

Random Music as Non-Random Internet Jokes

Reasoning Behind Sample Choice in Music Memes

Tom Verdonk (6000169)
MA Thesis Applied Musicology
Utrecht University
MCMV16014
2020-2021, block 4
Faculty of Humanities
Supervisor: Dr. Michiel Kamp

Abstract

Internet memes are prevalent when browsing the internet, and while the humor itself appears to be random, many aspects of memes are not. Existing research into memes already explored how memes should be defined, the community they create, and the political potential internet memes have, showing the influence memes have in modern society. However, music memes are much less studied, especially the question why certain music is used. This thesis is a deep dive into the subgenre of music memes. It theorizes criteria that music must fulfil to be useable for memes. Roughly, music memes can be put into two categories: memes that have old music and a new meme format or new music that uses an old format. To properly analyze why certain music is used for memes this thesis employs theories about ubiquitous listening, decontextualization, and participation culture. Applying these theories results in several external and internal characteristics that explain why certain musical pieces are used more for YouTube music memes than others. While the thesis analyses general music meme trends from the last five years, the specific objects of study are Crazy Frog memes and Morshu beatboxes. Most of these find their origin on YouTube but are also shared across many other media platforms. This thesis sheds some much-needed light on the specific workings of the internet meme culture, because the memes start coming and they don't stop coming.

Table of contents

Introduction.....	4
Chapter 1: What is a Music Meme?.....	9
Chapter 2: Why Making the “Same” Music Meme Over and Over Works.....	17
Chapter 3: Laughing at Unexpected Sounds.....	24
Conclusion.....	32
Bibliography.....	34

Introduction

In 2021, almost everyone who uses the internet frequently has been *rickrolled* at least once. Rickrolling is a game played on the internet where people post the URL of the music video of the song “Never Gonna Give You Up” (1987) by Rick Astley in blog posts or comments about completely different topics. Unsuspecting users then click on the URL, thinking they will get transferred to a related link, but instead hear the gated reverb toms and see a closeup of Rick Astley’s face, at which point they realize they have been fooled. This joke was so popular in the 2010s that the music video has over 850 million views on YouTube and many internet users (including me) have memorized the complete URL of the music video in an effort to avoid further pranks. Rickrolling changed the context of both “Never Gonna Give You Up” and the related music video from a long forgotten 1980s hit to a popular internet joke. This meme is only one of the many memes in circulation on the internet with new trends replacing old ones rapidly. Nowadays, rickrolling has died down but meme culture itself is bigger than ever. Evolved from the pranking of other internet users (although this still happens), meme culture now celebrates many categories of memes like remixes, mashups, re-edits and complete newly composed songs made from obscure sounds. While not completely gone, “Never Gonna Give You Up” has mostly been replaced by other memeable (i.e., having the potential to be funny when used in memes) songs like, “Hotline Bling” by Drake, “Axel F” by Crazy Frog, “All Star” by Smash Mouth and more.

But why are specifically *these* songs used in memes? First of all, meme creators do not actually use an entire song in their memes, the music meme would simply be too long and other problems (for example copyright issues) would arise. Instead of full recordings, meme creators often use samples from these recordings, taking a small iconic portion of a recording (i.e., sampling) and implementing these into a centrally within a music meme. Still, internet humor appears rather random, but this is not the case. Although reasons for sample choice are often obscure, there certainly are criteria that music and video must fulfil for them to be memeable. This thesis explains the question of how a music meme is created and especially why certain samples are (still) chosen for music memes.

While not always the main focus of research, memes have received some academic attention already. Firstly, memes frequently pop up in studies about participation culture on the internet.¹ After all, memes are made by internet users to be enjoyed by other internet users

¹ Jean Burgess, and Joshua Green, “The YouTube Community,” in *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Second edition.), Seconded (Digital Media and Society Series. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2018),

often without any expectation of monetary compensation. Other studies have looked at the political power and marketability of memes in current culture.² Finally, studies have discussed memes and viral videos (which have some overlap with each other) on specific media platforms, for example on Facebook.³ However, research focused on music in audio-visual memes and why certain samples are chosen has been lacking.

There is a difference between meme trends and individual memes. Meme trends are groups of memes that have a common element, which in the case of this thesis are musical samples. However, individual memes within the trend can differ from other memes within the trend as long as they have the common element. This is different from normal memes in the sense that meme trends can evolve while memes cannot. The act of rickrolling for example, is a music meme and not a meme trend since all of the memes try to perform the exact same joke in the exact same way. Making remixes and mashups of the song “Never Gonna Give You Up,” on the other hand, is a meme trend since it has a common element but offers more variation in meme creation.

The first objects of study in this thesis are several Crazy Frog memes.⁴ These memes are part of a larger meme trend centred around Crazy Frog. Crazy Frog is a character created in 2003 as a ringtone. In 2005, the character released a cover of the song “Axel F,” which became very popular, having more than 2.7 billion views on YouTube.⁵ The main characteristics of Crazy Frog are its loudness and obnoxious voice, and because of this Crazy Frog has become somewhat of a staple of the meme community. A meme trend discussed in the thesis is called the Morshu beatbox. Memes within this trend all feature a character from the obscure videogame *Link: The Faces of Evil* (1993), Morshu, with the audio of someone beatboxing. The audio originates from a different YouTube meme, the beatbox battle between

81–82; Limor Shifman, “When Memes Go Digital,” in *Memes in Digital Culture*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2014) 23.

² Anastasia Denisova, “Many Uses of Memes,” in *Internet Memes and Society: Social, Cultural, and Political Contexts*, Routledge Advances in Internationalizing Media Studies, 25 (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 35–39.

³ Paula Harper, “Unmute This?: Captioning an (Audio)Visual Microgenre,” *The Soundtrack* 9, no. 1 (2016): 7–23; Carol Vernallis, “YouTube Aesthetics,” in *Unruly Media: YouTube, Music Video, and the New Digital Cinema*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 127–204.

⁴ Pink Boi, “Screaming cat but it’s Crazy Frog,” streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znnngL_nS3pg;

Neverthink, “Tyler1 but he’s Crazy Frog,” streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t1Mh7rB1lg>;

iBDWR, “peter trips and hurts his knee,” streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtCDhQw33d8>.

⁵ Crazy Frog, “Crazy Frog – Axel F (Official Video),” streamed on May 22, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k85mRPqvMbE>.

the comic book characters Darkseid and Thanos.⁶ The jokes themselves vary wildly, which is why it is a music meme trend and not just a music meme. For example, memes in this trend argue about the film *Godzilla vs. Kong* (2021) or are vocoded to sound like another song.⁷ Lastly, some less popular music memes are discussed, like the Oblivion NPC dialogue memes, and the one-off (meaning it spawned no variations) “kanye crashes his 2018 hyundai sonata.”⁸ These memes are all quite recent, all of the memes have been released during the last two years, although some music memes do refer to earlier existing meme trends. The number of views of the individual memes varies wildly; some memes have around 712 views and others over fifty thousand or more (which admittedly still is not a very high viewcount for YouTube standards). However, because the YouTube meme community is already rather small, the number of variations a meme spawned and its inclusion in YouTube meme playlists say more about the popularity of meme trends than the total view count ever could.

While music memes do not limit themselves to one medium, YouTube will be the main focus in this thesis for the sake of brevity. Many contemporary music memes are created with the purpose to be posted on YouTube because of the audio-visual nature of the medium. After this, memes often spread through other social media like Reddit, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, 4chan and TikTok.⁹ However this does change something in the music meme, for example the fact that the music meme is muted at first when looking at it on Facebook or Instagram. Music memes are designed to be heard so muting them would somewhat defeat the purpose of the music meme. Thus, the medium that fits the music meme best, YouTube, will be the focus of this thesis.

The thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter explains the term music meme, its aesthetics, and its place within a wider meme community. This will be done by describing

⁶ Verbalase, “Darkseid Vs Thanos – Cartoon Beatbox Battles,” streamed on May 2, 2021, YouTube Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyGj4TDXj3Y>.

⁷ Nitro.iF, “Godzilla vs. Kong arguments in a nutshell,” streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mie_4r26Sxc;

Memnicus, “Morshu RTX ON Beatbox but it’s vocoded to Gangsta’s Paradise,” streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLaNJLZK21Y>;

Dripdroid 17, “Morshu Beatbox,” streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ0h6dewnrQ>.

⁸ Whacked-out Entertainment, “Oblivion NPC Dialogue – Oranges,” streamed on February 28, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bliWxOtesFO>;

Jared Morin, “Oblivion NPC Dialogue,” streamed on February 28, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EDtys1sIq0>.

Pluffaduff, “kanye crashes his 2018 hyundai sonata,” streamed on April 7, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKmL7jZUSx4>.

⁹ Nicholas Cook, “Digital Technology and Cultural Practice,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Music in Digital Culture*. Cambridge Companions to Music (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 18.

the workings of memes through formats and jokes.¹⁰ Then, I describe music memes and their place within a larger community and the YouTube as a platform. Limor Shifman created various meme-genres that describe the different types of memes that circulate the internet through an iconic element.¹¹ However, music memes do not exactly fit these genres as they currently are. Music memes have some differences with other (audio-visual) memes, although they do overlap in many aspects. Thus, in this chapter I update some meme-genres Shifman created. After this, I will explain the more general workings of music meme creation by explaining formats. This is essential to understand why certain music is used, since it gives very clear criteria for what is accepted in meme culture. Then, I will explain the difference in audio-visuality between different music memes. Some meme trends rely more on an audio-visual experience than others and this has consequences on what music is used for it. Lastly, I use theories on music videos and YouTube by Carol Vernallis and the meaning of memes by Pete Gofton to dive deeper into the workings of the music meme through referentiality and repetition.¹²

The second chapter explains the meme canon. Some music meme trends are held in higher regard than others. On top of that, it is common for memes to gain a large number of clicks if they use the same material that already established memes have done. For example, samples from “All Star” by Smash Mouth are still used in many different music memes, and do not appear to be going away anytime soon. The main question this chapter will try to answer is why this specific music keeps getting reused. To answer this, I apply theories from the book *Memes in Digital Culture* by Limor Shifman that theorize why certain memetic content becomes more popular than other memetic content.¹³ On top of that, there are other influences as to why samples are reused often in music memes. The first one is the participation culture which largely upholds certain tracks for memes, creating a sort of collective memory for memes (or a collective meme-ory). This is then further enforced by a “meme canon” that is created by prestigious meme-playlists, curated by users on YouTube.

¹⁰ Anastasia Denisova, “Definition and Evolution of the Concept of Memes,” in *Internet Memes and Society: Social, Cultural, and Political Contexts*, Routledge Advances in Internationalizing Media Studies, 25 (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 6–12.

¹¹ Limor Shifman, “Meme Genres,” in *Memes in Digital Culture*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2014) 99–118.

¹² Carol Vernallis, “YouTube Aesthetics,” in *Unruly Media: YouTube, Music Video, and the New Digital Cinema* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 127–204;

Pete Gofton, “Music, Memes and Meaning: A Semiotic Analysis,” in *Music on Screen: From Cinema Screens to Touchscreens*. Musicology research, vol. 2 (Spring 2017): 27–47.

¹³ Limor Shifman, *Memes in Digital Culture*, The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2014), 17–36, 65–98.

To properly analyze all this, I apply theories about participation culture from Jean Burgess and Nicholas Cook to show how a meme starts from a single origin point (although this is often obscure) and is then picked up by other creators who create variations on the original, which in turn creates the trend.¹⁴ Because of this prestigious status of some songs in meme culture, the repeating of content with slight variations is a good way of creating successful memes. The idea of spreadability (how internet content is designed to be spread to a larger audience) by Henry Jenkins is applied here because it sheds light on why content is often repeated.¹⁵ Finally, I discuss the value of musical repetition in music memes, giving the viewer information about the meme and how to reproduce it.

The final chapter looks into what makes the meme funny. This is done through the theory of incongruity, the clash of two different elements which creates a funny situation.¹⁶ The use of this in music memes disrupts the ubiquitous listening flow, a term coined by Anahid Kassabian.¹⁷ Music is everywhere nowadays, and listeners often do not listen attentively to it. Trying to switch our attention from passive to attentive is thus one of the main objectives of the music meme. However, not every piece of music is able to catch the meme viewer off-guard, meaning that a criterium exists about what music is fit for memes and what music is not. Paula Harper already started theorizing about how ubiquitous listening is affected by viral “Unmute This” videos (the exact difference between memes and viral videos will be explained in chapter 1) on Facebook.¹⁸ In this chapter I will explain what type of musical elements are most useful for creating the incongruity and break in listening flow.

¹⁴ Jean Burgess, and Joshua Green, “The YouTube Community,” in *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Second edition.), Seconded (Digital Media and Society Series. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2018), 77–95; Nicholas Cook, “Digital Technology and Cultural Practice,” 5–28.

¹⁵ Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. “Designing for Spreadability,” in *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (Postmillennial Pop. New York: New York University Press, 2013) 195–228.

¹⁶ Whitney Phillips and Ryan M Milner, “Constitutive Humor,” in *The Ambivalent Internet: Mischief, Oddity, and Antagonism Online*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017), 96.

¹⁷ Anahid Kassabian, “Ubiquitous Listening,” in *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013) 31–49.

¹⁸ Harper, “‘Unmute This’: Captioning an (Audio)Visual Microgenre,” 18.

Chapter 1: What is a music meme?

Defining and categorizing music memes within a wider internet culture

Memes come in all forms and sizes. Some early memes were screenshots from famous films with part of the line changed like the “One does not simply” memes (as seen in figure 1).

However, over time internet culture evolved, and so did internet memes. Nowadays there are certain aesthetics of memes that can be found throughout many of its subgenres. However, almost all digital communities, fandoms and friend groups have their own memes with widely varying messaging. Music memes are no different to this, which makes them hard to define.¹⁹

So, how can music memes be made into an understandable, coherent concept? First of all, I will define memes with the help of the definition of memes by Anastasia Denisova.²⁰ After that I will define the music meme as a combination of several of the nine meme-genres that

Limor Shifman designed and extra characteristics like *Internet Ugly*, referentiality, and repetition.²¹ Then I will consider the audio-visuality of music memes by looking at examples, namely the Oblivion NPC dialogue memes and recent additions to the “Crazy Frog” meme trend. Lastly, I look at how music samples used in memes have to have certain properties that allow them to be recontextualized successfully.²²

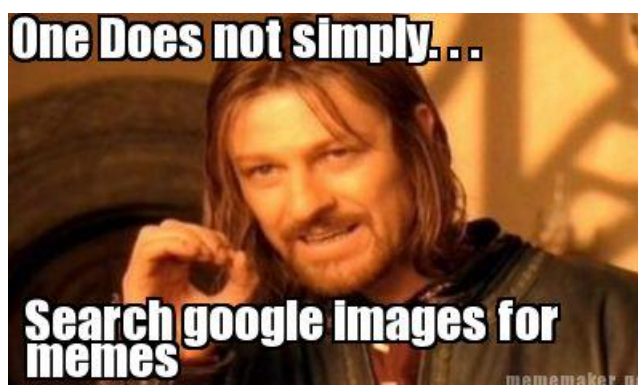


Figure 1: The “One Does not simply” meme.

Memes can be still images, GIFs, or audio-visual objects. The concept of the meme

¹⁹ Denisova, “Definition and Evolution of the Concept of Memes,” 8–9.

²⁰ Denisova, “Definition and Evolution of the Concept of Memes,” 6–12.

²¹ Shifman, “Meme Genres,” 99–118;

Nick Douglas, “It’s Supposed to Look Like Shit: The Internet Ugly Aesthetic,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 13, no. 3 (2014): 314–339;

Vernallis, “YouTube Aesthetics,” 127–154.

²² Gofton, “Music, Memes and Meaning: A Semiotic Analysis,” 27–47.

stems from Richard Dawkins and his comparison with genes.²³ Dawkins theorized that memes are cultural messaging and information passed on from one person to another. Memes had three main characteristics according to Dawkins. They had to have appeal, they had to be easy to replicate, and they had to be able to survive other memes.²⁴ When translated to internet culture, these characteristics still hold up. Internet memes have become popular because they are appealing, easy to replicate (which will be explained more in chapter 2), and only the most popular meme trends have survived for years now. Memes are a way for people to share ideas, come together and make messages that sometimes travel over generations.²⁵ Nowadays memes are even a way to identify with certain political ideologies and values.²⁶

The anatomy of a meme mainly consists of two parts: the format and the joke. According to Denisova a format can be a still image, a GIF, or a video linking memes mostly to the visual.²⁷ However, this is not entirely true: formats can also be auditory elements, like specific voice lines, music samples, or sounds. Formats must be easy to interpret by people that are within the meme community. The joke, however, can have more variation and can feature text, voice-over, video, other samples and more. As a general rule of thumb when studying memes, the format is the common aspect in a meme trend, while the jokes can vary widely. Because meme formats are made to be easy to interpret, a wide variety of different jokes can be combined with them making sure that meme formats often travel between communities.²⁸

Diving deeper into memes, elements like referentiality the *Internet Ugly* aesthetic come to light. Referentiality is hugely important in the meme community, most memes are

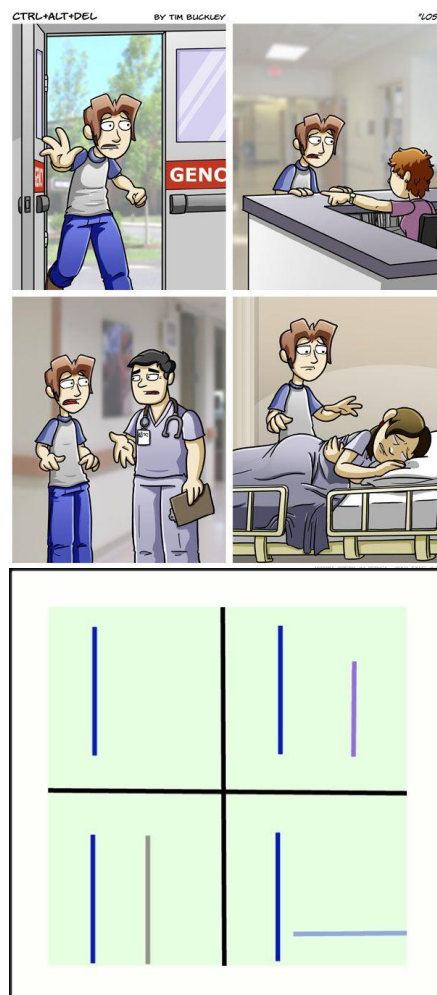


Figure 2: Two versions of the “Loss” meme.

²³ Denisova, “Definition and Evolution of the Concept of Memes,” 6.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Denisova, “Definition and Evolution of the Concept of Memes,” 8.

²⁶ Denisova, “Definition and Evolution of the Concept of Memes,” 10.

²⁷ Denisova, “Definition and Evolution of the Concept of Memes,” 9.

²⁸ Denisova, “Definition and Evolution of the Concept of Memes,” 10.

references to earlier events or even memes. An example of this is the “Loss” trend, which featured a comic of four panels of a person losing someone at the hospital. Later variations of this meme boiled the meme down to the simplest shapes, sometimes only creating the comic with lines. Both of these variations can be seen in figure 2. This referentiality carries over to music memes, where certain songs and musical pieces only have to be referenced through a few notes to work in the meme (“All Star” falls in this category for example).

The second universal characteristic is *Internet Ugly*. According to Nick Douglas, this is a trend on the internet where users purposefully make their content look amateurish and “ugly.”²⁹ This can especially be seen in memes. They often include bad photoshops or edits, additions drawn in Microsoft Paint or very blurry and low-resolution pictures.³⁰ Over the years this has led to trends like deep-fried memes, memes that are cluttered with visual white noise and off-putting colors (figure 3). Internet Ugly can be interpreted as a celebration of the do-it-yourself nature of the internet.³¹

When memes become audio-visual there suddenly is much more room to play with. Instead of one still frame they can be several minutes long, although most audio-visual memes are thirty seconds or shorter. This helps with interpretation since the combination of video and audio gives a more focussed message to the viewer. The music meme is an audio-visual meme where the main focus is on the music.

While purely audio base music memes do exist, because of the audio-visual nature of YouTube most music memes are audio-visual as well. A contemporary example of an auditory meme on YouTube, however, is the channel “Silvagunner,” where videogame soundtracks are posted that are remixed with samples from meme culture.³² While these remixes are intended as a prank, they often are interpreted as good music (according to the comments), showing that purely audio based music memes can have some trouble being interpreted as memes.



Figure 3: An example of a deep-fried meme. The color palette also refers to the synthwave aesthetic (more on this in chapter 2).

²⁹ Douglas, “It’s Supposed to Look Like Shit: The Internet Ugly Aesthetic,” 314–316.

³⁰ Douglas, “It’s Supposed to Look Like Shit: The Internet Ugly Aesthetic,” 315, 331.

³¹ Douglas, “It’s Supposed to Look Like Shit: The Internet Ugly Aesthetic,” 315.

³² These “rips” act like they are the original soundtrack, and thus rely on a similar effect that rickrolling does. The name of the channel is purposely very similar to another channel that posts the actual soundtracks. Therefore, the channel clearly tries to prank the viewer by letting them think they are listening to the original soundtrack and then catching them off guard with a remix.

SilvaGunner, Streamed on March 23, YouTube account, <https://www.youtube.com/c/SilvaGunner/videos>.

Music memes are similar to other memes in that they make use of a format and joke. The sample used in the music meme is often the format but can be the joke as well. This also is the main difference from other audio-visual memes that (sometimes even accidentally) feature music in them. Further aesthetic influence comes from the medium they are mostly posted on. YouTube music memes have some likeness to non-meme YouTube videos. This comes as no surprise, as the YouTube communities are highly reflexive and constantly concern themselves with the current state of YouTube.³³ Repetitive content does well and has become a key characteristic of YouTube.³⁴ Naturally, memes on YouTube have applied repetition as well, both within the meme as on a meme trend level.³⁵

Generally, music memes can be divided into two categories: memes with an old format but new joke or memes with a new format but an old joke. Translated to music memes, this means memes often feature the same music (like the song “All Star” by Smash Mouth) or try to do the same joke over and over (like the remixing of popular songs with the soundtrack of the quiz game *Kahoot*). This then results in an unofficial canon that contains the most memeable tracks (more on this in chapter 2).

The idea of the music meme can be further defined when it is aligned with several categories that Limor Shifman calls meme genres.

These describe the general aesthetics of main meme trends from 2013 and before.³⁶ While this list was not complete then, though Shifman never claimed it was, the mentioned genres are now more outdated than ever. The nine genres Shifman created are reaction photoshops, photo fads, flash mob, lip-synch, misheard lyrics, recut trailers, LOLcats, stock character macros and rage comics.³⁷ In 2021 some of these are still relevant, for example reaction photoshops are still quite popular in current meme



Figure 4: the Drake Reaction meme format.

culture (an example of this is the Drake reaction meme which can be seen in figure 4). Other genres, like LOLcats, flash mobs and rage comics, are now outdated. Some of the meme

³³ Michael Strangelove, “The YouTube Community,” in *Watching YouTube: Extraordinary Videos by Ordinary People*, Digital Futures (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 121.

³⁴ Vernallis, “YouTube Aesthetics,” 132.

³⁵ Limor, Shifman, “An Anatomy of a YouTube Meme,” *New Media & Society* 14, Nr. 2 (2012): 197.

³⁶ Shifman, “Meme Genres,” 100.

³⁷ Shifman, “Meme Genres,” 99–118.

genres rightfully point at general aesthetics in meme culture, like the use of copyright free stock footage, but other genres limit themselves to just describing a popular trend at the time. Flash mobs, for example, the group act of random dancing in public spaces, was a popular internet trend in the early 2010s but would nowadays not be associated with meme culture. This is because of the little variety between flash mobs, and they are often not meant to be funny.³⁸ On top of that, the group interactivity of flash mobs is offline, while the group interactivity of memes is done online through the replicating of memes. Because of this, flash mobs have more in common with “viral videos” than memes, a popular video on the internet but spawns no variations.³⁹

While not every genre describes memes, some of them can still be used to define music memes. The relevant genres are reaction photoshops, photo fads, lip-synch (now more popular than ever with the rise of the medium TikTok), recut trailers and misheard lyrics. However, where do music memes fit in these? Music memes show the aesthetics from several of these different genres, specifically the recut trailers, lip-synch, and misheard lyrics. Recut trailers are memes that consist of trailers that are re-edited to only vaguely be reminiscent of the original trailer, often to display criticism of the film.⁴⁰ This re-editing is not limited to film trailers: videogame cutscenes, music videos and even wrestling matches are re-edited. This meme trend originated from memes that were called *YouTube Poops* (or *YTPs*) which were often videogame dialogue re-edited to sound like the characters were saying out of context dialogue. This re-editing, or remixing, is a key characteristic of internet culture.⁴¹ Limiting this genre to just film trailers would not strike at the heart of what those memes were about. A more updated term would be re-cut (or remixed) video. Naturally, music memes have taken over many characteristics from this genre: editing is extremely important in music memes as can be seen in the examples given in the introduction.

Music memes also take shape as misheard lyrics and lip-synchs. Although lip-synchs are less popular in YouTube music memes, the relatively new platform TikTok is much more focused on lip-synch and memes originating from this medium often have it as a main characteristic. Interestingly, memes that fall under this category, almost always ignore the message of the song is completely ignored in favour of these new lyrics.⁴² Lyrics are

³⁸ While individual flash mobs differ wildly in terms of choreography and song choice, the videos posted on the internet about flash mobs were extremely similar.

³⁹ Shifman, “Memes Versus Virals,” 56.

⁴⁰ Shifman, “Meme Genres,” 109–110.

⁴¹ Shifman, “Meme Genres,” 118.

⁴² Shifman, “Meme Genres,” 108.

frequently misinterpreted on purpose and are often combined with a visual aspect to help with the misinterpretation of the lyrics, as is the case with the music meme “Play K’Nex.”⁴³

As said before, the main focus of music memes is the music. The samples used (and their associations) are the format of the music meme. This means that video often is less important for the meme to work, meaning it could be left out in theory but is kept because it helps with interpretation. An example of these memes are Oblivion NPC dialogue memes.⁴⁴ These memes video fragments with dialogue, picked from various situations like interviews or language learning programs, that appears somewhat awkward. Then the track “Harvest Dawn” from the soundtrack of the game *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* is played as the soundtrack of the video (although other tracks from the soundtrack can be picked as well). The joke in this case is underlining the awkwardness of the dialogue, referring to how awkward dialogue often is in the game (showing the referentiality of the meme). The video often is unedited, although an overlay of the user interface of the game is sometimes applied, to imitate the game even further. The video quality often is not very good, showing a clear influence from Internet Ugly, which in turn is strengthened through the lack of editing. On top of that, the video itself is not very important in this meme trend in the sense that it can be anything, from a language video lesson to someone talking awkwardly to a police officer. The video can be anything as long as it feels awkward to watch, at which point “Harvest Dawn” adds to this feeling of awkwardness through its referentiality with awkwardness in the video game *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*.

Sometimes, however, sometimes the video and audio are equally important. These music memes show more interaction between audio and visual elements. An example of these are Crazy Frog memes. These memes show a video of famous (in the meme community) characters screaming, for example Peter Griffin from the show *Family Guy* or the twitch streamer Tyler1. However, the audio of the scream is changed to the glissando around 1:24 in the song “Axel F” by Crazy Frog.⁴⁵ Then, when the drop happens in the song, the characters

⁴³ An example of this is the recontextualization of the song “Thank You, Next” (2019) by Ariana Grande. Morgue & Mufasa, “Play K’Nex,” streamed on February 27, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMZomP5RNIw>.

⁴⁴ Whacked-out Entertainment, “Oblivion NPC Dialogue – Oranges,” streamed on February 28, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bliWxOtesFO>; Jared Morin, “Oblivion NPC Dialogue,” streamed on February 28, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EDtys1sIq0>.

⁴⁵ Pink Boi, “Screaming cat but it’s Crazy Frog,” streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znnngI_nS3pg; Neverthink, “Tyler1 but he’s Crazy Frog,” streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t1Mh7rB1lg>;

are dancing to the music. Without the video of these famous characters, the meme would just be “Axel F.”

This music meme has several aspects. Firstly, even though the music is central in the meme, the meme relies on the audio-visual relation to tell the joke through the creation of new synchronization points and context.⁴⁶ This in itself is similar to the idea of the *arranged marriage* by Michel Chion.⁴⁷ It shows that music and visuals can create a new message when accompanied with each other. Secondly all the characters in the memes; Twitch streamers, a dancing cat, the actor Tobey Maguire (specifically his portrayals in the Spiderman films) and cartoon characters like Peter Griffin, are all references to older memes. This again shows one of the key natures of memes. Lastly, similar to the recut trailers, Crazy Frog memes show that the editing of video and audio is important in music memes. After all, without it the meme would not have been possible. Again, Internet ugly can be observed in the meme since the video quality of many of the memes is cropped. The other characteristic, reiteration, is also found in these memes, since most of these different memes have the exact same structure and use the same sample. It therefore makes sense to sample a song that consists of an extreme amount of lyrical repetition.⁴⁸ The used sample is eight measures long. This can be divided into two sections of four measures in which the instrumental section loops. At the end of the fourth bar the percussion drops in and the screaming glissando of Crazy Frog ends. However, after this the synths start again at the beginning of the first bar, repeating themselves.

While Oblivion NPC dialogue memes and Crazy Frog memes are wildly different, they both are music memes because they rely (in their own way) on the music for the meme to be funny. But this introduces a next key importance about music memes: “Harvest Dawn” is not funny on its own. “Harvest Dawn” is an ambient track supposed to be background sound when playing Oblivion, so what exactly makes that funny? “Axel F” by Crazy Frog is intended to be funny through its loudness and repetitive nature which are both part of YouTube characteristics.⁴⁹ However, even Crazy Frog is not considered extremely funny

iBDWR, “peter trips and hurts his knee,” streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtCDhQw33d8>.

⁴⁶ Michel Chion, “Lines and Points: Horizontal and Vertical Perspectives on Audiovisual Relations,” in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, second version, edited by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 59.

⁴⁷ Chion, “An Introduction to Audiovisual Analysis,” in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, second version, edited by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 177–178.

⁴⁸ Vernallis, “YouTube Aesthetics,” 129.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

without any added elements nowadays.⁵⁰ The vocals are mainly a collection of loud noises that cannot solidly be interpreted one way or another. Both samples are not (really) inherently funny on their own. “Harvest Dawn” and “Axel F” are only useable for memes because of their context and ability to change this. Pete Gofton states that the recording itself is not the meme, it does not even have to be funny.⁵¹ The sample has to be placed within a memetic environment to become funny.⁵² To be useable for memes, music must be able to undergo this change in context. The real memetic power of “Harvest Dawn” is not how funny the track itself is, but how well it takes over the context of other elements it is combined with. Thus, “Harvest Dawn” is funny because of its associative context. Similarly, while Crazy Frog is intended to be funny on its own, the current humor is not constructed through the song on its own but through the idea of these famous characters making sounds like Crazy Frog, meaning a recontextualization.

Therefore, a criterium arises for what makes certain tracks so useable for memes. The track must be able to undergo a recontextualization towards a less serious context. Now of course, one could argue that every musical recording is able to undergo this recontextualization, but the tracks most likely to be sampled are usually already ambiguous in both tone and messaging so they can be recontextualized more easily. An exception to this rule is if the original tone and messaging is already linked to silliness and internet culture, like Crazy Frog is. The track “Harvest Dawn” on the other hand, is ambiguous enough that its associative context has changed from the soundtrack of *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* or a generic fantasy soundtrack to a context inherently associated with awkwardness. Because of the ambiguous states of both tracks, they can be used for music memes. Thus, certain musical pieces are chosen because of their ambiguity and ability to be slotted in many different contexts, meaning they have the potential to return into many different memes.

⁵⁰ Humor is extremely subjective of course. However, if Crazy Frog would still be that funny on its own, Crazy Frog memes would stay closer to the source material.

⁵¹ Gofton, “Music, Memes and Meaning: A Semiotic Analysis,” 40.

⁵² Gofton, “Music, Memes and Meaning: A Semiotic Analysis,” 39.

Chapter 2: Why making the “same” music meme over and over works

The importance of repetition for canon content

In chapter 1, the reasons why certain samples are chosen for music memes still appeared rather vague. In this chapter, I will describe additional internal and external elements that mean certain recordings have more potential to be used for music memes than others. While musical pieces do not have to meet all the criteria to be memeable, in practice they often still do. Whether or not they fulfil all the requirements, the creation of memes over the years has resulted in two types of music memes: canon music memes (with recurring samples) and one-offs (with samples that have not been used before and spawned no variations). Canon music memes contain song formats and jokes that keep coming back in different variations. One-offs often use formats and jokes that exist outside of meme trends. Now of course there are countless different communities on the internet and many people makes their own memes, so it is very likely that these one-offs have come back in more niche groups. However, for music memes as a whole (on YouTube in particular) these resurgences are not big enough to call them part of the meme canon in the sense that they do not spawn many (if at all) variations and are not included in prestigious playlists.

In this chapter I discuss the meme canon and what exactly makes certain samples return time after time in music memes. These samples seem to be hyper-effective in conveying either the joke or making the format interpretable. A big part of why these keep coming back is because of the participation culture that exists on the internet and specifically on YouTube. This participation culture invites users to create similar content to create a steady stream of entertainment.⁵³ Music memes themselves also invite new people to join the meme community and constantly remix new versions by showing new remix possibilities that have not been made yet.⁵⁴ YouTube playlists also play a vital role in the elevating certain memes to a more prestigious status, making them more alluring to use in music memes. Copyright laws have a huge influence on how samples can be used on platforms like YouTube, and this directly trickles down to music memes on the platform.⁵⁵ But not only these external factors influence the usefulness of certain tracks for music memes. Morshu beatboxes show musical elements, particularly repetition, which makes the song more

⁵³ Jenkins, “Designing for Spreadability,” 198.

⁵⁴ Shifman, “Unpacking Viral And Memetic success,” 88.

⁵⁵ David Laderman and Laurel Westrup, “Thinking through Sampling, Literally,” in *Sampling Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 238–239.

effective when used as music memes.⁵⁶ These factors help to explain why certain music meme trends keep returning.

While everyone can potentially create memes this does not mean every meme will be just as popular (in that they will spawn new variations) or that every music meme will be used over and over again. The best memes (according to their respected communities) rise to the top through various means. Subreddits about memes feature the best of certain types of memes. For example, the top of all time of r/SoundsLikeMusic features the best music memes of everyday objects emitting sounds that, in the right context, sound like specific songs.⁵⁷ These memes rise to the top through upvotes, a way for reddit users to show that they like the posted content. Furthermore, YouTube memes are carefully curated through certain prestigious playlists. These prestigious playlists, often curated by a single user, decide what memes are worth watching and these memes often end up sticking around the longest.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, these playlists often are somewhat messy and not specified to just music memes. Although music meme playlists exist, they are less popular and often very specific, for example showing only vocoded music memes.⁵⁹

Music memes featured in these playlists often contain the same samples. Some examples of these are “All Star” by Smash Mouth, “Sweden” and “Minecraft” (from the Minecraft soundtrack) by C418, the aforementioned “Axel F” by Crazy Frog, and one of the

⁵⁶ Cook, “Digital Technology and Cultural Practice,” 18.

⁵⁷ SoundsLikeMusic, Reddit, Accessed on March 21, 2021, <https://www.reddit.com/r/SoundsLikeMusic/top/?t=all>.

⁵⁸ Some examples of these playlists are the “important videos” playlist and the “Instant Regret Clicking this Playlist.” Even though these do not only feature music memes, they are persistent throughout the playlists. The first six videos of the “Important videos” playlist are music memes for example.

Cococatful, “important videos,” streamed on March 21, 2021, YouTube playlist, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6EoRBvdVPQ&list=PLgcliw49-xcF7TF-uNX7acOGjfqc4gSZM>; EpicDonutDude, “Instant Regret Clicking this Playlist,” streamed on March 21, 2021, YouTube playlist, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHfaZEUbAqI&list=PLv3TTBr1W_9tppikBxAE_G6qjWdBljBHH.

⁵⁹ Joseph roach, “vocoded Memes playlist,” streamed on March 28, 2021, YouTube playlist, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1EiycvMnqmA8GZI9bX8foDMtYQ1w69or>.

more recent additions, the Morshu beatbox by Verbalase.⁶⁰ While this last meme appeared to have been outdated for a while, it had appeared before in the form that can be seen in the top picture of figure 5, in the beginning of 2021 the beatbox returned. An example of the newest version (relative to the writing of this thesis) features the Morshu beatbox vocoded to sound like the song “Gangsta’s Paradise” by Coolio.⁶¹ The song does not sound entirely like “Gangsta’s Paradise” however. The vocoding is done to the chord progression of the song but this is where the similarities end. The original vocals are removed, the song is sped up and the instrumentals are changed to feature almost purely synths. The percussion is not soft cymbals combined with a hip hop-like sounding snare drum with a lot of gated reverb anymore. The new percussion features a click every sixteenth beat, heavy bass drum and a more digitally altered snare that does still feature the gated reverb. The video is also altered, featuring a 3D Morshu (which came from another meme trend) with a city background in a sort of “negative” picture color scheme but with the colors changed to feature many purples, pinks, and blues (as can be seen in figure 5). While this does not necessarily show Internet Ugly, it does show another famous internet aesthetic. This is the synthwave aesthetic, a combination of this color palette and shapes that are linked to the music genre with the same name.⁶² Musically, this remix also borrows elements from this genre, for example in the percussion and the heavier focus on synths. The synthwave (and the closely related genre vaporwave) genres play a lot with nostalgia, hinting to another reason why the



Figure 5: The original Morshu (above) and the “synthwave” version (below).

⁶⁰ This Is That Guy, “All Star But they don’t stop coming pitch corrected,” streamed on March 26, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eT3BFzSD6YY>; The House of the Dank, “BEACH BABY VS DOGGO GONE MINECRAFT MEME,” streamed on March 26, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHZq69gUD50>; Dripdroid 17, “Morshu Beatbox,” streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ0h6dewnrQ>.

⁶¹ Memnicus, “Morshu RTX ON Beatbox but it’s vocoded to Gangsta’s Paradise,” streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLaNJLZK21Y>.

⁶² Laura Glitsos, “Vaporwave, or Music Optimised for Abandoned Malls,” *Popular Music* 37 (1) 2018: 111.

creator has chosen to use older memes.⁶³

The Morshu beatbox is a prime example of remix culture. Both the audio and video originally come from YouTube (meme) videos which in turn come from other media again, showing how much remixing the audio and video have had already. Then both parts are mashed together to be the first wave of Morshu beatbox music memes, which featured a 2D Morshu. Finally, the music meme is remixed yet again and is vocoded to “Gangsta’s Paradise” by Coolio, features a 3D Morshu, and the video is mixed to be more aligned to aesthetics that fit the new genre of the song. This is probably not the last time the meme will be seen either so the meme will probably be edited in various ways in the future.

The reason why the beatbox is remixed with “Gangsta’s Paradise” is no coincidence either. The sample has appeared in its own music meme trend before, which is now mostly found on Instagram profiles and in meme compilations on YouTube.⁶⁴ These memes often used the choral sample at the end of the song (from 3:36) and edited it on different videos of characters from all kinds of media screaming similar to the Crazy Frog memes.⁶⁵ The memes were short, usually not longer than a couple of seconds. Because of this the memes usually only contained four bars of the song. Only some of the most memorable parts were used, namely the chord progression and the choir vocals. The reason why the sample was used can be attributed to its ability to catch viewers off guard with how attention-grabbing the choral part can be (more on this in chapter 3). However, more specific reasons as to why someone started to use this sample for memes would be speculations with no real evidence. Since the sample was already known and celebrated in the meme community, the step to remix it with other meme canon samples is easily made. In other words, repeating the use of meme canon music memes and remixing them reinforces the meme canon and the place of the remixed memes in it.

But why is this very specific music sample chosen for (the same type of meme) over and over again? For this there are several different explaining factors. Some external factors

⁶³ Glitsos, “Vaporwave, or Music Optimised for Abandoned Malls,” 104.

⁶⁴ These specific memes shown in the ‘Gangsta’s Paradise’ compilation are “stolen” memes from other creators and are not always rightly credited. This highlights a larger problem in the meme community. On the one hand the community tries to stimulate people to share the memes further and make their own variations on memes; on the other, people show dislike when memes are shared and not properly credited, even though there is no real ownership within meme culture. On top of that, the origin of memes is often very hard to track. This has created a paradox within the meme community with no clear solution. See Quantum Dank, “Gangsta’s Paradise Memes Compilation,” streamed on April 30, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGQ60moG5d8>.

⁶⁵ Many of these memes are considered not very funny by the YouTube meme community. On top of that some of them even border on inappropriate.

have already been discussed in chapter 1. The beatbox sample is quite ambiguous, as seen by its ability to change from a beatbox by Thanos to a beatbox by Morshu. On top of that, the original music meme and several other versions have been added to the “I regret watching” playlists. Next, repeating pre-existing content is “safe.” Music memes, and memes in general, often are not made for financial gain. They are however, still made to be clicked on by as many people possible, either to grow the meme community or reach a certain status within the meme community. Henry Jenkins argues that while content creators cannot fully predict whether or not content will be successful, they have some tricks that are proven to increase the “spreadability” of the content.⁶⁶ One of these tricks is creating a steady stream of content.⁶⁷ Vernallis states that viewers might like to watch repetitive content because the world around goes too fast.⁶⁸ Therefore watching repetitive content might be a way to not get overwhelmed by the experience of everyday life. The YouTube algorithm recommends more of the “same” content to users, meaning that making music reiterations of already established music memes might be “safe” content to get consistent views. These music memes borrow prestige from established memes to become more successful and therefore add to the steady stream of content. Because of this, music meme creators are encouraged to use the same (format) over and over because it is a proven way to successfully create content.

As already said, music memes are generally very short.⁶⁹ In these few seconds, the meme must set up the joke through the format *and* deliver the punchline. Everything needs to be done rather quick. Therefore, it helps if the format or punchline (or both) are quickly recognized and interpreted. To add to this, many music memes sample copyrighted music, meaning that they are only allowed to use a very short fragment of the track, which is around seven seconds.⁷⁰ Using more than this would lead to a warning and eventual copyright strike. Different media platforms use different copyright systems. TikTok for example, allows users to use much longer musical samples, and has resulted in music memes sometimes being longer. However, short music memes still appear frequently on media platforms like TikTok. Whether this can be attributed to TikTok meme makers following YouTube trends, or other reasons like attention span, one cannot say. As a general rule of thumb, music memes on YouTube that use copyrighted music have the extra criterium that they have to be recognizable in an extremely small timespan.

⁶⁶ Jenkins, “Designing for Spreadability,” 196.

⁶⁷ Jenkins, “Designing for Spreadability,” 198.

⁶⁸ Vernallis, “YouTube Aesthetics,” 132.

⁶⁹ There are outliers, namely the “1 hour long” meme trend.

⁷⁰ Burgess, “YouTube and the Media,” 42.

Repeating content on a meme level is one way to explain the why the same sample often returns in music memes, but there is another. Samples that contain musical repetition increase their iconicity and become easier to recognize.⁷¹ While already quite useful for longer videos, it becomes even more important with extremely short audio-visual experiences like music memes. The faster the sample is recognized, the easier it is to convey the message that is sent with the meme. This also leaves more room to make more complicated jokes and memes, which results in remixes of two different music memes. Limor Shifman argues that the success of video memes can be seen in how many repetitions it can spawn.⁷² According to Shifman, the video meme shows that it can be replicated and shows some unspoken rules as to what parts need to be replicated, inviting people to contribute.⁷³ The sample is a kind of instruction manual for many memes, and is very closely related to the format. Thus, to convey all this information, the sample must be easy to recognize and interpret.

But how does this work in practice? When using the example of “Morshu RTX ON Beatbox but it’s vocoded to Gangsta’s Paradise” again, the low beatboxing of Morshu and the chord progression of “Gangsta’s Paradise” both repeat themselves in the music meme. Essentially containing two formats (the beatbox and “Gangsta’s Paradise”), the meme tells the viewer that many more remixes can be made with both “Gangsta’s Paradise” and the beatbox. The rules for these remixes are also implied. The beatbox must contain the repeating four bars of beatboxing (which all other Morshu beatbox memes do as well). Similarly, the meme tells us that the “Gangsta’s Paradise” format is looser. The sample is already heavily altered from its original state in “Gangsta’s Paradise” and does not even feature the choral part anymore. One of the few common features still left is the chord progression, showing that this is still necessary for the meme. Of course, these instructions could be interpreted from a meme that had much less repetition. However, intramusical repetition in the music meme shows what elements are absolutely necessary, in this case the four bars of beatboxing and the chord progression of “Gangsta’s Paradise.” While this meme is relatively new at the time of writing (it was posted on January 26, 2021) new versions of both formats have already been created, following the implied rules.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Shifman, “Unpacking Viral and Memetic Success,” 83.

⁷² Shifman, “Unpacking Viral and Memetic Success,” 97.

⁷³ Shifman, “Unpacking Viral and Memetic Success,” 83; Cook, “Digital Technology and Cultural Practice,” 18.

⁷⁴ Pringa, “Peter falling down the stairs vocoded to Gangsta’s Paradise,” streamed on January 27, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ftt0AZUN0M>; Memnicus, “mmmmm Morshu,” streamed on March 27, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0-sjyy9hAM>.

These implied rules give us a view behind the curtains as to what makes memes so widespread on the internet. Internet communities are not separate entities, they constantly influence each other through their shared media.⁷⁵ One of the most effective of these media is the meme. Because of the inherent information on how to replicate them that music memes contain, communities outside of the YouTube meme community can make their own versions of said meme, often focused on their online communities (for example fan communities making edits of music memes towards their fandom). Therefore, the prior knowledge needed to make a music meme is close to none. More importantly, this explains why we see the same meme over and over again, because its format is best defined.

It turns out that sample choice for music memes is not as random as it appears. Certain musical elements make sure that some samples are picked than others more often. The most important of these might be repetition. Although the samples often are so short, samples usually feature a form of musical repetition in the rhythmic patterns, the chord progression or ornamental notes. This repetition makes the meme more recognizable and helps with decrypting the hidden instructions for making the meme. Vocals can add to this effect. Unique or loud voices have more meme potential in music memes, as shown the choral part in “Gangsta’s Paradise” or the Crazy Frog memes discussed in chapter 1. These samples often feature loud, attention-grabbing voices (more on this in chapter 3). The short duration of actual music in music memes creates an interesting dynamic as well. The music is central to the meme, setting it up through the format, but doing this extremely fast. Because of this, samples often limit themselves to some features that are easy to recognize and ignore the rest of the original recording. These features are then established because of both the internal musical repetition and the fact that memes are often copied. Finally, repeating the music meme or versions of the same music meme invites new people to join the creation and celebration of music memes by using the most iconic (and often loudest) samples, growing the meme community.

⁷⁵ Michael Strangelove, “The YouTube Community,” 104.

Chapter 3: Laughing at unexpected sounds

Attention-grabbing strategies in one-off and beginning canon music memes

Because of the existence of a meme canon, one might expect that the music meme community only uses the same few samples over and over. While a part of the music meme community certainly does this, YouTube is also full of new and creative memes that use music that has never been heard in memes before. These music memes can get many views and might eventually even result in their admission to the canon, but more often than not sizzle out after a while. There are two categories within these types of memes: “one-offs” and beginning canon memes. The main difference between these two is that one-offs are not made with the idea of creating more variations later. Beginning canon memes are made to be varied upon, and often already use more known material in the meme community. Finally, both these types of music memes use some tricks to become more successful. In this chapter I will explain how this works. Firstly, I will look at what actually makes these music memes funny. Then, I demonstrate that music memes rely heavily on the interplay between grabbing our attention through music and the humor it creates.

Humor is extremely subjective, and to people who are not in the know of music memes, they can even be vague to the point that they might not even be funny to them. While already explained that they are not completely random for insiders, this still does not clarify why memes are considered funny. Limor Shifman attributes the humor in memes to three categories. The first one is incongruity. What this means is that two elements that would not normally fit together are combined, creating a weird and unexpected whole.⁷⁶ Incongruity in memes can come in many different forms, but the most common in audio-visual memes is created through a disparity in audio and video elements.⁷⁷ In music memes specifically, another common way incongruity is created is through incongruity within the audio itself. Many meme mashups, for example, can be considered funny through their auditory incongruity. The mixed elements are not completely random, however. Combining a video of a car driving by with the Morshu beatbox video would not be funny; it would just be random. The combination, although often dissonant in message, must still fit the existing meme.⁷⁸ In essence, this results in the creator trying to subvert the expectations of the viewer, setting something up and doing the opposite, therefore still staying within the logical routes the

⁷⁶ Shifman, “Unpacking Viral and Memetic Success,” 79–80.

⁷⁷ Shifman, “Unpacking Viral and Memetic Success,” 80.

⁷⁸ Phillips and Milner, “Constitutive Humor,” 96.

meme could have gone.⁷⁹ This dissonance is similar to Michel Chion's concept of audio-visual dissonance, where the effect is noticeable if the different elements are linked to their own different messaging.⁸⁰ In music memes this can be often found through sounds of characters being replaced with sounds from entirely different characters. This is at the core of incongruity in memes, the dissonance only occurs if the different elements clash because they convey different messages, while still having some association with each other. According to Shifman, this effect can be compared with a puzzle, and users can solve it through making their own memes to see which fits best.⁸¹ However, it is important to state that there is no hierarchy between the meme variations, meaning that there is no meme that would fit "best," and meme creation is mostly about seeing which puzzle pieces fit at all.

The second category is playfulness. Through memes, users are invited to play along with the meme.⁸² For example, the aforementioned rickroll, which tries to trick people to watch "Never Gonna Give You Up" is a prime example of a game being played on the internet. On one side, the creators win by tricking the viewer, and on the other side, the viewers try to spot the rickroll before it happens. While less common in this form nowadays, many music memes can still be analyzed through this ludo-musicological perspective.⁸³ For example, because many memes re-use some element of another meme, trying to recognize this element early on can be considered a form of play. The last category, according to Shifman, is superiority. These are memes that intentionally make fun of other people and look down on them.⁸⁴ This last category is the least common in music memes.

The first category, incongruity, is especially prevalent in music memes. Usually, the early music memes in a trend on YouTube try to subvert the expectations of the viewer. Again, the already discussed Crazy Frog memes are a prime example of this. While technically not one-offs because the character is part of the canon, these memes gained less popularity than older Crazy Frog memes ones making it sit somewhere between canon and non-canon. The replacement of screams with Crazy Frog creates an incongruous effect: the viewer does not know when the Crazy Frog audio comes in, only that the video is related to

⁷⁹ Phillips and Milner, "Constitutive Humor," 96.

⁸⁰ Chion, "Lines And Points," 37.

⁸¹ Shifman, "Unpacking Viral and Memetic Success," 80.

⁸² Shifman, "Unpacking Viral and Memetic Success," 79.

⁸³ While writing this thesis, rickrolling has returned, mainly on the subculture surrounding popular YouTuber Pewdiepie. A big difference here however is that the rickrolling now focusses more on tricking people through GIFs which often have no sound. This means that rickrolling is now more about watching the video and not hearing the song, making it less of a music meme.

⁸⁴ Shifman, "Unpacking Viral and Memetic Success," 81.

Crazy Frog through the video title. Because of this, the audio could only be a few things. For example, if the audio were the Morshu beatbox, it would not have made much sense; after all the video does not show the character moving their lips. Even within the song “Axel F” itself it, only the samples that could be used had to feature Crazy Frog vocalizing long, loud notes. On top of that, the audio had to have a form of transition to a more repetitive musical section that a character could dance to. Therefore, for this music meme to work, it had to be this sample.

In chapter 1, I discussed that for music memes to work, the message and tone of a musical piece have to be somewhat ambiguous, so they can be recontextualized for the music meme. However, how does this relate to the theory of incongruity, where it has become clear that the audio and video elements should clash? Whitney Phillips and Ryan Milner have highlighted three factors that jokes have that make them incongruous. These are factors that create the apparent randomness of jokes on the internet.⁸⁵ The first and most important of these factors is *fetishism*, meaning that the humor covers up a lot of the irrelevant context (be it political, cultural or other). This way the viewer can focus their attention more on the relevant, or funny, parts.⁸⁶ The Oblivion NPC dialogue memes for example, leave out the entirety of the context of the video. Similarly, Crazy Frog memes completely ignore that the glissando is in the middle of the songs and acts as a bridge. Further factors are that the memes are *generative* and *magnetic*, meaning that they create a group of people that are in the know and attract attention.⁸⁷ The result of this is that music memes become hyper fixated on one or a few contextual and musical elements while the rest is completely stripped away. These elements can be a hook, but they can also be much shorter, as is the case with the current Crazy Frog memes. The “Gangsta’s Paradise” meme remixed with a Morshu beatbox from chapter 2 also shows this effect. Firstly, all irrelevant contextual clues are covered up, like the vocals and lyrics (and thus the message of the original recording), which opens up more freedom to attach it to other music memes. It attracts attention in the sense that the remix is rather catchy (according to the comments). Then, since it has boiled away all irrelevant context and only the chords remain, it requires viewers to be familiar with “Gangsta’s Paradise” and its earlier role in meme culture because otherwise this meme would appear rather random. Finally, the Morshu Beatbox remixed with “Gangsta’s Paradise” is incongruous, since they had nothing to do with each other before the meme and are therefore

⁸⁵ Phillips and Milner, “Constitutive Humor,” 98–99.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Phillips and Milner, “Constitutive Humor,” 99.

unexpected (and funny). Because these two meme trends were already more established, this entirely new meme could happen. When memes start to use new music, the samples used are usually closer to the source material. Only when they become a bit more established can the musical material be remixed and changed more and more until only the most essential elements are kept.

An example of a one-off containing incongruity is the music meme “kanye crashes his 2018 sonata.” This meme is a remix of the song “Gold Digger” (2005) by Kanye West and Jamie Foxx. The clip is short, it spans 18 seconds of the beginning of the song. The lyrics are remixed to be “Now, I ain’t sayin’ she a 2018 Hyundai Sonata” instead of “Now, I ain’t sayin’ she a gold digger.”⁸⁸ This lyrical remix could be seen as a combination between the edited video and misheard lyrics that Shifman categorized as meme genres.⁸⁹ The second lyric in the video, “Shoulda got Geico,” is also a complete re-edit. I consider this meme to be a one-off and not a beginning canon meme because of how specific it is. Variations to this would have to remix the lyrics entirely differently or even use a different sample, at which point the connection with the original music meme would be very thin.

The meme of “Gold Digger” relies a lot on incongruity. The reason why this works is because at first the viewer would not expect the lyric to be changed, catching them off-guard. Then the viewer realizes that the lyric is different from the original, creating the incongruous effect. This is, in this case, created between the original audio and the remixed lyrics, making the music meme somewhat different from the usual memes that create incongruity through audio and video. At the same time, the remix somewhat makes sense since Kanye West references the car brand in the song “Gold Digger” (2005) itself, showing that there *is* a reason behind the remixing of the lyric; it simply left out most of the irrelevant context.

Incongruity highlights another effect that music memes rely on. Because the different elements combined do not fit well with each other, it highlights the fact that music is playing. Nowadays, music often serves a background function.⁹⁰ In films, viewers can often get a general idea of what the film is about without hearing the music. On top of that, shops play non-offensive music that (allegedly) stimulates how much consumers buy. Lastly, playlists (specifically mood playlists) are becoming more popular than albums, showing that the average person is less picky about what specific music to listen to next. All of this results in

⁸⁸ Pluffaduff, “kanye crashes his 2018 hyundai sonata,” streamed on March 30, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKmL7jZUSx4>.

⁸⁹ Shifman, “Meme Genres,” 108–110.

⁹⁰ Kassabian, “Ubiquitous Listening,” 38–39.

music being constantly around us, which makes it less noticeable. Music can even be barely audible.⁹¹ It has become a way of creating a mood or setting, both commercially and not.⁹² In YouTube videos, this is no different. Many video creators use barely audible, attention wise, background music to set moods, just like films and television do. A significant difference with film and television however, is that because copyright holders crack down on YouTube videos rather hard, only a small group of useable copyright free recordings are used by most creators on the platform. Because of this, most music in YouTube videos has become even less noticeable because the average viewer has heard the recording many times before. This phenomenon, the interaction with music while not actively “listening” to it, is called *ubiquitous listening*.⁹³ We listen to music while often doing other activities, for example watching and hearing someone talk in a video. According to Anahid Kassabian, who coined the term, listening through music like this creates a certain flow where one action seamlessly flows over into the next. Secondly, the music does not have a source. Technically, the music comes from the speakers, but through the way we interact with the music it becomes something of the environment, in the same way that a wallpaper becomes less noticeable when part of a room.⁹⁴ This way of listening is the direct result of advances in sound engineering, like the amplification of sound and the portability of sound.⁹⁵ Because of these new inventions, music is now often something we do while also doing other activities.⁹⁶ One of the more recent developments influencing this is the rise of (mood) playlists, a current phenomenon which only amplifies our mode of listening. After all, it is easier to write a paper if one does not have to constantly pick a new song. Finally, Kassabian argues that genre is losing its importance, since modern technology and media allow us to experience much more different kinds of music rapidly.⁹⁷

Music memes expect us to be within this ubiquitous mode of listening, but they also rely on it. Not only do they “wake us up” from the steady flow of videos we were watching on YouTube, we also are completely aware of the music in the music meme quite suddenly. But how do music memes do this? This strategy has a lot of interplay with incongruity. Incongruous jokes require us to reflect on them, since we have to analyze the joke for

⁹¹ Kassabian, “Ubiquitous Listening,” 33.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Kassabian, “Ubiquitous Listening,” 39.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Harper, “Unmute This’: Captioning an (Audio)Visual Microgenre” 10.

⁹⁶ Kassabian, “Ubiquitous Listening,” 31.

⁹⁷ Kassabian, “Ubiquitous Listening,” 40.

elements that feel remixed together. In music memes, where the incongruity often exists in a form of audio-visual dissonance, viewers thus have to reflect on why the music does not with the other elements in the meme at first glance. This means that the viewer is very actively thinking about the musical sample in the meme and its relationship with the video, other memes, and internet culture in general. This effect happens quickly though, because music memes are made to be quickly digestible and understandable. Exploring this further, there are some musical elements that have strong potential to make us listen attentively. As mentioned earlier, one of these is loudness. In many music memes the loudest elements (like Crazy Frog screaming or the “Gangsta’s Paradise” choir singing) are used to attract our attention. This is often paired with increased volume in the bass section and sometimes a boost in loudness of the whole sample.⁹⁸ Vocals appear to be more common to grab attention than just instrumental parts. A reason for this could be that we automatically focus more on voices than other sounds.

That there is a clash between audio and video does not mean that either of those were chosen randomly. Revisiting the Crazy Frog memes, would the music meme work just as well if the scream were replaced with a sad piano piece? This would definitely be incongruous, but it would not really be that funny because it would be too random. Since internet humor is not actually random, it only appears so for outsiders, a sad piano linked to a form of (visual) loudness would have to be already established in the meme community somewhere. Since this is not the case (as far as I know), viewers would ask themselves what the piano would refer to and what that would mean in relation to the character screaming on screen and therefore question what exactly should be funny in the situation. In other words, not only the irrelevant context would be ignored, like it is in fetishism, it would ignore all context, at which point interpretation would vary wildly. This is exactly why the Crazy Frog glissando does work: not only is one scream replaced with another, keeping it related, it refers to already known material in the community (because the content is generative), therefore making the incongruity easier to interpret.

A final effect that the piano could have is that the viewer might not realize the piano soon enough because it would not be striking enough. The effect of this would be that the punchline had already been given and the joke would be wasted. This is why loud sounds often are more effective for creating incongruity in music memes. While definitely not the

⁹⁸ These are very loud; I recommend lowering the volume before listening to this playlist. Varvara Alexeyenko, “Bass boosted meme songs,” streamed on May 5, 2021, YouTube playlist, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2FMz2xwDUahrm3CKNBm_YFvwrVXZB-Jv.

only way to pull us out of our listening flow, loud sounds are very effective in grabbing our attention. Films and television shows use loud, attention grabbing, sounds all the time, often combining them with some striking visual cues to create a synchronization point.⁹⁹

Particularly striking synch points often make use of an acoustic blast. This a loud, abrupt sound that has the intention of creating a response in the viewer, the acoustic startle.¹⁰⁰ A common example of this is the “jump scare,” which often tries to scare the viewer in horror films by using a stinger.¹⁰¹ According to Valerio Sbravatti, jump scares rely heavily on the anticipation of the acoustic startle through silence before the jump scare.¹⁰² This is where the similarities between music memes and jump scares end, since music memes do not rely on anticipation because they simply are too short to contain (much) anticipation.

The acoustic startle caused by the scream in the Crazy Frog memes helps the viewer return their attention back to what is happening on screen. As I have already said, the characters portrayed in these memes are already well-known in the meme community, so viewers might have lost their attention because of this. Through the loud music and the fact that it was unexpected, our attention is immediately directed back to the meme itself, which then shows a form of incongruity because it is not the character screaming, but Crazy Frog. Then, the viewer is suddenly aware of the music being played through the loud sound and the instrumental part after that (which in turn is enforced through the character on screen dancing).

Music memes on YouTube are not the only form of modern media that employs this tactic. Paula Harper has shown that certain Facebook videos, namely “Unmute This!” videos have a very similar effect in breaking us out of our ubiquitous listening flow.¹⁰³ Viewers are encouraged to unmute these videos, that are muted by default, and therefore switch from a passive consumption to a more attentive consumption of the audio-visual material.¹⁰⁴ The main difference between these videos and music memes is that the interruption in ubiquitous listening here comes from the visual cry to unmute the video through captions and comments, while music memes on YouTube break the flow through an auditory element. Nonetheless, “Unmute This!” videos show that interrupting our media consumption flow and making us

⁹⁹ Chion, “Lines and Points: Horizontal and Vertical Perspectives on Audiovisual Relations,” 59.

¹⁰⁰ Valerio Sbravatti, “Acoustic Startles in Horror Films: A Neurofilmological Approach,” *Projections: The Journal for Movies and Mind (new York)* 13, no. 1 (2019): 45–46.

¹⁰¹ Sbravatti, “Acoustic Startles in Horror Films: A Neurofilmological Approach,” 53.

¹⁰² Sbravatti, “Acoustic Startles in Horror Films: A Neurofilmological Approach,” 52.

¹⁰³ Harper, “‘Unmute This’: Captioning an (Audio)Visual Microgenre,” 11

¹⁰⁴ Harper, “‘Unmute This’: Captioning an (Audio)Visual Microgenre,” 18.

pause and contemplate a piece of media is a common tactic on the internet for making (moderately) successful content.

In essence, non-canon music memes always try to catch us off-guard, applying an incongruous effect through the break in ubiquitous listening. The music memes expect us to be in an environment that is constantly surrounded by sound, usually through other YouTube videos or playlists. A sudden shift from inattentive to attentive listening is then combined with video that does not (entirely) go along with this shift and thus creates the incongruous effect. While utilizing sudden loud musical elements is the most effective way of creating this effect, there are other ways of achieving it, mainly through remixing. Auditory incongruity, for example Kanye West's remixed vocals in "kanye crashes his 2018 hyundai sonata" makes us listen attentively. We expect the normal lyrics but are treated to a mashup that at first glance does not make much sense. This is because the music meme applies fetishism, ignoring most context regarding Kanye West and Hyundai except for the fact that the original lyrics mention it. In this example, the incongruous effect is itself responsible for catching us off-guard and shifting our attention from a passive flow (especially if it is watched as part of a playlist) into an active one. Thus, to make a good music meme, the sample must be able to break through the current (passive) listening state that the viewer is in, otherwise the music meme will simply not be funny.

Conclusion

Meme culture travels at extremely fast speeds and music memes are no different. At the time of publishing this thesis, all of the memes discussed are already outdated and replaced by either remixes of these existing music memes or entirely new music memes. This is the curse of academia; it always lags behind contemporary culture. However, this does not mean that academics, especially musicologists, should completely ignore memes. Music stands central in meme culture on YouTube specifically. Many of the most famous and celebrated memes that currently exist on the platform are music memes. Therefore, music might be one of the most effective ways of not only creating a successful meme, but also conveying your message to others.

Music can be this effective because it efficiently brings meta-information with it, is ambiguous enough to be useful for more than one purpose and makes users actively consume the content. Applying samples as a meme format sends a message that invites the viewer to make music memes ourselves by showing is the possibility it has to be recontextualized. On top of that the memes even show how one would make their own version of the meme. Because of this, musical repetition is important, since it is used to specify what musical material can be left out and changed, and what material must absolutely stay. This information is necessary, because not every sample requires the same amount of musical material to still be recognizable enough to work in the music meme. On a larger level, musical repetition helps with the iconicity and memorability of the meme the same way repeating the music meme (with small variations) does, making sure that these memes become more solidified in the meme canon.

The humor of music memes relies on the viewer not expecting some element in the meme. To do this, music memes expect us to be constantly surrounded by music and sound. Music memes grab our attention through the incongruous effect, the humorous effect two dissonant elements mashed together have. It results in the viewer getting caught off-guard, and their listening flow interrupted from inattentive to attentive listening. A very effective way of achieving this, is through loudness in music, like bass boosted memes or the Crazy Frog screaming memes.

Lastly, music can be interpreted in many different ways, and this is valuable for making music memes. The most memeable recordings are the ones that can be sampled in many different contexts. This does not mean that the sample has complete ambiguity however, the sample often retains some vital contextual element of its original state, which helps with the humorous effect of the meme. The most prolific tracks thus have repeating

musical material, use an effect to grab our attention like a loud voice, and can undergo a recontextualization while still holding on to a single piece of context.

Internet memes, and music memes in particular, require much more research. This thesis has, for example not discussed how music memes lose their popularity again, or what happens to music memes when they are eventually decanonized. Neither have I highlighted the importance of location in music memes. After all, almost all of the music memes make use of Western music samples which has a rather strong effect on who are in the know and who are not. Finally, marketing a song through memes might be a new way for artists to create a considerable audience, as shown with the single “Montero (Call Me By Your Name)” by Lil Nas X.¹⁰⁵ Music is extremely valuable to internet culture as a whole and I see no way that music memes will disappear. Where there is music and internet, there will be music memes as well.

¹⁰⁵ As part of the marketing of his new single, Lil Nas X has made joke remixes like “Montero but ur in the bathroom of hell while lil nas is giving satan a lap dance in the other room.” This shows a clear understanding of internet and meme culture and the marketing the song through this appears rather successful. Lil Nas X, “Montero but ur in the bathroom of hell while lil nas is giving satan a lap dance in the other room,” streamed on April 4, 2021, YouTube Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54K1B1Fp9Ww>.

Bibliography

Burgess, Jean, and Joshua Green. "The YouTube Community." In *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Second edition.). Seconded. Digital Media and Society Series. 77-95, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2018.

Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, second version, edited and translated by Claudia Gorbman, New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.7312/chio18588>.

Chion, Michel. "An Introduction to Audiovisual Analysis." In *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, second version, edited by Claudia Gorbman, New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.7312/chio18588>.

Cook, Nicholas, Monique Marie Ingalls, and David Trippett, eds. "Digital Technology and Cultural Practice." In *The Cambridge Companion to Music in Digital Culture*. Cambridge Companions to Music. 5-28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Denisova, Anastasia. *Internet Memes and Society: Social, Cultural, and Political Contexts*. Routledge Advances in Internationalizing Media Studies, 25. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019.

Douglas, Nick. "It's Supposed to Look Like Shit: The Internet Ugly Aesthetic." *Journal of Visual Culture* 13, no. 3 (2014): 314–39. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1177/1470412914544516>.

Glitsos, Laura. 2018. "Vaporwave, or Music Optimised for Abandoned Malls." *Popular Music* 37 (1): 100–118. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1017/S0261143017000599>.

Gofton, Pete. "Music, Memes and Meaning: A Semiotic Analysis." *Music on Screen: From Cinema Screens to Touchscreens*. Musicology research, vol. 2, (Spring 2017): 27-47.

Harper, Paula. "'Unmute This': Captioning an (Audio)Visual Microgenre." *The Soundtrack* 9, no. 1 (2016): 7–23. https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1386/ts.9.1-2.7_1.

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. "Designing for Spreadability." In *Spreadable Media : Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. 195-228. Postmillennial Pop. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

Kassabian, Anahid. "Ubiquitous Listening." In *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity*. 31-49. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

Laderman, David, and Laurel Westrup. "Popular Culture through the Eyes, Ears, and Fingertips of Fans." In *Sampling Media*. 212-227. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Phillips, Whitney, and Ryan M Milner. "Constitutive Humor." In *The Ambivalent Internet: Mischief, Oddity, and Antagonism Online*. 92-126. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017.

Sbravatti, Valerio. "Acoustic Startles in Horror Films: A Neurofilmological Approach." *Projections: The Journal on Movies and Mind (New York)* 13, no. 1 (2019): 45–66.
<https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.3167/proj.2019.130104>.

Shifman, Limor. *Memes in Digital Culture*. The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2014.

Shifman, Limor. "An Anatomy of a YouTube Meme." *New Media & Society* 14, no. 2 (2012): 187-203.

Strangelove, Michael. "The YouTube Community." In *Watching YouTube: Extraordinary Videos by Ordinary People*. 103-136. Digital Futures. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.

Vernallis, Carol. "YouTube Aesthetics." In *Unruly Media: YouTube, Music Video, and the New Digital Cinema*. 127-154. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Digital Sources:

Cococatful. "important videos." Streamed on March 21, 2021, YouTube playlist, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6EoRBvdVPQ&list=PLgcliw49-xcF7TF-uNX7acOGjfqc4gSZM>.

Crazy Frog. "Crazy Frog – Axel F (Official Video)." Streamed on May 22, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k85mRPqvMbE>.

Dripdroid 17. "Morshu Beatbox." Streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ0h6dewnrQ>.

EpicDonutDude. "Instant Regret Clicking this Playlist." Streamed on March 21, 2021, YouTube playlist, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHfaZEUbAqI&list=PLv3TTBr1W_9tppikBxAE_G6qjWdBljBHJ.

iBDWR. "peter trips and hurts his knee." Streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtCDhQw33d8>.

Jared Morin. "Oblivion NPC Dialogue." Streamed on February 28, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EDtys1sIq0>.

Joseph roach. "vocoded Memes playlist." streamed on March 28, 2021, YouTube playlist, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1EiycvMnqmA8GZI9bX8foDMtYQ1w69or>.

Lil Nas X. "Montero but ur in the bathroom of hell while lil nas is giving satan a lap dance in the other room." Streamed on April 4, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54KIB1Fp9Ww>.

Memnicus. "Morshu RTX ON Beatbox but it's vocoded to Gangsta's Paradise." Streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLaNJLZK21Y>.

Memnicus. "mmmmm Morshu." Streamed on March 27, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0-sjy9hAM>.

Morgue & Mufasa. "Play K'Nex." Streamed on February 27, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMZomP5RNlw>.

Neverthink. "Tyler1 but he's Crazy Frog." Streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t1Mh7rB1lg>.

Nitro.iF. "Godzilla vs. Kong arguments in a nutshell." Streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t1Mh7rB1lg>.

Pink Boi. "Screaming cat but it's Crazy Frog." Streamed on February 23, 2021, YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znngI_nS3pg.

Pluffaduff. "kanye crashes his 2018 hyundai sonata." Streamed on April 7, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKmL7jZUSx4>.

Pringa. “Peter falling down the stairs vocoded to Gangsta’s Paradise.” Streamed on January 27, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ftt0AZUN0M>.

Quantum Dank. “Gangsta’s Paradise Memes Compilation.” Streamed on April 30, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGQ60moG5d8>.

SilvaGunner. Accessed on March 23, 2021, YouTube account, <https://www.youtube.com/c/SilvaGunner/videos>.

SoundsLikeMusic. Reddit, accessed on March 21, 2021, <https://www.reddit.com/r/SoundsLikeMusic/top/?t=all>.

The House of the Dank. “BEACH BABY VS DOGGO GONE MINECRAFT MEME.” Streamed on March 26, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHZq69gUD50>.

This Is That Guy. “All Star But they don’t stop coming pitch corrected.” Streamed on March 26, 2021, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eT3BFzSD6YY>.

Varvara Alexeyenko. “Bass boosted meme songs.” Streamed on May 5, 2021, YouTube playlist, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2FMz2xwDUahrm3CKNBm_YFvwrVXZB-Jv.

Whacked-out Entertainment. “Oblivion NPC Dialogue – Oranges.” Streamed on February 28, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bliWxOtesF0>.