Reverse Treatment

DUE: Thursday January 24th, Thursday February 14th, Thursday March 7th

A treatment is traditionally a pitch that a music video director makes to a recording artist/record label; it is how a song will be “treated” as a video. A music video treatment is essentially a creative contract for the concept of the video and all other creative decisions will be made based upon this document. Treatments should express the vision or idea for the video and concisely translates a director’s creative vision into words.

For this assignment you will reverse engineer a music video to write its treatment. That is, you will choose a music video and write an analysis of it in treatment form. This should not only assist you in a deep reading of the video but also help sharpen your skills for writing an actual music video treatment. Thus, you will write an analysis in treatment form and not a traditional deep textual read or research paper form.

Look at characteristics such as performance, narrative, or concept, the look, feel or style, editing, locations/settings, props, wardrobe, performance style, acting, lighting, color, camera work and cinematography (i.e. lensing, rig use), and the hook, takeaway, and addressing the audience.

It’s most important to address the the audience and takeaway from the video (what will stay in their mind after viewing, how will they feel, how will they connect to it) and really think about what the audience will take away from it generally (you’re obviously an audience member and will have a specific reaction based upon your positionally in the world).

Write and print a 2-3 page reverse treatment for a music video (12-point font (use Courier font, which is the industry standard for treatments), SINGLE spaced, and use black ink. I may offer a way to submit digitally, but will establish the standard that I want these in hard copy. The video you choose MUST be online and easily accessed.

Please read your reverse treatment, edit it, re-read and edit again, before you hand it in. If you’re lucky enough to have friends, ask one of your smart ones to edit it also. You may have some great ideas, but, if expressed poorly through writing flaw, those ideas will be suppressed and it will be reflected in your grade.

This reverse treatment will be graded upon content, use of course concepts, writing style, organization/structure, and grammar. Most important, can I see and understand your analysis in treatment form? Do some background research on your video: is there a making of video that looks at how the video was made, is there any material out there that addresses the director’s inspiration, is the piece intertextual and reference or include other videos/texts?

Each reverse treatment is worth 20% of your final grade. You can download and view some sample music video treatments, as well as other content related treatments on the VALUABLE RESOURCES page on the course blog.

***A pro tip: Use adjectives that show us what you’re trying to say and do not tell us using many words!!!

GUIDELINES FOR CONTENT:

There is no definitive way to write a treatment, and thus clearly no definitive way to write a reverse treatment. Thus, you will have to be creative here.

Please include the following information at the top of your treatment.
WRITING THE REVERSE TREATMENT:

First, watch the video. What comes to your mind? How do you feel? What do you think the intentions of the director/artist were? Watch the video more? Decide what the video is, what's its identity? Is it narrative, pseudo-doc, stage performance, art, concept, or hybrid? But, watch more and determine what's most important about the video. After you've thought about this, draw up an outline using some of the categories below (you may write your treatment like that or you can just use the outline to have an unfolding method). Maybe even do a sectional read; that is, what happens during the intro, first verse, first chorus, second verse, bridge, break, etc. Note the key moments in the video. What makes it stand out? Makes it memorable? Always think about the connection between the artist, the song, the visuals and you, the audience. There should be some synergy between all the aforementioned.

It's also very important to be familiar with the artists' brands. The brand is often at the core of writing the treatment as an actual pitch, so when you reverse the treatment look at how the artists' brands are considered in the video.

There are many ways to write a treatment, but I think for this assignment it's best to use the outline approach. For instance, you have subject headers like The Look or Editing or The Performance or The Takeaway, and then you address each of those elements as you break them down.

You could also try the unfolding method: A happens, then B happens, then C happens. However, if you choose this method make sure to address the categories (i.e. color, wardrobe, settings, editing, the concept, etc.) throughout the text. Either way, address the takeaway and audience at the end (what should the audience take away from the video, what will they remember, what meaning will they make out of it).

Make sure you write descriptively and use adjectives that SHOW us. I shouldn't even have to watch the video when I read these; I should read the reverse treatment and see the video in my head. Ideally a treatment is a sales pitch to a label/artist, so you need to be creative in how you flip a textual analysis into a pitch.

SOME CATEGORIES TO ADDRESS:

**Overview:** a general overview or summary of the video, from the narrative to the look, just summarize the video. Also, sell the video. This is your 30 second elevator pitch. Why is this idea different, why memorable, how will it connect the artist to the audience, etc.?

**Style:** this could be general (a fairy-tale feel), more specific (shot entirely in black and white except for all red is in full color), but also a short summary of the video (not only what happens but how it looks; specifically, the style's significance to the story or concept).

**Look:** how does it look? Light, color, texture, shots, etc. (You could address Look as in the general look of the video and then have light, color, texture, etc. be their own headers).

**Performance style:** how does the artist perform? What do they look like? How do they
engage with the camera? Or, if the recording artists are not present, apply to the actors. (here you could do some research on the artist's prior music video or marketing (album covers, etc.) to see if there is influence...usually there is).

The Story: if there is a narrative, discuss it in general. You may need or want to break this into acts (presuming there is 3 act structure to the narrative). Don’t tell every single thing that happens: find the key moments that drive the story forward and connect those moments to the song/lyrics, the artist, and the audience.

Concept: It’s possible for have a narrative video that is also conceptual. However, if your video explores a theme, idea, concept, color, light, look, art, pastiche whatever it is, address it. Now there may be a small narrative there as well, but often if you feel like concept > story, that is, the concept is more important to the piece than the story, then you have a concept video. Maybe you blow up household items, maybe you follow a day in a the life of a bull who is addicted to pills, maybe all your characters have inflated hands, etc. then you have concept. Now, there could be narrative, performance, etc. in there as well.

Theme: is there a simple theme? Like love or relationships or family or? Bigotry? Family? If this theme is important, address it.

Cinematography: is the cinematography notable? Amazing shots and use of color and light? Specific shots that stick out and should resonate w/ the audience? Framing, shot length, composition, movement, etc.

Editing: look at the editing style, pace, juxtaposition, etc. Not only address how it’s edited but how does this style create meaning.

Set/Locations: address the settings where the video is shot. How are the settings important the message/meaning of the video? Address props or other art direction elements here and what they add to the piece. If you note a shot, note why it’s important to the video as a whole and to the audience.

Actors/Wardrobe: who are the actors in the video? How do they act? What does this convey? How does wardrobe enhance the visual aesthetic or story in the video?

How it’s done: typically here you'd describe technical elements and how you'd achieve special effects, etc.; however, since it's been done, here is where you can do some research into, say, how a complex shot or a SFX was created for the video.

Lyrics/song: do the song's lyrics interact w/ the video? If so, how? What is the mood of the song/lyrics and how do they interact w/ the visual elements?

Feel: what is the general feeling or tone of the video? How does this impact the audience?

The Hook or Takeaway: what is the visual hook? That is, what gets the audience to watch the whole video and remember it. Is there a takeaway? Why is the video memorable? What makes this different than other videos?

THROUGHOUT address the audience. How should they feel? How should they interpret the messages in the video or engage with the characters. Think about representation here: how are femininity/masculinity, race, class, our bodies, etc. represented in the video?

***Pro Tip: always cite other music videos or films as reference points (i.e. “we will use an opening shot similar to...” or “she will have a dance number with a feel similar to Beyonce’s “Single Ladies" video”). Music videos are often highly referential and borrow from film and popular culture. Also, directors usually always have influences for their work, so it's worth
noting. One important thing to note is that YOU CANNOT DRAW ON THE FUTURE; that is, Madonna’s “Vogue” couldn’t have been influenced by Beyonce’s “Single Ladies.” So, when you address borrowing, make sure that it's historically accurate!!!!

***Also, write in future tense, and not past tense (unless you're referencing a text, event, video, etc. that preceded the release of the video; i.e. “Madonna performed aggressively in “Vogue,” but here she will perform subdued”). Remember, you want to write this analytically as a pitch: what you WILL do, how the video WILL look, how the artist WILL perform, etc.

***Remember that you're pitching a video idea that is, theoretically, not made yet. So, don't spend a ton of time talking about a specific shot (unless it's central to the video) because in theory that shot hasn't been shot. So, you have to use your imagination here and avoid the type of deep analyses you do in other classes.

HOW YOU’LL BE GRADED:

- Content: what you address in the Reverse Treatment and how.
- Analysis: how well you consider and address meaning and the audience.
- Writing: how strong is your writing? Do you use lots of words or do you show us?
- Breadth of thought: how thoughtful is your RT? What categories do you attend to and with what sort of detail?
- Overall Presentation: did you follow instructions? How well are you showing a grasp of the course materials and bringing in ideas from class.

RUBRIC:

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Total: [ ]

[ ] redundancies [ ] grammar/writing errors [ ] end stronger
[ ] use more colorful adjectives/wording and bring to life
[ ] connect to artist/brand better [ ] connect to audience/appeal to emotion
[ ] connect to the music and song
[ ] stronger pitch of idea and why it’s the best or most unique
[ ] focus more on story hooks/main events in arc [ ] better sell the concept
[ ] overall look or structure needs work (i.e. headers don’t stand out, no paragraphs)