



E. Charlotte Stevens

Fanvids

Television, Women,
and Home Media Re-Use

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Transmedia: Participatory Culture and Media Convergence

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Introduction

Abstract

How can we take vids seriously as works in their own right? The introduction chapter of *Fanvids* covers a brief history of media fandom, which I understand as the productive home media audiences who adopt domestic technology as tools for remix and recombination to create interventions into their own media landscape. This chapter contains an overview of the structure and aims of the monograph. This chapter also describes the different genres and categorizations of vids, each of which illuminate a different facet of a vid's argument or the kinds of transformation enacted in the vid.

Keywords: fanvids, television, fan studies, vidding genres

What is a vid? Also known as a fanvid, it has its origins in videotape-related practices of media fandom and was known as a fan music video or songtape. Today, vids are one variety of fan-made short videos made from the segmentation and re-editing of existing audio-visual sources with a popular song as soundtrack. There is a developing consensus among scholars about the definition of a vid. Francesca Coppa characterizes it as 'a visual essay' (2008: 1.1) designed 'to make an argument or tell a story' (2009: 108) or, as Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson describe it, 'to analyze a particular character' (2006: 12). Anne Kustritz calls it 'a form of remix video collage' (2014: 225), one that according to Tisha Turk 'integrat[es] repurposed media images with repurposed music' (2011: 84). Turk goes on to note that 'one of the most interesting things about vidding is that it involves *both* interpreting commercial texts *and* producing new texts for an audience of fellow fans' (2015: 164, emphasis in original). A vid is typically (though not exclusively) made *of* film and television but is not film or television itself, though it intersects with histories of media circulation and spectatorship practices. Accordingly, this book's chapters are organized around themes of collecting and archiving media, of the visual pleasures of film and television as presented through the

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vid, and of the adaptation and transformation of narrative within the vid. Vids are a textual expression of fannish interpretation, and their production has been enabled by the development of home media technologies from the VCR through to the personal computer.

I have written *Fanvids: Television, Media, and Home Media Re-Use* at a time when an awareness of transmedia storytelling is a constant background to discussions of popular culture. The safe economic bet of a further instalment of a franchise or an adaptation of a story successful in one medium to another (not to mention direct remakes) has provided a swell of ‘sequels, prequels, adaptations, transpositions, or modifications’ (Ryan and Thon 2014: 1) to familiar storyworlds. For the fan communities that follow the novels, films, video games, and television series that engender these storyworlds and who do the work of engaging with characters and scenarios across their different iterations (Scolari, Bertetti, and Feeman 2014), these provide a bounty of potentially complex storyworlds. Indeed, the way media fandom approaches its creative fanworks—with an ethos of repetition, variation, and the pleasure of the iteration—is echoed by these official productions.

In this book, I do not analyse narrative strategies in which a unified storyworld is presented across multiple platforms, nor do I examine technologies employed to invite sustained audience engagement (see Evans 2011; Stein 2015; Kohnen 2018). Instead, I take vids as paratexts (Gray 2010) that are part of an ‘interdependent, dynamic transmedia system’ (Stein 2015: 6), where the vid is a fan-led extension of the source material. I follow a ‘looser definition of transmedia’ that allows for ‘audiences as well as official authors [to] co-construct transmedia narratives, storyworlds, and frames for engagement’ (Stein and Busse 2012: 14). The critical and creative work done by fans through their fanworks is part of the cross-platform narration that extends storyworlds past the bounds of official production. As with contemporary English-language Western popular culture more broadly, the transmedia context is a constant undercurrent through this work.

In this book, I aim to take vids seriously as texts in their own right and as texts that can withstand critical and aesthetic analysis. In doing so, I am adopting and extending an argument put forth by Jason Jacobs in relation to using textual analysis for the study of television: ‘that while some programmes are designed as pleasant casual distraction [...] many will be able to withstand the kinds of critical pressure that we normally apply to other artworks’ (2001: 431). This volume reconsiders the boundaries of television and of television studies while exploring how to approach texts like vids which are most often *made of* television but are not *on* television. One boundary is that of medium specificity: the distinction between film

and television as separate media is eliminated in vids, as both were treated as different forms of video before media convergence in the 2010s made it reasonable to consider (as does Newman 2014) all kinds of moving image to be digital video.

Brief Introduction to Media Fandom and a History of Vids

The vid is a product of media fandom. As a subset of media audiences, fan audiences are ‘distinguishable from the general audience in their emotional connection to their specialized interest’ (Brayton 2006: 138) and the way they self-identify as members of a subculture. Fan studies as an interdisciplinary field and the many current acceptable ways of ‘being a fan’ lead to competing and nuanced definitions of how one distinguishes ‘fans’ from ‘audiences’ (Click and Scott 2018: 2). For my purposes here, I focus on media fandom and on works produced within the ‘established and insular’ vidding community (Russo 2016: 448) that grew out of the organization of mostly female audiences of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (NBC, 1964-1968) and *Star Trek* (NBC, 1966-1969) and whose interest in these series was expressed in part through critical and creative responses. Media fandom continues to have a strong interest in television, though often in connection to other media. Therefore, this study examines vids made out of and in relation to television on the whole; however, as will be demonstrated throughout, the re-use of home media in the vid suggests a minimal difference between the home use of film and television.

Fanworks represent a diverse array of engagement with films, television series, and other media. These creative practices include critical and artistic work across all media and occur both online and off. Alongside vid-making (vidding), fans write fan fiction (fanfic, or fic), which is prose fiction of many different lengths and styles (Jenkins 1992; Bacon-Smith 1992; Jamison 2013; Hellekson and Busse 2014). Podfic is an audio performance of fic, sometimes including elaborate audio design (De Kosnik 2016; Kustritz 2017). Fan art can include the visual arts and handicrafts, such as knitting, quilting, jewellery making, stained glass, and woodworking (Hills 2014; Persky 2015; Busse 2015; Phillips and Freund 2016). Outside these specific creative practices, fans may also attend, organize, and/or contribute programming for fan conventions (Amesley 1989; Jenkins 1992; Stevens 2017a; Gilbert 2018), where it is common to see cosplay, that is, attending in costume (Lamerichs 2011; Kirkpatrick 2015; Scott 2015). The most common fanworks are critical commentaries on media texts through mailing lists (as paper zines and online), online



message boards, blogging communities, in conversation, and other social media (Cumberland 2000; Verba 2003; Bury 2017). Vids exist between these creative and critical responses.

This book is concerned with vids in the tradition of works first shared at media fandom conventions such as Escapade and Media West in the United States in the 1980s. VividCon is a multi-day vid-specific convention that met annually from 2002-2018; its European counterpart, VidUKon, has been running since 2008. Other fan conventions include vids in their programming. The first vids in this tradition were made on videotape and were themselves inspired by a series of slide shows presented at American *Star Trek* fan conventions in the 1970s. The first of these was Kandy Fong's *What Do You Do With a Drunken Vulcan?* (1975).¹ This performance showed slides—made from film left over from editing *Star Trek* episodes—in time to a fan-recorded cassette soundtrack (Coppa 2008: 3.1-3.3). The videotape works that followed were inspired by Fong's work but lacked her privileged access to offcuts. Instead, domestic VCRs were used to edit off-air recordings with a similar creative and critical purpose.² In this way, vids tell part of the story of audiences' re-use of media; this is explored further in the discussion in Chapter 4 of audiences who maintain personal archives of media.

Media fans Kendra Hunter and Diane Barbour made *Starsky & Hutch* (ABC, 1975-1979) vids on videotape 'as early as 1980' (Coppa 2008: 4.1), but identifying the first vid ever made is not possible—and truly, establishing precedence is beside the point. As the form was shared at conventions—luring new potential vidders to try their hand after stumbling across a vidshow in progress (Coppa 2011), for example—vidding turned the living room (or other domestic space) into a site of media production for an overwhelmingly female audience. Videotape compilations of vids were shared with other fans at conventions and were traded through the mail, which required personal contact with other fans. In order to learn about this form, interested fans would attend workshops at conventions or join a videotape collective (Penley 1991; Bacon-Smith 1992; Jenkins 1992; Coppa 2011). As early as 1992 (Coppa 2006: 53), online resources enabled a transformation of this body of knowledge, as the internet broadened the accessibility of fandom. Vidding was aided and enabled by related fan practices of tape-sharing and collecting,

1 Vids are short videos that are self-contained and released as individual works. Accordingly, I format vid titles and use an in-text citation style that follows the convention for complete works (italicized) rather than for segments of longer works (in quotation marks).

2 A complementary trajectory towards the vid occurred within *Xena: Warrior Princess* (Renaissance Pictures/Universal TV, 1995-2001) fandom, which 'evolved without direct roots to the traditional vidding community' (laurashapiro 2007).



and this circulation of media has been accelerated by digital file-sharing and the increased power of personal computers and reach of broadband internet (see De Kosnik 2016 for a discussion of fan spaces online). Today, there are innumerable websites, communities, blogs, and discussion forums that share information about the vidding process.

The critical consensus is that women are an unambiguous majority in media fandom despite occasional fandoms attracting different genders and identities, a position that has not changed since the first wave of fan studies work. Constance Penley (1991) and Camille Bacon-Smith (1992) write from the position that media fandom is a female subculture.³ Jenkins describes his experience of fan spaces and practices as ‘largely female, largely white, largely middle-class, though it welcomes into its ranks many who would not fit this description’ (1992: 1). This presumption of whiteness has persisted (Pande 2016; Pande 2018), and the implicit monolingual and monocultural nature of the field may well be ‘a holdover from the earliest days of English-language fan studies’ (Morimoto and Chin 2017: 177). This project does not take great steps to challenge these presumptions, as it is grounded in the analysis of fan re-workings of (mainly) Anglo-American source material, circulated among fans who frequent spaces associated with fan conventions in Britain and the United States, in dialogue with critical literature developed in similar contexts. However, and while recognizing that an individual’s experience of gender is complex, I understand vidding as arising from a space that has historically been composed of ‘primarily female fans’ (Busse 2009: 106), where vids are made ‘overwhelmingly by women’ (Coppa 2009: 107). As a member of the community—though not as a vidder myself—I write from a position of experiencing vidding as a spectator and not a practitioner, in the same way that I might ask a television studies or film studies class to discuss a piece of television or a film with an awareness of production contexts without necessarily having empirical knowledge of those industries.

In addition to gender, the pseudonymity of fan creators is an understood part of the presentation of fanworks. Accordingly, I credit vidders using the names under which they release their work. Indeed, the fluctuating permissibility of format-shifting and legal re-uses of media for artistic and/or critical purposes is a further reason to maintain the pseudonymous vid credit. Sharon Marie Ross (2008) reports that her respondents were

3 I acknowledge that conflating biological sex and performative gender in a binary is reductive and not uniformly accurate. However, for brevity’s sake, I use ‘woman’ and ‘female’ interchangeably and include trans* identities as an opposition to the cisgendered male positionality.

appreciative of online anonymity. This freedom to explore one's private interests without fear of discovery is significant, as outing oneself as a fan is still potentially a source of shame (Larsen and Zubernis 2012), and 'work and personal relationships' can be 'negatively affected by an outing' (Busse and Hellekson 2012: 39; see also Lothian 2012). While the vidders whose work I cite do often use ambiguously gendered pseudonyms, the evidence provided by the above accounts of gender in media fandom leads to the creditable assumption that vids are, on the whole, made by (and for) women.

Structure and Aims

This study seeks to analyse how meaning is constructed in vids: as dialogues between the clips as edited and the use of the chosen song, and between the expectations for narrative and/or character development as constructed by the source material and the argument put forth by the vid itself. Vids remake narratives for a deeply attentive fan audience that is watching with an extensive knowledge of the source text or with sufficient familiarity of the vid form's codes and conventions. My examples are mainly vids of live-action narrative fiction because this reflects the majority of vids in media fandom as I understand it and covers technological changes in television from VCRs and the rise of the home video to digital viewership. This definition leaves out AMVs (anime music videos; see Roberts 2012), machinima (Lowood and Nitsche 2011), and other recent digital remix video forms (e.g. supercuts, faux trailers), which are related practices but are not part of this particular tradition. Indeed, by gathering together a selection of vids for this book, I am effectively arguing that the rich history of fans' media re-use means that vidding can stand on its own.

The organizing question for this study asks what a vid is and, by extension, what vids are to television and film. The vid form's dense textuality, its use of evolving media technologies, and its correspondence with non-institutional archives suggest congruence with the extra-textual life of television: if television is re-edited outside of television's flow or combined with excerpts from film, does it stop being television? How does television exist outside of television? Ultimately, vids are not television; however, their form, content, and context are derived from television and therefore deserve to be part of a more comprehensive contemporary history of home viewing and recording. Exploring the boundaries of television does not automatically indicate an interdisciplinary project, as the hybridity and expansion of television studies



(cf. Brunsdon 1998) follow the movement of television audiences' use of the medium and its products.

This book is structured into six chapters: the first two discuss the context and approach for this research, and this is followed by four chapters with case studies that each take a complementary view of vids and vidding. The first chapter, 'Critical Contexts: Television Studies, Fandom Studies, and the Vid', explores what a television scholar can learn from the story of vids and vidding. This chapter considers the vid form and vidding practice in relation to the academic histories of television and television audiences. It covers the history of productive (female) home media audiences who have adopted domestic technology as tools for remixing and recombining to create radical interventions into their own media landscape. Indeed, vidding is possible technologically because televisual flow can be interrupted, excerpted, and returned to. The second chapter, 'Approach: How to Study a Vid', discusses my approach to textual analysis and what can be learned from studying vids as texts unto themselves. This chapter also explores canon formation in television/media studies and how this can apply to studying a marginal form. The third chapter, 'Proximate Forms and Sites of Encounter: Music Video and Experimental Tradition', works through specific academic framings of similar forms such as found footage films in the experimental tradition and music video; it also discusses how vids have been incorporated into recent gallery exhibitions.

The remaining three case study chapters each focus on a different aspect of how the vid form relates to television, exploring how attention to vids—as a method of sharing paths through media texts—can nuance an understanding of the possible ways to relate to television and other media. The first of these, Chapter 4, 'Textures of Fascination: Archives, Vids, and Vernacular Historiography', asks what the analysis of vids can reveal about histories, memories, and practices of watching television. This chapter compares contrasting theoretical understandings of collections and archives to contextualize the archival work done by vidders. Videotape vids bear traces of their archival origins, as the selective use of clips and the wear evident on the copies strongly indicate a viewer's favourite moments, telling a historical story about practices of re-viewing, interpretation, and memorialization of texts. Given the gendered reality of vid production, these women's histories of viewing and practices of spectatorship are immanent in the vid text as textural/aesthetic qualities. In this chapter, I argue that the home media collection has created conditions for media fans' creative expression and critical analysis. These archival traces are visible on the vids themselves, which chronicle, for example, the unofficial distribution

networks of videotape and the practice of returning to favourite scenes that cause wear on the tape itself. These personal historiographies are presented in the content and texture of a vid. I focus on vids from the 1980s and 1990s that were made on videotape and conclude with a discussion of the archival look of certain *Star Trek* vids in relation to bootleg textures: the aesthetic traces of analogue and digital video.

Chapter 5, 'Critical Spectatorship and Spectacle: Multifandom Vids', asks how we can account for vids that combine multiple source texts into one work. This chapter focuses specifically on multifandom vids, a genre of vidding that draws together video clips from several sources and that demonstrate ways of watching broadly across media texts. It expands on the premise of the previous chapter to discuss the vid form as detailing a mode of spectatorship that works across a genre (e.g. science fiction) or other set of related texts (e.g. Clark Kent and Lex Luthor in a transmedia romance across films, animated and live-action television series, and comic book pages). In this, vids are the record of more than the interpretation of a single text: they construct 'paths' through genres, transmedia narratives, or even actors' careers and therefore raise issues of stardom and performance. Alongside critical work on found footage films, this chapter analyses the visual pleasures of vids and their relationship with audience fascinations of erotics, of spectacle, and of the pleasures offered by various genres.

Finally, the sixth chapter, 'Adapting Kara Thrace: Dualbunny's *Battlestar Galactica* Trilogy', asks what it means for a series or film to be adapted to a vid. Vids draw out and remake texts and can potentially address faults in the source text, correct them through pointed exclusions, and even supersede the source text in its fulfilment of promises of progressive representation. This final case study chapter is an analysis of three *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2003-2009) vids, designed to examine both the vid's relationship with adaptation and genre and the central role that songs play in making meaning in vids. While vids rely heavily on their soundtrack to structure meaning within the work, they are not abstract illustrations of songs. Instead, the clichés and idioms of the chosen song's instrumentation are vital in completing the vid's reinterpretation of its source text. In this case, the music, voice, and star image of the recording artist Pink are instrumental in appraising the character development of Kara 'Starbuck' Thrace in this vid trilogy. These three vids were made at different points while the series was still in production, and each work reflects the development of the character and memorializes the potential for, and perhaps desire for, a particular kind of feminist representation.



Fannish Genres and the Vid

Throughout this book, I use the terminology of fandom instead of adopting categorization associated with found footage film, remix video, or other proximate forms. Just as film and television broadly conform to genres, each with their own tendencies and characteristics, so too can vids be grouped into recognizable genres. In any discussion of films or television programmes, it is generally accepted that the critic or scholar will have a wide viewing experience and general knowledge of similar texts in order to inform analysis. However, as I am aware that the vid form still is marginal and can often be mistaken for similar forms, I offer the following explanations developed during the course of my research and long personal involvement with fandom. Vids can be difficult to interpret for those who may know the source material but not fandom norms, but the captioning effect and structuring created by vids' soundtracks make vids generally accessible to non-fannish viewers. It is common in vids to address character psychology, proposing a voice for characters' inner thoughts and feelings. As Jonathan Gray argues, this probing of 'a character's psyche leads to many of the form's better offerings' (2010: 157). Indeed, fanworks have long been a place to expand upon characterization in a context where the episodic structure of television runs counter to character development.

As with fanfiction, vids may be classed as *gen*, *het*, and *slash*, indicating whether the work includes romantic pairings. *Gen* typically refers to a *general* work, one that does not focus on sexual relationships. *Het* involves a *heterosexual* pairing of characters in a relationship either present in the original material or created in the work. *Slash* works create a narrative space that elaborates a 'perceived homoerotic subtext' (Busse and Hellekson 2006: 10) in the primary work. The term refers to the typographical mark separating the characters being 'slashed' (i.e. 'Kirk/Spock' is the pairing of Kirk and Spock), which indicates that a fanwork will 'concern a same-sex relationship between the two men' (Penley 1991: 137). In pre-internet zine fandom, 'K&S' would indicate that the work contains the two characters but is *gen*, not *slash*.⁴ Scholarly attention to media fandom has sought to explain the appeal of *slash*, with explanations ranging from an idealization

4 The intermediary stage of this terminology can be seen in 1980s fanzines; for example, contributions to *S&H Letterzine* #36 (October 1982), refer to "'/' fiction'. In digital fandom, a forward slash (/) is an essential part of a URL, and as such can disrupt hashtags on sites such as Tumblr and Instagram. This has led to single-word portmanteau 'ship names' derived from the characters' names: 'drarry' replaces 'Draco/Harry' or 'Harry/Draco' or 'H/D'.

of romance without gender hierarchies (Penley 1991; Busse and Hellekson 2006) to 'a way of doubling the number of objects of erotic consideration' on offer (Kaveney 2010: 245). As Julie Levin Russo (2018) points out, slash on its own tends to indicate a male/male relationship, with the all-female variant requiring a separate term: femslash, or femmeslash. Slash fandom is arguably where vidding began.

There are countless slash vids, and I will use talitha78's vid *Fever* (2010) as an illustrative example. It pairs an Adam Lambert song about explicit sexual attraction with the many clips from Guy Ritchie's 2009 *Sherlock Holmes* film in which Holmes (Robert Downey Jr.) and Watson (Jude Law) share the frame, exchanging a variety of fond and exasperated glances. The song amplifies (or constructs, depending on one's perspective) a desiring subtext underlying each glance, with the repeated lyric 'Would you be mine?' giving voice to an unspoken mutual attraction. These do not necessarily need to be limited to a duo: *Parachute* (thingswithwings, 2014) is a *Leverage* (TNT, 2008-2012) vid articulating the bond between three central characters, and in addition to appropriately romantic lyrics, the song's polyphony in the final repetitions of the chorus underscores its argument about the multiple directions of affection in this triad. Such *ship* vids (once styled '*ship*', short for 'relationship') can act as explicit declarations of romantic desire or friendship beyond the relationships that are demonstrated in the text. Some vids can be *friendshippy* and imply a close but not necessarily sexual bond between characters. *Kryptonite* (Seah and Margie, 2002), for example, is an *Invisible Man* (Sci-Fi Channel, 2000-2002) vid about the show's two main characters highlighting their friendship, mutual respect, and willingness to sacrifice themselves for their partner. It uses the song 'Kryptonite' by 3 Doors Down as its soundtrack. The close bond between the characters could be read as platonic or romantic, though not explicitly desiring or erotic as with *Fever*.

Vid genres are also defined by the nature of the transformation enacted within the work rather than by their ship. These include (but are not limited to) *character study*, *constructed reality*, *multifandom*, *meta*, and *recruiter* vids. These genres have fluid boundaries, can be hybridized, and may be known by different names in different fandom communities. I use terminology drawn from my experiences attending and participating in vidding conventions in the US and the UK,⁵ with reference to convention programme books and to the fan-written wiki site fanlore.org. While this is not an exhaustive list of vid genres, it indicates the form's possible variations and uses.

5 Including contributing programming to VidUKon (see Stevens 2017a).

Character study vids are focused on examining a single character's motivation and development with a minimal degree of transformation of the source narrative. In *Thousand Eyes* (thuvia ptharth, 2018), the 54 episodes of *Nirvana in Fire* (琅琊榜, Shandong Film & TV Production/Daylight Entertainment, 2015) are condensed to explore the emotional journey of the protagonist Lin Shu (Hu Ge, 胡歌), also known as Mei Changsu, as he enacts a complex political scheme. The plot of *Nirvana in Fire* is not transformed, and essential character elements are drawn out for a viewer familiar with the series as a whole. Character study vids are particularly effective in promoting secondary characters to a leading role within the bounds of the vid. For example, *The Adventure* (greensilver, 2012) uses clips of the *Harry Potter* film series (2001–2011) that feature supporting character Neville Longbottom (Matthew Lewis). Narrative economy limits the amount of diegetic introspection a supporting character can have, but character study vids are a way to devote a concentration of screen time to the feelings, experiences, and motivations of characters beyond the main few. For the duration of the vid, Neville is the hero: as his small acts of courage through the film series are collected and displayed, the vidder argues that Neville has been just as vital as Harry (Daniel Radcliffe) himself in defeating Voldemort (Ralph Fiennes). What is more, the extended production cycle of the *Harry Potter* series—eight films released over a ten-year span—means the vid captures Lewis-as-Neville growing up on screen. When used to treat secondary characters, character study vids have a pleasurable tinge of righteous justification, as underdogs are given a heroic space or villains are granted the illicit allure of an anti-hero.

Constructed reality vids use clips to construct a new narrative, sometimes including clips beyond the single source to build a cohesive story. As with all vids, constructed reality vids rely on editing and song choice to create these alternate storylines. For example, *Opportunities (Let's Make Lots Of Money)* (Killa and Carol S., c. 2001), cuts together clips from *Highlander: The Series* (Gaumont Télévision, 1992–1998) with the Pet Shop Boys song 'Opportunities' to make it appear as if the subjects have decided on a 'life of crime' (as described in the vid's opening credits). The original source contains all the elements which could then be recombined into a new narrative with radically different meanings. While a slash vid may appear to be constructing a reality for its subjects, slash vids amplify subtext, using clips as evidence of desire or affection and not to construct a new narrative.

The fandom being vidded does not necessarily need to have a visual source. Fans of comedy/horror podcast series *Welcome to Night Vale* (Commonplace Books, 2012–present) have used the principles of constructed reality



to create vids of this audio-only source. One particularly well-executed and effective example is *Bloody Shirt* (unfinishedidea, 2014), which gathers clips from eighteen film and television sources to construct a visual reality for the podcast. *Bloody Shirt* does not create visuals to illustrate any particular episode or narrative arc but instead creates an abstract and atmospheric space that draws on the same narrative conventions and tropes that are used in *Night Vale* itself. While the vid does use multiple sources, it is not a multifandom vid because the clips are adopted as representations of *Night Vale*, its residents, and the history of its community radio station rather than being used as individual examples in a vid that compares and contrasts multiple fandoms. Vidders have also composed vids based on novels by Octavia Butler, Lois McMaster Bujold, and Ben Aaronovich by way of the same kind of creative analogy.

Multifandom vids, discussed at length in Chapter 5, use multiple television series and/or films as their source material—that is, they draw from multiple fandoms—to mount a comparison or demonstrate contrasts between the various sources, enacting a kind of audio-visual genre study. For example, *Around the Bend* (Danegen, 2010) collects clips and still images of women operating cars, motorcycles, and aircraft to celebrate the representation of a female presence in activities traditionally dominated by men. These include not only selections from cult film and television sources but also historical/archival footage, examples of world cinema, and commercial music videos. As is typical for multifandom vids, there is no particular narrative. Instead, it uses The Asteroids Galaxy Tour's jubilant song 'Around the Bend' to construct a diegetic space dominated by happy and confident women in charge of these powerful machines. The organizing logic of the vid groups each mode of transportation, which allows the viewer to evaluate and appreciate the repetition and variation across the many examples included in the vid.

Meta vids make a comment about an issue or situation beyond the narrative in the vid itself. These may often be multifandom vids, as they use clips from multiple sources to compare and contrast issues of representation. For example, Laura Shapiro's unsettling *Stay Awake* (2010) matches congruent storylines from series such as *Farscape* (Nine Network/Sci-Fi Channel, 1999-2003), *Battlestar Galactica*, and *The X-Files* (FOX, 1993-2002) to highlight the problematic representation of the pregnant female body in science fiction television. Other meta vids take vidding itself as their subject, including clips from other vids to comment on the form's potential and successes, such as *Us* (lim, 2007) and *Destiny Calling* (counteragent, 2008).

Finally, the *recruiter* vid is intended to convince a viewer to watch the vid's source text. These can adhere to any of the main genres (gen, het,



or slash) and will highlight aesthetic or thematic elements that make the series appear compelling. For example, Jayne L.'s *Fireworks* (2010) was made to solicit new viewers for the television series *Power Play* (CTV, 1998-2000), a lesser-known Canadian series about a fictional hockey team. Vids do not have to be made as recruiter vids to be used as such, though there is a distinction drawn in fandom between a vid made explicitly to grow a fandom and vids addressing an existing audience. As a personal aside, my first experience of watching vids (after years of following discussions about vids on the alt.tv.x-files.creative newsgroup without seeing any myself) was part of a friend's efforts to introduce me to *Farscape*: we did not watch a full episode but rather started with *Farscape* vids. These served as trailers or teasers for the show but also shared their creators' arguments about what made the series compelling. (For the record, this approach was successful, and I was duly recruited.) As Jonathan Gray argues, successful vids 'have something interesting, substantive, and/or revelatory to say about the show' or other source material (2010: 159). Vid genres are significant in part because they offer different frameworks against which to re-present their sources.

These genres are all linked through the role of music in vids, particularly in constructing subjectivity in character study or relationship vids, but song choice is relevant to all vid genres. In *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins argued that, when watching vids, 'viewers are often totally disinterested in the identity of the original singer(s) but are prepared to see the musical performance as an expression of the thoughts, feelings, desires, and fantasies of the fictional character(s)' (1992: 235). To argue that 'nondiagetic [sic] performers play little or no role within fan videos' (Jenkins 1992: 235) is to suggest that a song's lyrics take precedence over its other aural connotations. While the individual performer may be irrelevant to the vid's immediate construction, the song's instrumentation and the performer's voice are fundamental to how vids are understood. Nondiagetic *performers* may have little or no role, but their *performances* are vital.

In a vid, musical performance is used to express a character's interiority, and the accompaniment to those lyrics is just as influential and theoretically complex as screen music more generally. The study of the vid form requires recognizing the importance of musical genre, instrumentation, and performance in providing context for re-used clips beyond lyrical signification. Just as one's tone of voice can greatly alter meaning when speaking, the genre of song and performance do much of the 'heavy lifting' in conveying and directing meaning in a vid. While other vid genres rely on images to tell their story or present their analyses, multifandom vids are more abstract and rely on the signification of the image *as* an image.

Whereas slash vids work well with love songs (as one would expect) and character study vids tend to need lyrics that describe a person and/or their motivations, multifandom vids can be very effective with dance music, featuring short verses and long repeating choruses or nonsensical lyrics. These provide a structure for the vid but put the burden of meaning-making on the clips themselves and the performances in the song. Indeed, as it is possible to make successful vids using instrumental songs, lyrics are not always necessary.

Conclusion

This book engages with the vid as a form intimately related to television, as a product of a kind of spectatorship, and as a way of interacting with media that took full advantage of developments in home video technology. Throughout, I draw on related literature within fan studies, television and film studies, and screen studies more broadly to undertake a sustained exploration of the ways in which vids carry with them traces of production and interpretation.

The vid, as a complex technological cultural artifact, is worthy of as much critical academic attention as other forms of fan activity such as fan fiction, and yet vids have only relatively recently been the subject of scholarship. The vid is a form of cultural production that represents a unique relationship to technology and media: it is a product of a decades-long, organized, parallel industry in which material and immaterial production is linked to practitioners' knowledge as both technically skilled digital and active and critical audience members. The vid form strongly suggests an audience that is competent in the deep reading and careful viewing of mainstream and cult television and film and that keeps archives of media with which they engage both critically and creatively.

Vids are made by women in media fandom and are their responses to tendencies in mainstream media and cult texts that marginalize women's stories and experiences, reframing narratives that exclude them. This book also highlights the importance of stardom and performance to television audiences, and the pleasures and attractions of television and film that are made visible and concentrated in vids argues for an audience whose spectatorship is based on more than a concern about narratives unfolding. Fundamentally, this study argues that the vid form demonstrates that television's active audiences are active *media* audiences, watching broadly across various screen media. This takes into account the importance of



the songs used in vids because instrumentation, vocal performance, and lyrics all caption a vid's moving images. The interplay between sound and image in vids is where meaning is derived; the vid form is therefore about more than simply viewing.

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