's buddy is the result of prosthetics and animatronics – a real mask/head creation, with internal wiring to enable changing facial expressions – and hands, created by Alec Gillis.

Ashley Connor's video for alt-rock legends Sleater-Kinney (now a duo comprised of Corin Tucker and Carrie Brownstein) is a showcase for the talents of director/writer/ performer Miranda July and a raw artistic expression on the nature of grief. Brownstein suffered a



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personal tragedy last year and the song *Hell* is informed with that experience, interpreted by July in a theatrical, abstract performance piece, flipping between near mania, in a kind of joyless pursuit of pleasure, to lonely desolation and beyond – and always as a counterweight to the energy of the song. The effect is intense and intimate, captured by renowned cinematographer Connor while she was 7 months pregnant. It's a powerful statement on the agony of loss – and the need to carry on.

East London troubadour Hak Baker's debut album came out this year, with videos that cemented his reputation as an artist who excels in the music video medium. Directed by Irish director Hugh Mulhern, the videos for *Telephones 4 Eyes* and *Doolally* also featured some of the best use of AI in music videos this year, where the gritty world described in Baker's songs is transformed into a cartoonish and psychedelic experience. In *Doolally* in particular, AI generative animation is used, as well as 3D animation, props and puppets, to create the untethered mass of imagery that adds a hallucinogenic quality to the story of how Hak and his mates progress on a seriously big night out.

Norwegian director Kasper Haggström has become a favourite at BUG over the past few years for his signature comic style. In the Haggström world, the aesthetic of downbeat Scandinavian drama clashes head-on with absurdist comedy. His latest triumph is for British alt-rock outfit Squid. In *The Blades*, a young woman played by Charlotte Ritchie becomes the victim of petty bureaucracy in the waiting room of an institutional building, her hapless predicament leading to a moment of existential reflection and flight from reality. Haggström channels some 20th century greats (Kafka, Beckett, Tony Hancock) and the video features lovely performances from Ritchie and Tamsin Heatley as her pettifogging nemesis.

While several videos we are showing tonight won awards at the recent UKMVAs, one of the biggest accolades on the night – The Icon Award – went to directing duo Dom&Nic (that's Dominic Hawley and Nicolas Goffey) for their contribution to music video creativity for nearly 30 years. This year they directed their tenth video for The Chemical Brothers for *Live Again* – and like so many of their previous videos, they have broken new ground. Dom&Nic used a virtual production stage to create a continuous dance performance, by captivating and elastic dancer Josipa Kukor, through multiple environments. She repeatedly wakes in her trailer to find herself in a different place, from desert to night-time city, to Martian worlds – created in Real Time CGI at Untold Studios. Dom&Nic could switch between these environments live on set, within takes. The result is yet another brilliant video.

In several BUG shows last year we regularly added a *bona fide* classic video to the running order – and we are doing the same tonight. This time, it's one of the greatest British pop videos ever. Kylie Minogue has had a very successful 2023 with a huge hit song in *Padam Padam*. But we are turning the clock back more than 20 years to when she rose from mere pop star to pop icon status with the huge success of *Can't Get You Out of My Head* – and that brilliant video directed by Dawn Shadforth.

Which leads us to a present-day iconic video. In May, director Camille Summers-Valli introduced us to an exciting new artist with an explosively joyful visual. Mette Towley has forged a career as a dancer, appearing on stage and in videos for the likes of Pharrell and Rihanna, and she is now stepping out on her own as METTE. The video for her first single, the gospel-influenced *Mama's Eyes* is a rousing showcase for her talents – and Summers-Valli combines METTE's charismatic performance and dance moves with a vast range of stock footage and the artist's home movie footage in a brilliantly turbo-charged, visually witty edit. The video has been scooping up awards ever since – including at the recent UK Music Video Awards where it won Video of the Year and Best Editing, for veteran British editor Vid Price.

One of the most entertaining videos of the year – and another award-winner at the recent UKMVAs – came right at the start of 2023, when London rapper AntsLive and director Tom Emmerson made a rap video in a very surprising location: the Italian Alps. In a series of dazzlingly colourful picture-postcard style vignettes, Ants upends convention, displaying considerable charm and some bravery as he takes to his surroundings: riding on horseback, wooing the farmer's daughter, hitching on the side of a fire engine. He shares the screen with possibly the greatest goat of all time, but with his cheeky sense of mischief, Ants always remains the undisputed star of the show. Made with a low-budget, but lots of preparation – it was shot over 2 weeks and Ants spent 10 days before that learning to ride. Its success has led to two ambitious sequel videos for Ants by Emmerson this year, and the director signing with a top production company.

Enjoy our show. We will be back in 2024 with more BUG fun.

Programme notes and credits compiled by Sight and Sound and the BFI Documentation Unit

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Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk