

THE DUVETS SCRATCHED ME!

D-D-D-D-D-D-DESSA FOX says that television, and especially video, need not be an anaesthetic when the innovative cut-up scissors of the **DUVET BROTHERS** are around. She profiles these pioneers of film-scratch.

THE THEORY goes that the spirit of '76, like Jim Morrison and Martin Bormann, is Not Dead but alive and patient and living in the tropics, waiting for underdeveloped nations to acquire flyovers and TVs and industrial anthrax. Wherever factories are being built, punk is holding its breath. Meanwhile, the kids back home are feeling abandoned. Gangs of icon-addicts roam the streets, eyeballing musicians for promising stigmata – hey you, you in the poxy shoes, are you He Who Come Again?

What everyone fails to realise is that Western music may no longer be the site of regime wars (it's official – Youth won). These days, the film industry looks ripe for a spot of drain-cleaning. Or television. Are you ready for the new rude boys – lugging Sony equipment?

With the occasional exception of Channel Four, English television is just as moribund as '76's cod-stuffed charts ever were. Consider the parallels: enormous amounts of money are pumped into a dwindling number of 'spectaculars'; barnacled executives fear for their jobs, so they Go Wogan; and the loners and independents are flourishing as never before, holed up in bunkers and flaying new technologies down to the wires. And over everything drips the insulting, stingy-choccy attitude of the British Way Of Broadcasting; Mistress Government knows what is best for you, and so will pull the plug around midnight. No wonder the Duvet Brothers found it necessary to invent themselves.

The Duvet Brothers are Peter Boyd and Rik Lander, a.k.a. the most famous scratch-video artists in the country. Their work is a TV-squish mix of homemade drama, music, editing effects, and recycled documentary, the best known of which is the Blue Monday sequence in *The Greatest Hits of Scratch Video* cassette ('Monday' contains the Nice Splice of the year: *nich get RICHER/ poor get POORER*). Duvetworks have played everywhere from frozen-butto venues to the Tate Gallery, and are now under heavy observation from Channel Four. After late-May video dates in Leicester and Glasgow, Lander and Boyd plan at least three live vision mixes in June: on the 8th at Derby's Metro Cinema, on the 27th at the Zap Club in Brighton, and an ongoing residency at the reopened Fridge in Bixton.

The Duvet products you can't see (until next month) are promotional videos for singles that never grew up: Colourbox's 'Shotgun', Torch Song's 'Don't Look Now', and a masterwork from 'The Sid Presley Experience'. 'Public Enemy Number One' is the first track on the forthcoming Duvet videocassette, 'Pillow Talk'.

In a tiny editing suite off Old Compton St. in Soho, I'm watching 'Pillow Talk' get punchy. The Duvets arrive from their respective day work: Lander is an engineer-editor at Diverse Productions, an independent TV company, and Boyd has nipped in

from St. Martin's School Of Art. Next up are the scurvy Presley beauties – brilliant stuff, but I'm pondering pure commerce. Who owns the pop promos that were never aired? Does anyone care enough to sue video artistes?

"I suppose we're going to be a test case," says Lander, clearly the editor of the two because his legs are draped over the console deck; the buttons are fairly purring back.

"We made them, but in the case of very small record companies, it's very hard to know who owns what. We decided to issue the promos because we know we're not going to sell a million copies. It's the fly on the elephant's back situation – the record companies are going to look pretty foolish going after us with big guns. The Presley one is just a big mystery – the guy who commissioned it literally took the money and ran."

On screen, Colourbox appears wearing video polychrome: saturated colours and double-inverted shock lines. Everyone is being followed around by woozy doppelgangers. How do you get the effects?

Peter cautions against too much techno-think: "It's more a matter of putting in long hours. We don't have access to Quantel or state-of-the-art equipment, so what we try to do is sweat over the feedback effects we can get with what we have. Plus some of it is done in the camera. We're in a position similar to musicians – it's not the studio that produces the work, it's the ideas you bring to it."

The subject of scratch video comes up, and we all rub our heads. In little more than a year, 'scratch' has grown from DIY monster-mash to newest academic plaything to colour spreads in the *Sunday Times* magazine. Scratch's ugliest accolade must be the video for Paul Hardcastle's '19', a rip-off of the likes of the Duvets from start to finish.

"'19' is a fucking disgrace", maintains Boyd. "It's like anything else mainstream idiots do badly – they can't even steal correctly, 'cos they use the style but throw away the substances."

The three of us wrangle briefly over scratch-as-revolution: How best to make anti-war statements inside boxes labelled 'I sell things'? Why are cut-ups still considered rough stuff? But nope; agreements fell to the cutting room floor.

Both Duvets, however, are unstinting in their admiration of Luton's Gorilla Tapes Group: "Death Valley Days" is the best scratch video ever made". Equally sharp is the Gorillas' definition of scratch: 'the individual talks back to television'.

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