
LADIES &
GENTLEMEN
ROCK &
ROLL
MTV


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Ladies and Gentlemen Rock and Roll
By Eden Chalmers
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INTRODUCTION

This publication celebrates MTV turning 40 in 2021. Throughout will include history, logo development and archived photography from the early years of the television channel.

MTV (originally an initialism of Music Television) is an American cable channel that launched on August 1, 1981. Based in New York City, it serves as the flagship property of the MTV Entertainment Group, part of ViacomCBS Domestic Media Networks, a division of ViacomCBS. Prior to launch, the network was first tested on December 1, 1977, as Sight on Sound.

The channel originally aired music videos and related programming as guided by television personalities known as video jockeys or 'VJs'. In the years since its inception, it significantly toned down its focus on music in favor of original reality programming for teenagers and young adults.

"MTV WOULD CHANGE THE WAY WE CONSUMED MUSIC AND HAS LEAD TO SOME OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS IN POP CULTURE





PREVIOUS CONCEPTS & INITIAL LAUNCH

MTV's original purpose was to be "music television", playing music videos 24/7, guided by on-air personalities known as VJs, or video jockeys (inspired by DJ, for "disc jockey"). Its original slogans were "You'll never look at music the same way again", and "On cable. In stereo."

Music Television or MTV was a channel that was created by Viacom Media Networks and it was launched on August 1, 1981. The idea of creating specialty channels such as MTV came from a division of Warner Communications called Warner Cable. They launched the first two-way interactive cable TV system in Columbus, Ohio and the named it QUBE which was able to offer a handful of specialty channels in 1977.

One of the specialty channels was entitled "Sight on Sound" and it was a music channel that showed clips from different concerts and other shows that were music oriented. Generally speaking, Sight on Sound didn't show any music videos and it was more of a channel that was made to showcase different music in various formats.
MTV launched at

QUBE was an interactive cable TV system and it enabled viewers to engage by voting on things like their favorite albums, songs, and artists. During that time, the voting was done through telephones and mail.

Until one day a man named Robert V. Pittman (one of the guys who created MTV and a successful businessman) saw that QUBE's concept had the potential to be taken in a more innovative direction. Pittman came up with that idea when he was hosting a 15-minute show called "Album Tracks" during the late '70s. This idea plus the interactive format that Warner Cable used in QUBE helped set the stage for the birth of MTV



Warner Cable Logo
Viacom Logo
Robet V. Pittman
QUBE Logo

on August 1, 1981. They debuted with the phrase "Ladies and gentlemen, rock-and-roll". This was spoken by John Lack and was played over footage of the countdown to the launch of the space shuttle Columbia.

This kicked into the original MTV theme song while an image of an American Flag on the moon changed to the MTV logo. The first music video on MTV, which at the time was available only to homes in New Jersey, was the Buggles' "Video Killed the Radio Star".

It was followed by Pat Benatar's "You Better Run". Occasionally the screen went black when an employee at MTV inserted a tape into a VCR. MTV's lower third graphics near the beginnings and ends of videos eventually used the recognizable Kabel typeface for about 25 years; but they varied on MTV's first day, speaking in a different typeface, and including details such as the song's year and record label.



MTV Debut
The Buggles
John Lack







LOGO DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

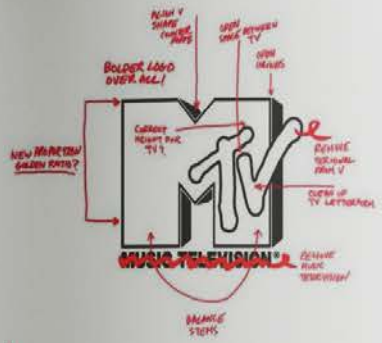
Iconic combination of letters "M," "T," and "V," flickering triumphantly in place of stars and stripes—and signaling the launch of a radical new television network. This spot would kick off nearly four decades of MTV's impact on youth culture, much of which has been successful thanks to its ever-changing visual identity.

Before its launch, MTV had little budget for creative. The logo was originally conceptualized by three young graphic designers—Pat Gorman, Frank Olinsky, and Patti Rogoff—who had set up shop in a tiny room in New York City's Greenwich Village under the moniker Manhattan Design.

Olinsky, who received the brief from his friend, the first MTV creative director Fred Seibert, was tasked with designing a logo for a 24/7 music video channel at a time when a "music video" was a foreign concept. The winning design was a blocky "M" with a freeform "T" and "V," with "Music Television" printed underneath.

The logo remained unchanged for nearly three decades because of its fluidity. It could be any color or texture—as well as animated—adapting, like music, to the vicissitudes of pop culture. Over the years, a seemingly infinite number of versions were produced by various agencies to embody the spirit of MTV.

MTV Logo Development
MTV Original Logo
Analysis of Logo



OVER THE YEARS, A SEEMINGLY INFINITE NUMBER OF VERSIONS WERE PRODUCED BY VARIOUS AGENCIES TO EMBODY THE SPIRIT OF MTV.

"MTV was the first real attitude channel; before that, people watched shows on TV, but the networks had no identity," said MTV co-founder and Bob Pittman, who oversaw the network until 1987.

The idea was to give MTV such a strong identity, that viewers would tune in because of the network itself, he explained. "We needed something that said, 'We're not like TV!'...[it] set the mood of the irreverence of youth, but the seriousness and reverence for music." MTV's early identity was provocative, colorful, unapologetic, and in a constant state of flux. Pittman said that making the decision not to grow old with viewers meant that the network had to constantly change.

"Even if it was great, we had to get rid of it, because then it was your older brother's MTV," he said.

This mindset could also be seen in design initiatives led by Jeffrey Keyton, who joined the team in 1987 and continues to oversee design today.

By 1996, MTV's unique visual identity had already garnered its own exhibition.

The show, held at The Art Director's Club in New York City and titled "As Seen on TV," featured 15 years worth of print ads, posters, television spots, and interactive campaigns created for both viewers and MTV advertisers.

A New York Times write-up called the work in the retrospective "often innovative, occasionally irritating and almost always rambunctious—all in keeping with a medium that has helped transform how other media, and advertising, looks and sounds."



The Original VJs:
Nina Blackwood
Mark Goodman
Alan Hunter
JJ Jackson
Meg Griffin



THE ORIGINAL VIDEO JOCKEYS

MTV's original purpose was to be "music television", playing music videos 24/7, guided by on-air personalities known as VJs, or video jockeys (inspired by DJ, for "disc jockey"). Its original slogans were "You'll never look at music the same way again", and "On cable. In stereo."



MTV's earliest format was modeled after AOR (album oriented rock) radio. It underwent a transition to emulate a full Top 40 station in 1984. Fresh faced young men and women hosted its programming and introduced videos.

Many VJs became celebrities in their own right. MTV's five original VJs in 1981 were Nina Blackwood, Mark Goodman, Alan Hunter, J.J. Jackson and Martha Quinn.

Popular New York DJ Meg Griffin was going to be a VJ, but decided against it at the last minute.

The VJs were hired to fit certain demographics the channel was trying to obtain: Goodman was the affable everyman; Hunter, the popular jock; Jackson, the hip radio veteran; Blackwood, the bombshell vixen; and Quinn, the girl next door.

Due to uncertainty around the channel's success, the VJs were told not to buy permanent residences and to keep their second jobs.

The earliest music videos that comprised most of MTV's programming in the 1980s were promotional videos (or "promos", a term that originated in the UK) that record companies had commissioned for international use, or concert clips from any available sources.
In its early days, MTV occasionally let celebrity "guest VJs" take over the channel for an hour to host their favorite music videos. They included musicians such as Adam Ant, Billy Idol, Phil Collins, Simon Le Bon and Nick Rhodes of Duran Duran, Tina Turner, and comedians such as Eddie Murphy, Martin Short and Dan Aykroyd.

Flashdance (1983) was the first film whose promoters supplied MTV with musical segments as music videos, which the channel included in its regular rotation.
In addition to giving exposure to lesser-known artists, MTV was instrumental in the booming '80s dance wave. Video budgets increased, and artists began to add fully choreographed dance sections. Michael Jackson's music became synonymous with dance.

In addition to learning the lyrics, fans also learned his choreography so they could dance along. Madonna capitalized on dance in her videos, using classically trained jazz and breakdancers. Along with extensive costuming and makeup, Duran Duran used tribal elements, pulled from Dunham technique, in "The Wild Boys"; and Kate Bush used a modern dance duet in "Running Up That Hill". MTV's influence on dance as well as music has carried through to this day.



THE VJS RECORDED INTRO AND OUTRO VOICEOVERS BEFORE BROADCAST, ALONG WITH MUSIC NEWS, INTERVIEWS, CONCERT DATES AND PROMOTIONS.

ROCK AND ROLL: BRITAIN & USA

MTV also sparked the Second British Invasion, featuring existing videos by UK acts who had used the format for several years (for example, on BBC's Top of the Pops). MTV targeted an audience of ages 12 to 34.

In the beginning, MTV only had about 120 videos in its library. These were played on constant rotation cut with segments from vee-jays. The videos composed about 80% of the programming on the network.

Because music clips were not very popular among American artists, executives turned to old footage of live concerts and shows as well as clips by British artists such as Duran Duran, the Eurythmics and Human League.

These artists were creating a completely new sound for which there was no term. It was christened "new music" which soon became "new wave." It was defined by heavy synthesized sounds and dance beats. This music was mixed with a new generation of American rock 'n' roll to comprise MTV's video repertoire. In October of 1981, MTV hosted its first celebrity contest entitled "One Night Stand with Journey" where one lucky viewer got to spend the night with the band Journey.

The contest defined MTV as a viewer's network: one whose content was dependant on the viewers preferences and involved the viewers in everyday programming. This event began a trend that continued with contests such as 'A Weekend with Van Halen,' and 'Bon Jovi in Your Backyard.'





Ozzy Osbourne
Tom Cruise
Cher (Middle 1980)
Billy Idol









"MTV HAS PAVED THE WAY FOR A HOST OF INVADERS FROM ABROAD: DEF LEPPARD, ADAM ANT, MADNESS, EURYTHMICS, THE FIXX AND BILLY IDOL, TO NAME A FEW. IN RETURN, GRATEFUL BRITS, EVEN SUPERSTARS LIKE PETE TOWNSHEND AND THE POLICE, HAVE MUGGED FOR MTV PROMO SPOTS AND MADE THE PHRASE 'I WANT MY MTV' A HOUSEHOLD COMMONPLACE."





Michael Jackson
Whitney Houston
Rick James
David Bowie (MTV Interview)

BREAKING THE COLOUR BARRIER

It's a tough subject but one that needs to be looked back on. Despite the massive amount of amazing black musicians in the early 80s MTV wasn't really playing them. There was the thought that the average white viewer wouldn't be able to embrace it.





During MTV's first few years, very few black artists were featured. The select few in MTV's rotation were Michael Jackson, Prince, Eddy Grant, Donna Summer, Joan Armatrading, Musical Youth, The Specials, The Selecter, Grace Jones and Herbie Hancock. Mikey Craig of Culture Club, Joe Leeway of Thompson Twins and Tracy Wormworth of The Waitresses were also black. The Specials, which included black and white vocalists and musicians, were also the first act with people of color to perform on MTV, their song "Rat Race" was the 58th video on the station's first broadcast day.

MTV refused other black artists' videos, such as Rick James' "Super Freak", because they did not fit the channel's carefully selected album-oriented rock format at the time. The exclusion enraged James, who publicly advocated the addition of more black artists to the channel.

Rock legend David Bowie also questioned MTV's lack of black artists during an on-air interview with VJ Mark Goodman in 1983. MTV's original head of talent and acquisition, Carolyn B. Baker, who was black, questioned why the definition of music had to be so narrow, as did a few others outside the network.

Years later, Baker said, "The party line at MTV was that we weren't playing black music because of the research' – but the research was based on ignorance... We were young, we were cutting-edge. We didn't have to be on the cutting edge of racism." Nevertheless, it was Baker who rejected Rick James' Super Freak video "because there were half naked women in it, and it was a piece of crap. As a black woman, I did not want that representing my people as the first black video on MTV

According to The Austin Chronicle, Jackson's video for the song "Billie Jean" was "the video that broke the color barrier, even though the channel itself was responsible for erecting that barrier in the first place." But change was not immediate.

"Billie Jean" was not added to MTV's "medium rotation" playlist (two to three airings per day) until it reached No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

In the final week of March, it was in "heavy rotation", one week before the MTV debut of Jackson's "Beat It" video. Prince's "Little Red Corvette" joined both videos in heavy rotation at the end of April. At the beginning of June, "Electric Avenue" by Eddy Grant joined "Billie Jean", which was still in heavy rotation until mid-June.

At the end of August, "She Works Hard for the Money" by Donna Summer was in heavy rotation on the channel.

Herbie Hancock's "Rockit" and Lionel Richie's "All Night Long" were placed in heavy rotation at the end of October and the beginning of November respectively. In the final week of November, Donna Summer's "Unconditional Love" was in heavy rotation.

When Jackson's elaborate video for "Thriller" was released late that year, raising the bar for what a video could be, the network's support for it was total; subsequently, more pop and R&B videos were played on MTV.

Following Jackson's and Prince's breakthroughs on MTV, Rick James did several interviews where he brushed off the accomplishment as tokenism, saying in a 1983 interview, in an episode of Mike Judge Presents: Tales from the Tour Bus on James, that "any black artist that [had] their video played on MTV should pull their [videos] off MTV."

REGARDLESS OF THE TIMELINE, MANY BLACK ARTISTS HAD THEIR VIDEOS PLAYED IN "HEAVY" ROTATION THE FOLLOWING YEAR (1984)



Michael Jackson (Billie Jean Music Video)

THIS IS THRILLER

"Thriller" expanded the boundaries for music videos, single-handedly transforming what was then a new and oft-maligned genre that killed the radio star into a cultural phenomenon and an art form in its own right.

Thriller scaled MTV's reputation as a new cultural force; dissolved racial barriers in the station's treatment of music (though MTV has always denied they existed); revolutionised music video production; spawned the "making of" genre of documentary ("The Making of Fillet," as Landis said at the time); helped create a market for VHS rentals and sales.

Fans were desperate to see it when they wanted, rather than at the will of TV stations; and, in 2009, became the first music video to be inducted into the Library of Congress's National Film Registry.

"Music videos in the early 80s started as a little cottage industry in Britain, really," says Brian Grant, the British director who made the Private Dancer video for Tina Turner and Whitney Houston's I Wanna Dance With Somebody. "As soon as the Americans got involved, things became monetised, turning music videos into a proper industry, which operated alongside MTV. The big turning point was Thriller."

MTV paid $250,000 and Showtime $300,000 for the rights to the documentary, Jackson would take care of upfront costs, and the video was able to go ahead, with the label coughing up $100,000. When the documentary was released on VHS, selling for $29.95, it attracted more than 100,000 advance orders in its own right.





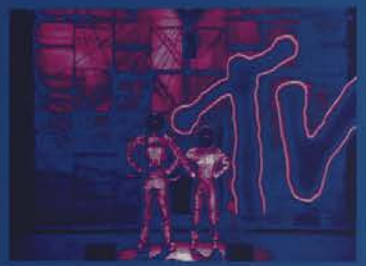




Michael Jackson
Whitney Houston
Rick James
David Bowie (MTV Interview)







1984: MTV VIDEO MUSIC AWARDS

The MTV Video Music Awards (commonly abbreviated as the VMAs) is an award show presented by the cable channel MTV to honor the best in the music video medium.

1984: At the first MTV Video Music Awards in 1984, Madonna performed her hit "Like a Virgin" wearing a combination bustier/wedding gown, including her trademark "Boy Toy" belt. During the performance, she rolled around on the floor, revealing lace stockings and a garter.

Cyndi Lauper spoke in "Exorcist-esque gibberish" to explain the VMA rules right before winning the Best Female video for "Girls Just Want to Have Fun".
David Bowie, the Beatles and director Richard Lester were rewarded with the first ever Video Vanguard Awards for their work in pioneering the music video.
1988: At the 1988 Video Music Awards Michael Jackson appeared for the first time. A pre-recorded live performance of Bad was shown." He was also awarded the Video Vanguard Award, which was later renamed in his honor.

1989: Controversial comic Andrew Dice Clay's appearance at the 1989 Video Music Awards to promote his new movie, The Adventures of Ford Fairlane, earned him a "lifetime ban" from the network when he introduced Cher with some of his recently notorious nursery rhymes that contained vulgar language and references. After performing with Tom Petty, Guns N' Roses guitarist Izzy Stradlin was assaulted by Mötley Crüe lead singer Vince Neil, leading to a verbal battle between Neil and Guns N' Roses lead singer Axl Rose.

1990: At the 1990 MTV Video Music Awards, Madonna gave a memorable performance of her single "Vogue," which featured Madonna and her backup dancers dressed in an 18th-century French theme, with Madonna bearing great resemblance to Marie Antoinette. The performance consisted of both a dramatic historical reinterpretation of "Vogue" as well as her dramatically becorseted breasts.





MADONNA'S PERFORMANCE OF "LIKE A VIRGIN" HAS BEEN REFERRED TO AS ONE OF THE MOST "UNFORGETTABLE" AND "ICONIC" MOMENTS IN BOTH POP CULTURE AND VMA HISTORY FOR THE SINGER'S FASHION AND HER "PROVOCATIVE MOVES".



1990S ALTERNATIVE MUSIC

Alternative rock is a category of rock music that emerged from the independent music underground of the 1970s and became widely popular in the 1990s.

Nirvana led a sweeping transition into the rise of alternative rock and grunge music on MTV in 1991, with their video for "Smells Like Teen Spirit".

By late 1991 going into 1992, MTV began frequently airing videos from their heavily promoted "Buzz Bin", such as Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains, Soundgarden, Nine Inch Nails, Tori Amos, PM Dawn, Arrested Development, Björk, and Gin Blossoms.

MTV increased rotation of its weekly alternative music program 120 Minutes and added the daily Alternative Nation to play videos of these and other underground music acts. Subsequently, grunge and alternative rock had a rise in mainstream cultures, while 1980s-style glam bands and traditional rockers were phased out, with a few exceptions such as Aerosmith and Tom Petty.

Older acts such as R.E.M. and U2 remained relevant by making their music more experimental or contemporary. MTV also played many hard rock acts such as Pantera, Death and other death/heavy metal acts at the time period, which saw rotation especially in Headbangers Ball, a program equipped for the genre.



Over the next few years, more hit alternative rock acts were on heavy rotation, such as Stone Temple Pilots, Soul Asylum, Rage Against the Machine, Marilyn Manson, Tool, Beck, Therapy?, Radiohead, and the Smashing Pumpkins. Other hit acts such as Weezer, Collective Soul, Blind Melon, the Cranberries, Bush, and Silverchair followed in the next couple of years.

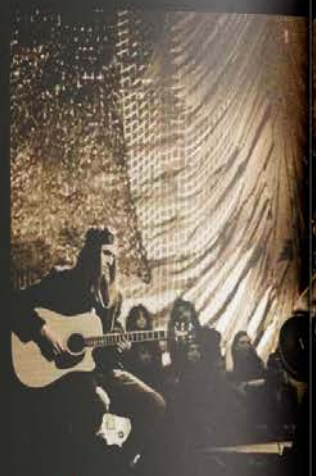
Alternative bands that appeared on Beavis and Butt-Head included White Zombie. Also at this time, MTV began promoting new pop punk acts, most successfully Green Day and the Offspring, and ska punk acts such as No Doubt, the Mighty Mighty Bosstones, and Sublime. Alternative singers that were more pop-oriented were also added to the rotation with success, such as Alanis Morissette, Jewel, Fiona Apple, and Sarah McLachlan.

> ALTERNATIVE MUSIC IS MUSIC THAT HASN'T YET ACHIEVED A MAINSTREAM AUDIENCE, ALTERNATIVE ISN'T NEW WAVE ANY MORE, IT'S A DISPOSITION OF MIND.









Courtney Love (Unplugged)
No Doubt (MTV VMA)
Unplugged Logo (1990)
Pearl Jam (Unplugged)
Oasis (Unplugged)
Bob Dylan (Unplugged)

