

## The Musicless Music Video as a Spreadable Meme Video: Format, User Interaction, and Meaning on YouTube

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The aim of this article is to analyze the musicless music video—that is, a user-generated parodic musicless of the official music video circulated in the context of online participatory culture. We understand musicless videos as spreadable content that resignifies the consumption of the music video genre, whose narrative is normally structured around music patterns. Based on the analysis of the 22 most viewed musicless videos (with more than 1 million views) on YouTube, we aim, first, to identify the formal features of this meme video format and the characteristics of the online channels that host these videos. Second, we study whether the musicless video generates more likes, dislikes, and comments than the official music video. Finally, we examine how the musicless video changes the multimedia relations of the official music video and gives way to new relations among music, image, and text to generate new meanings.

*Keywords: music video, music meme, YouTube, participatory culture, spreadable media, interaction*

For the purposes of this research, the musicless video is considered as a user-generated memetic video that alters and parodies an official music video and is spread across social networks. The musicless video modifies the original meaning of the official-version music video, a genre with one of the greatest impacts on the transformation of the audiovisual landscape in the past 10 years. The short duration of the music video is ideal for social networks like YouTube, which until 2010 enforced length restrictions to the videos users could upload. On the other hand, the role played by the Internet in music consumption prompted the development of an online music consumption culture (not without controversy) that facilitated the popularization of the music video when video-sharing platforms started to emerge. The music video abandoned the medium in which it reached its popularity, television, and moved to the Internet, where it found great acceptance (Viñuela, 2013). In fact, the 10 most viewed videos on YouTube, since its launch in 2005, are music videos (Wyatt, 2015).

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The previous figure highlights the relevance of this audiovisual genre and justifies the analysis of music videos in online platforms. In fact, research on this audiovisual genre has been carried out recently by specialists from different fields, including musicologists such as Richardson (2011) and Cook (2013) and experts in audiovisual communication such as Sexton (2007) and Vernallis (2013). These authors have analyzed not only the transition of the music video to the Internet but also the evolution of this genre in the context of participatory culture that has been promoted by the new medium. Other authors have also reflected on the emancipation from television of the music video and their production companies and have analyzed the value and meaning of the amateur music video and its ability to become spreadable (Edmond, 2014; Hearsom & Inglis, 2013). This explains why the music video has become an attractive text for users, who find pleasure rewriting it.

The analysis of the musicless video and its relation to the music video genre is a challenge because the narrative of the music video is different from that of film and television series. Many authors (Kaplan, 1987; Kinder, 1984) have analyzed the postmodern condition of these music videos, which avoids dialogues, privileges fragmented scenes, and allows for multicharacter playing by the same actor (usually the singer), all as part of a narrative logic known as "video clip style" (Sibilla, 2003). These authors granted the song the capacity to give continuity to the music video and mitigate the constant fragmentation. Thus, the removal of the soundtrack of a music video usually also results in the removal of all narrative meaning from the video. In this context, we can analyze phenomena such as the lip dub and the flash mob, which maintain the original music but integrate a new sequence of images, as well as the "literal video version" and "songnify the news" genres, which maintain the original imagery but modify the original soundtrack. Thus, we focus on the analysis of the musicless video as a new text created by users through the integration of diegetic sounds that aim to establish a parodic relation to the original music video and create new meanings. In this context, we consider the musicless video as a memetic version of an official music video because, according to Kim (2016), a meme video is a sort of movie content in which the original digital content has been altered by the active and creative participation of the audience.

Although the musicless video is shared through YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, this research focuses on the analysis of the musicless video shared on YouTube. Shifman (2011) argues that among the various new paths of diffusion in digital communication, YouTube stands out as a unique platform both for the propagation of memes and research. YouTube is a platform that acts as an interactive mechanism, which coordinates the collective creativity as a generator of meaning. For all this, Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013) consider that YouTube allows users to represent identities, share content, and express opinions in the context of participatory culture.

YouTube was the chosen video-sharing platform because it acts as a mechanism of interaction that coordinates collective creativity in a way that generates value and meaning. The musicless video format confirms that YouTube, more than a television, is a changing object of study that is characterized by the diversity of the contents hosted in channels accessible to users. Therefore, it is essential to analyze the impact of YouTube on the daily lives of users to understand the functioning and meaning of the new media contexts (Burgess & Green, 2009).

In this sense, and given the scarcity of research related to musicless meme videos, the objective of this article is to offer an exploratory approach to this phenomenon, focusing on the analysis of the videos' production context, on the interaction generated among YouTube users, and on the analysis of the musicless video's narrative structure from a musicological perspective.

### Theoretical Framework

Development of the Internet and technology has enabled the digitization of audiovisual texts that are susceptible to being remixed with other content. In this process, audiences occupy a place that demands the right to participate in the creation of content because, as Jenkins et al. (2013) point out, "as material spreads, it gets remade: either literally, through various forms of sampling and remixing, or figuratively, via its insertion into ongoing conversations and across various platforms" (p. 27).

Spreadability is a key concept to understand musicless video because, as Jenkins (2009) argues, it defines content's capacity to attract users' attention and provoke resignification. As Soochoul Kim (2016) did with the Korean singer PSY and his hit song "Gangnam Style," it would be interesting to analyze and rethink the transmedia storytelling phenomena around the process of the global diffusion of music videos. According to this author, the musicless version of "Gangnam Style" might be analyzed as transmedia storytelling content related with the official music video. However, this research study does not approach the transmedia storytelling of the official music video but rather focuses on the phenomenon of musicless meme videos based on the analysis of the features of the most viewed musicless videos posted on YouTube.

Jenkins was a pioneer in the theorization of the concept of transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2003) and its subsequent development (Jenkins, 2006, 2007, 2009). For Jenkins (2006), transmedia storytelling represents a cultural phenomenon characteristic of the era of media convergence and participatory culture. The author defines transmedia storytelling as

a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story. (Jenkins, 2007, para. 2, blog)

In addition, Jenkins (2009) highlights the importance of the grassroots expansion as a fundamental element in the process of transmedia storytelling because user-generated content (UGC) might add value to the original content. In part, spreadability is the result of technology developments, because the digitalization of content has facilitated format changes and the emergence of cheaper ways to circulate content (Jenkins et al., 2013). However, Kim (2016) rethinks the notion of transmedia storytelling because meme videos "should be understood not as deterministic and mechanical processes, but as one of the phenomena of a digital culture and communication appearing as the result of interactions between current digital technologies" (p. 5677) and participatory culture. In other words, for this author, the meme video is a core factor of the digital content production, distribution, and

consumption model. Consequently, we analyze the features of the musicless video as a meme video in the context of convergence and participatory culture.

Participatory culture spreads and interacts with content due to cultural, personal, entertainment, performance, political, and economic reasons, and due to people's need to share ideas and feelings and even to promote themselves in social networks (Broeren, 2009; Burgess & Green, 2009; Jenkins et al., 2013; Kim, 2016; Lange, 2009; Peters & Seier, 2009). Whatever their motivations, users may discoverer new markets, generate new meanings, or support independent producers (Jenkins et al., 2013). However, for Fuchs (2010), according to Marxian class theory, if users become productive, they can be exploited by capitalism, because labor generates surplus. Nevertheless, Hesmondhalgh (2010), following the thesis of Andrejevic, argues that the concept of exploitation needs further explanation within this context of participatory culture. For this author, by creating content, users can actually escape from alienation. Alternatively, platforms such as YouTube do not pay users to produce content, so this means producers are sold as a commodity to third-party advertisers. For Fuchs, content created by users "does not mean democratization of the media toward a participatory or democratic system, but the total commodification of human creativity" (p. 192).

Following Knobel and Lankshear (2007), Shifman (2011), and Kim (2016), we consider the musicless video is a kind of user-generated meme and parody version of an official music video. As Knobel and Lankshear have pointed out, following the theory of biologist Richard Dawkins (1976) in his book *The Selfish Gene*, in the context of the Internet, meme "is a popular term for describing the rapid uptake and spread of a particular idea presented as a written text, image, language 'move,' or some other unit of cultural stuff" (Knobel and Lankshear, 2007, p. 202). In the context of the convergence culture and participatory culture, Shifman understands memetic videos as "a popular clip that lures extensive creative user engagement in the form of parody, pastiche, mash-ups or other derivative work" (p. 5). According to Knobel and Lankshear (2007), the characteristics of a meme, also in the YouTube context, are humor, intertextuality, and anomalous juxtapositions of texts. Furthermore, humor, cultural resources, parody, and references are strategies and features that make contents more likely to go viral (Jenkins et al., 2013).

In relation to the anomalous juxtapositions of texts in audiovisual media, Cook has recently updated his multimedia theory to suit the contemporary audiovisual context according to the practices of text rewriting. Cook (2013) has confirmed the development of a "multimedia mentality," in which the audiovisual text would never reach a stable meaning or a formal configuration since it would be subject to the modifications users want to perform, generating new texts in a process of constant reworking, recycling, and resomatization.

With regard to intertextuality, both music videos and musicless videos are texts that can be part of a same musical matrix but that can also be understood autonomously. However, since there is a strong intertextual relationship between the official music video and the musicless video, users can obtain greater enjoyment if they know the source of the text, that is, if they have seen the official music video that has been parodied, because this knowledge allows them to make a reciprocal comparison between both contents, the parody and the original content.

In relation to humor, the musicless video emphasizes the small narrative weight of the image in many music videos by parodying absurd or ridiculous gestures and scenes that in the original music video appear to be justified and even attractive. Thus, while the original music video builds the discourse by thinking more about the effect of images on potential consumers than about its narrative plausibility, the musicless video emphasizes the realistic sound description of the reality shown in the moving image through the removal of the music track and the integration of extradiegetic sounds.

Linda Hutcheon (1985) stresses that "the auto-reflexivity of modern art forms often takes the form of parody and, when it does so, it provides a new model for artistic process" (p. 5). In this sense, parody may be a strategy to develop new ways of expression—new strategies both to expand the formal parameters of a particular genre and create "another form of coded discourse" (Hutcheon, 1985, p. 16). Thus, the musicless video may be seen as a new audiovisual genre with its specific characteristics. However, the meaning in musicless videos implies an intertextual relation and a communication process in which both author and audiences need to share a system of codes and values. This is where meaning becomes a political issue, the result of a negotiation in which cultural restraints are crucial.

Parody emphasizes "the difference rather than the similarity" (Hutcheon, 1985, p. 6); this is probably the main reason why these videos are named "musicless" or "without music." Nonetheless, as Tryon (2008) argues, in parodying, "the primary techniques are inversion, in which the video maker inverts the meaning of the original by adding new elements, and exaggeration" (p. 210). Thus, the addition of Foley in musicless videos is hyperreal and exaggerated to highlight a parodic reading. Besides, as Broeren (2009) points out, online videos usually share characteristics with films from early cinema: They are short, and, for them, showing (cinema of attractions) is more important than telling (narrative cinema). For this author, online videos usually do not tell a story per se, and thus parody should be related to the attractorial feature.

Since one of the objectives of this research study is to analyze how the musicless video modifies the meaning of the official music video, it is necessary to observe the ways in which the narrative of musical texts have been analyzed. The narrative of the music video complicates its analysis with the traditional tools created for the analysis of films or fiction television texts and has prompted other disciplines such as musicology to explain a narrative in which images respond more to musical parameters than to a plausible visual logic. If this is the case, we could verify the narrative condition of the music video in the phenomenon of the musicless video. In addition, we will observe how the loss of the fundamental language of the music video generates a parodic narrative that highlights the absurdity of the image sequences.

In any case, the debate on narrativity reveals the need to extend the perspective of the analysis to the conditions of production and the contexts of consumption of music videos (Viñuela, 2009), which are two variables that are especially significant for the analysis of the musicless video due to the user's capacity to disseminate and consume videos in different platforms. In this sense, musicless videos confirm that the meaning of an audiovisual product is modified in the precise moment in which the relations established between the languages that compose it (music, image, and text) are altered. For years, the music video was understood as a genre in which music took precedence over image. Frith (1988) argued

that the song was a text prior to the video and that it determined such aspects as its duration, narrative, aesthetics, and formal organization. Goodwin (1992) proposed the analysis of the music video as a musicology of the image, while Björnberg (1994) proposed a semiotic analysis of the songs to understand the logic of images in a music video. Cook (1998) advocated for a multimedia audiovisual analysis without hierarchies, focused on the new resulting audiovisual language, which altered the previous constituent meanings (music, image, and lyrics). Based on this premise, any modification to the audiovisual text would have, as a result, a new meaning—as happens in the case of musicless videos.

In the case of the musicless video, it involves a complex modification of the original text, as it is a phenomenon based on the revelation of the diegesis of the action depicted in the images. Thus, the video without music maintains the singing voice and the paralanguage of the performer who appears on the screen, the sound of the musical instruments, and the diegetic sounds of the actions represented in the image. Therefore, musicless videos use common cinema techniques to create narrativity: Foley becomes a significant resource to convey a sense of the space where the action takes place, and “vococentrism” guarantees the centrality of the character/singer and reinforces the role of lip-synching. The result is a new multimedia relationship that generates a meaning that is very different from its antitext; it is also common for images to be fragmented and reorganized to create a new narrative discourse.

In short, the analysis will focus on establishing how musicless videos are created, to compare the interaction generated by users with every type of video and to observe how the parodic text modifies the story of the official music video.

### **Research Design**

The research presented is exploratory and pursues the following three objectives:

1. Identify the formal features of musicless videos: duration, upload year, and characteristics of the host channel.
2. Compare the interaction generated by musicless videos and official music videos to determine what type of content tends to generate more likes, dislikes, and comments on YouTube.
3. Analyze the role of music and sound in the narrative of musicless videos that modify the meaning of the official music video.

Using a nonprobabilistic convenience sampling method, we selected the 22 musicless videos that had received more than 1 million views by March 24, 2016 (see Table 1). This minimum number of views ensures the selection of contents that have had a remarkable impact on the audience. To complete the sample, we selected the corresponding 22 official music videos from which the musicless videos derived. Links to the videos are shown in the Appendix.

The previous sample was examined to answer the following research questions:

*RQ1: What are the defining features of the musicless video, and what are its main similarities and differences with respect to the official music video?*

*RQ2: What are the features of the video channels that host musicless videos?*

*RQ3: Do musicless videos generate more interaction than the original music videos?*

*RQ4: What narrative parameters are modified in the multimedia relation of musicless videos, and what are the implications of these modifications in the creation of meaning?*

**Table 1. Research Sample.**

Name	Performer	Views	
		Official music videos	Musicless
"Gangnam Style"	PSY	2,539,208,410	22,663,905
"Oops! . . . I Did It Again"	Britney Spears	88,074,281	4,900,692
"We Can't Stop"	Miley Cyrus	659,347,089	4,138,210
"Stay"	Rihanna ft. Mikky Ekko	497,079,048	4,090,305
"Happy"	Pharrell Williams	812,942,823	3,954,653
"Dancing in the Street"	Bowie & Jagger	15,372,264	3,517,316
"Thrift Shop"	Macklemore & Ryan Lewis	873,931,398	3,330,048
"Uptown Funk"	Mark Ronson ft. Bruno Mars	1,457,304,103	3,439,891
"Bad Blood"	Taylor Swift ft. Kendrick Lamar	825,330,607	2,799,011
"Focus"	Ariana Grande	422,166,912	2,624,502
"Firestarter"	Prodigy	61,008,140	2,504,231
"All About That Bass"	Meghan Trainor	1,306,769,384	2,051,418
"Bitch I'm Madonna"	Madonna ft. Nicki Minaj	175,999,212	2,047,282
"Chandelier"	SIA	1,192,330,151	1,985,834
"Dark Horse ft. Juicy J"	Katy Perry	1,328,513,543	1,689,939
"I Want to Break Free"	Queen	115,554,849	1,590,947
"Stitches"	Shawn Mendes	320,581,302	1,563,456
"Can't Remember to Forget You"	Shakira ft. Rihanna	662,932,464	1,388,476
"Hotline Bling"	Drake	589,232,356	1,360,400
"The Way You Make Me Feel"	Michael Jackson	142,672,936	1,358,170
"Drag Me Down"	One Direction	395,388,185	1,089,422
"Bad Romance"	Lady Gaga	674,195,767	1,016,966

The research method combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. To answer the first research question, we will describe the duration and upload year of the musicless videos. Subsequently, we will delve into the production of these parodies through an interview with Mario Wienerroither, a pioneer in the creation of musicless videos.

To answer the third research question, we use univariate quantitative analysis, which focuses on making observations about one variable in an independent way, on the comparison of the values of the same or different variables and on the identification of differences between them (Sierra, 2005). In this sense, the selected variables are the likes, dislikes, and comments generated by each of the official music videos and their musicless video versions on YouTube. Subsequently, we calculated the percentage of interaction of each video with regard to these variables and in relation to the total number of views. Afterward, we compared the interaction percentage reached by official music videos and musicless videos.

Finally, to answer the fourth research question, we applied a musicological perspective to analyze the role of users in the modification of the meaning of the original video.

It is difficult to establish common standards in the sample of 22 musicless videos, beyond their apparent popularity. The variety of the sample allows us to affirm that practically any music video can be the subject of a musicless video parody. In fact, there are examples of parodies of videos belonging to different music genres (rock, pop, R&B, soul, funk, rap), and despite the differences related to the musical parameters that define each style, all of them are musicless video parodies. There was no preference toward music videos that represent a particular type of space. Thus, the sample included videos set indoors and outdoors, in realistic and surrealist spaces, in the daytime and nighttime. The themes of the songs do not seem to be relevant either, and, thus, the songs evoked different feelings: love, happiness, mental derangement, excitement, sadness. Questions related to the gender or race of the artists were not decisive either. In terms of nationality, there was a prominence of English-speaking artists, which responds more to the hegemonic position of this market than to language issues.

In contrast, even though most of the popular musicless videos corresponded to recent hit songs, such as "Gangnam Style," by PSY, and "Happy," by Pharrell Williams, the sample also included parodies of videos from the 1980s, such as "I Want to Break Free," by Queen, and "Dancing in the Street," by David Bowie and Mick Jagger. These are classic music videos that have transcended the short promotional life traditionally associated with this genre. Similar to what happens with the phenomenon of "literal video versions," the selection of certain music videos to be parodied with musicless video versions contributes to the creation of a canon of music videos that for different reasons overcomes the temporal promotional barrier of a music single to become an element of popular culture recognized as a generational and even intergenerational link. This fact contributes to the generation of value between users, since they share common references and even connect with the nostalgia alluded to by Jenkins et al. (2013).

## Results

With regard to the first research question, we observed that while the duration of official videos exceeds three minutes, the duration of musicless videos hardly exceeds two minutes (see Table 2), except



in three cases that last around four minutes. This means that instead of expansion, there is a process of contraction from the narrative point of view. In other words, while in the original music videos narration is dependent on the song, in musicless videos the content is independent of the song; the musicless video is resignified and creates its own narrative out of the interaction of sound and image.

**Table 2. Characteristics of Musicless: Host Channel, Duration, and Upload Year.**

Name	Performer	Official music video			Musicless video		
		Channel	Length	Year	Channel	Length	Year
"Gangnam Style"	PSY	VEVO	4:12	2012	Mikolaj Gackowski	3:52	2012
"Oops! . . . I Did It Again"	Britney Spears	VEVO	4:11	2009	Mario Wienerroither	1:4	2015
"We Can't Stop"	Mile Cyrus	VEVO	3:33	2013	CollegeHumor	3:32	2013
"Stay"	Rihanna ft. Mikky Ekko	VEVO	4:07	2013	Mario Wienerroither	1:10	2015
"Happy"	Pharrell Williams	Iam OTHER	4:07	2013	House of Halo	2:07	2014
"Dancing in the Street"	Bowie & Jagger	Emimusic	2:58	2009	Mario Wienerroither	57	2014
"Thrift Shop Feat"	Macklemore & Ryan Lewis	Ryan Lewis	3:52	2012	CollegeHumor	3:51	2013
"Uptown Funk"	Mark Ronson ft. Bruno Mars	VEVO	4:3	2014	House of Halo	1:40	2015
"Bad Blood"	Taylor Swift ft. Kendrick Lamar	VEVO	4:04	2015	House of Halo	1:44	2015
"Focus"	Ariana Grande	VEVO	3:44	2015	House of Halo	50	2015
"Firestarter"	Prodigy	VEVO	3:46	2008	Mario Wienerroither	1:11	2014
"All About That Bass"	Meghan Trainor	VEVO	3:09	2014	House of Halo	1:25	2014
"Bitch I'm Madonna"	Madonna ft. Nicki Minaj	VEVO	4:02	2015	House of Halo	2:19	2015
"Chandelier"	SIA	VEVO	3:51	2014	Mario Wienerroither	2:03	2014
"Dark Horse ft. Juicy J"	Katy Perry	VEVO	3:45	2014	House of Halo	2:17	2014
"I Want to Break Free"	Queen	Queen Official	4:31	2008	Mario Wienerroither	1:13	2013
"Stitches"	Shawn Mendes	VEVO	3:59	2015	House of Halo	1:57	2015
"Can't Remember to Forget You"	Shakira ft. Rihanna	VEVO	3:25	2014	Mario Wienerroither	1:04	2014

"Hotline Bling"	Drake	VEVO	4:55	2015	House of Halo	1:44	2015
"The Way You Make Me Feel"	Michael Jackson	VEVO	6:43	2009	Mario Wienerroither	1:01	2014
"Drag Me Down"	One Direction	VEVO	3:11	2015	House of Halo	1:35	2015
"Bad Romance"	Lady Gaga	VEVO	5:07	2009	House of Halo	1:41	2015

With regard to the upload year, the oldest musicless video is "Gangnam Style" of Gackowski, uploaded in 2012. However, Mario Wienerroither is the pioneer in the creation of musicless videos. The first video he uploaded to YouTube was "I Want to Break Free!" by Queen, in 2012 (this video was deleted for possible copyright infringements and reuploaded in 2013). Figure 1 shows the growth trend of the phenomenon. In 2014 (eight musicless videos) and in 2015 (10 musicless videos), there was a larger number of cases that reached more than 1 million views, which demonstrates the increasing acceptance of the phenomenon within the YouTube community. Particularly, the creators of the House of Halo channel took advantage of the official launch of the official music videos of pop stars and the traffic they generated to launch their musicless parody versions (#withoutmusic). Thus, of the 12 #withoutmusic videos uploaded by House of Halo in 2015, seven coincided with the official music videos that were released in the same year by pop stars like Taylor Swift, Ariana Grande, and Madonna. Not surprisingly, record companies are concerned with the potential capacities of meme videos to spread a song in social media. Thus, many contemporary music videos are becoming more appealing for "YouTube makers in search of a ground," and "many YouTube clips adopt a knowing stance" (Vernallis, 2013, p. 194) as a spreadable strategy in social media.

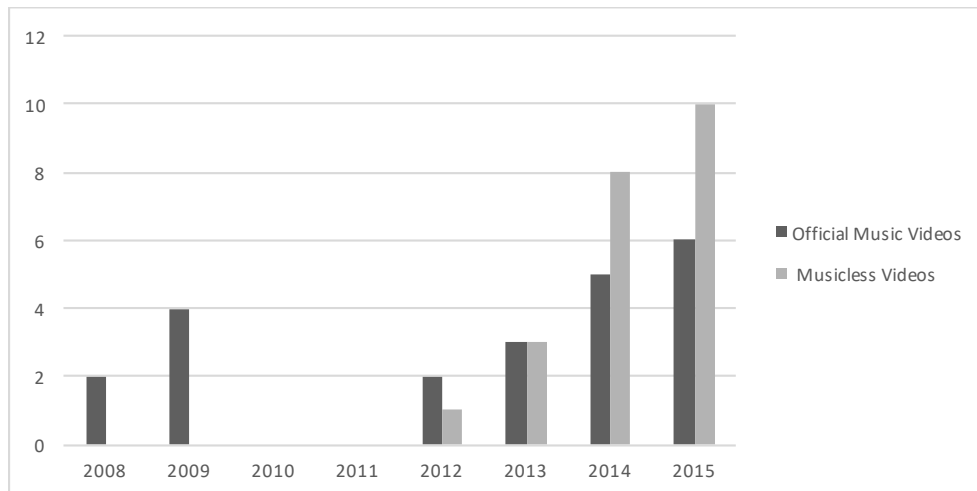


Figure 1. Comparative of official music videos and musicless video versions by year.

The second research question investigates the users who disseminate the musicless videos. The most popular uploader of videos is House of Halo, which uses the hashtag #withoutmusic to identify 47 musicless videos, of which 12 have more than 1 million views and represent 50% of our research sample, with 11 musicless videos (see Table 3). House of Halo is an entertainment channel that hosts content created by Erik van der Ven and Eline Vera de Reus, of Amsterdam, and which features musicless videos in a regular basis. Since its creation in January 2014, the authors have accumulated more than 230,364 subscribers and 35,561,322 views with all their playlists, identified with hashtags such as #vocalcover, #soundlike, and #musicmashup.

**Table 3. Characteristics of the YouTube Channels Hosting Musicless.**

Channel	Views	Subscribers	% of musicless	Tag
House of Halo	35,561,322	230,364	50.00% (11)	#withoutmusic
M. Wienerroither	38,689,889	99,752	36.36% (8)	Musicless
CollegeHumor	4,376,088,183	10,679,442	9.10% (2)	Without Music
M. Gackowski	22,992,254	11,583	4.55% (1)	Without Music

The second most successful channel, with 36.36% (eight videos) of the #musicless videos is the channel of Mario Wienerroither, a sound designer, editor, and mixer. He created the channel in 2006 and it has more than 99,752 subscribers and 38,689,889 views, which surpasses the view count of House of Halo. Wienerroither specializes in what he calls "musicless videos," while the House of Halo channel includes other types of music-related expansions. At the end of the 1990s, Wienerroither began to give new meanings to audiovisual fragments by adding a new parodic soundtrack as a form of personal entertainment. The first musicless video that went viral and caught the attention of the media was Prodigy's "Firestarter." It was uploaded to YouTube in January 2014, and by July 2015 it had received more than 2 million views. According to Wienerroither, his contents are created outside professional routines and do not aim to make profits:

I have never earned a cent with the videos. I always get copyright claims on YouTube and agree to these claims, so all the revenues go to the right holders of the visual contents. I do not even monetize when I use copyright-free or creative commons material. What I am doing should be free to watch for everyone and I will not get into the situation that I only produce them for the money. I think this would not be any good in terms of the quality for my spare-time-productions. (M. Wienerroither, personal communication, July 21, 2015)

The benefits provided by YouTube are not enough to make a living from musicless videos. However, the sound engineer recognizes that although that is not his main objective, the channel is a showcase to promote his work for advertising agencies that need his talent. In this sense, the owners of House of Halo are more explicit, since their channel invites viewers to contact them for "business inquires." In the case of this channel, the creators are professionals who could use their creativity to make profits by generating traffic and attracting advertisers to YouTube. If users are sold as a commodity by networking platforms to attract advertisers, this might constitute a kind of exploitation according to Fuchs

(2010). However, as Mario Wienerroither points out, musicless videos provide great experiences that might help him escape from alienation:

Of course, I never did things just because of the money. If you go on long and focused enough with what you are loving, it will pay off in the end and turn into something great. Cheesy, yes, but true. The tons of supporting comments, contacts, great experiences and moments of laughs I caused and earned with just a few hours of work are priceless. (M. Wienerroither, personal communication, July 21, 2015)

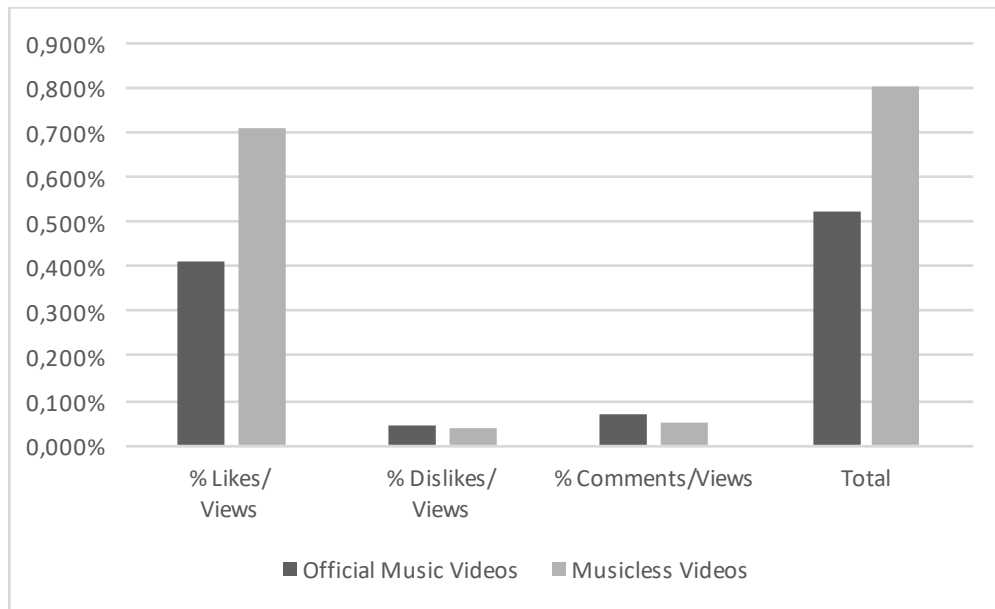
Indeed, merit, reputation, and trust have become important in YouTube, where the conversational features of this platform help to build social relationships and networks within the community (Bruns, 2008).

In contrast, CollegeHumor represents 9.1% of the sample with two videos. This channel is a professional comedy YouTube platform with more than 10,679,442 subscribers and more than 4,376,088,183 views since 2006. The company was created in 1999 in New York, has published books, and has a show on MTV and a movie in production. CollegeHumor Media has become an advertising platform for other brands, since it generates more than 100 million video views per month. Its musicless videos do not use hashtags and use a title that indicates only that they are "music videos without music." Being a professional channel, CollegeHumor has many more videos, but only two of its music videos without music have more than 1 million views. CollegeHumor exploits videos on YouTube as an entertainment business model that, in addition, attracts advertising. Therefore, it offers professionalized UGC that can generate income. This situation points to the growing corporatization of YouTube, since the content that users create to share in the social network have become assets that generate income due to their ability to attract advertisers (Sánchez-Olmos, 2015). CollegeHumor could cross the border of UGC to make videos within a professional framework.

In the last place is Mikolaj Gackowski's channel, which is the creator of only one musicless video in the sample, but that video has the largest number of views since its creation in 2011. This channel, which has 11,583 subscribers, offers a parody of the most viewed music video in the history of YouTube: "Gangnam Style." The channel has more than 22,992,254 views, and most of them practically correspond to the views of the musicless version of "Gangnam Style," which represents 4.54% of the sample. In this case, the owner of the channel broadcasts content as UGC.

The third research question aims to calculate the percentage of user interaction of the official music videos and their musicless versions. The total percentage of interaction in relation to the total number of views is 0.523% for official music videos and 0.800% for their musicless versions (see Figure 2). This means that YouTube users want to be entertained rather than to interact. Users are more active with musicless videos, but there is not a big difference in terms of interaction percentage points among music videos and musicless videos. Van Dijck and Nieborg (2010) criticize the euphoric analysis about participatory culture because most users, instead of creating, watch or download content contributed by others. However, Jenkins et al. (2013) argue that people initially learn through "lurking" or observing and that they are aware of their potential capacity to contribute.

First, the highest percentage of interaction was generated by the variable “likes,” followed by “comments” and “dislikes” (see Figure 2). The individual analysis of each variable indicates that the official music video generated 0.409% of “likes” with respect to the number of views, whereas the musicless videos generated 0.711%. The comparison of results indicates that the musicless video obtained 73.8% more “likes” than the official video, which demonstrates that the content created by users gets more positive votes, in percentage points. With regard to the variable “dislike,” the official music video obtained 0.045% of votes negative, whereas the musicless videos obtained 0.037%. This means that users give 17.2% fewer negative votes to musicless videos than to official music videos. Therefore, users prefer musicless videos. However, in terms of the interaction generated through “comments,” which requires greater effort from users, musicless videos generate 24.7% fewer comments than the official music video (0.070% vs. 0.037%). Examining the three variables together (see Figure 2), the results indicate that the musicless videos generate 52.9% more interaction than the official music videos (0.523% vs. 0.800%).



**Figure 2. Comparison of interaction: Musicless videos versus official music videos.**

These results demonstrate that YouTube is not only a platform to share content but also a social network that encourages individual interaction through likes, dislikes, comments, and subscriptions (Bruns, 2008; Burgess & Green, 2009). Humor and parody get more likes and fewer dislikes for musicless videos. However, music videos that premiered before the digital era get more comments than do musicless videos. In both cases, this interaction is commercially significant data for Google to connect users with companies, which need Google for targeted advertising, marketing, and sales management (van Dijck & Nieborg, 2010).

The fourth research question is related to the aesthetic aspects and the meanings derived from the modifications made to the official music video in the multimedia relations of their musicless versions. This aspect is complex, not only because of the variety of procedures developed by prosumers, depending on the music video they are modifying, but also because there are different possible perspectives and different levels of depth in the analysis of a video. The intention of this analysis is to identify some of the patterns that are significant to understand the transformation of meanings that is generated in musicless videos.

One of the first interesting findings is the different approach of prosumers to the original music videos. While CollegeHumor and Mikolaj Gackowski maintain the original structure of the images, Mario Wienerroither and House of Halo fragment the scenes to build a new, smaller visual structure that fits the parodic purpose of the musicless video. In this sense, the musicless videos present a narrative contraction that affects the sequences and is fundamental to understanding the new generated discourse; the new versions not only remove some sequences but also often rearrange them or change their duration, affecting their original purpose. For instance, the duration of the music video for "The Way You Make Me Feel," by Michael Jackson, is reduced from seven minutes to one in the musicless video version. This decontextualization provokes alienation, which is essential to generate the parody effect, since it creates absurd situations in which artists appear without singing, like Rihanna in "Stay," where she appears in a bathtub and is quiet all the way throughout the video. There are musicless videos that use images that have not been taken from the official music video, as in the musicless video for Britney Spears' "Oops! . . . I Did It Again," made with footage of dancing outtakes from the video included in the *Britney Spears: My Prerogative* (2004) DVD.

The soundtrack of the musicless video participates actively when it comes to reveal the narrative strategies of the official music video by highlighting the sound variations of the different spaces that are represented in the video. Location changes are constant in many music videos, and musicless videos often recreate ambience by adding Foley with strong sound contrasts between scenes, which are soothed with the song in the original music video. For its part, the musicless version of the video for "Bad Blood," by Taylor Swift and Kendrick Lamar, reinforces the cinematographic aesthetic of the original video by eliminating the musical accompaniment and giving a greater role to hyperreal diegetic sounds that appear in the original video. In most cases, the sound contrasts between spaces are intended to demonstrate the spatiotemporal discontinuity and narrative fragmentation of the music video—usually with a parodic sense, as in a scene of "We Can't Stop," in which Miley Cyrus appears at a house party where people are sleeping all over the place and their loud snoring is heard all around (3:17).

It is also common to demonstrate the distance between characters and the actions represented with respect to the camera. For instance, the bust shot of Britney Spears in the musicless video version of "Oops! . . . I did It Again" picks up the sounds produced by the singer's vinyl outfit in each movement, while the volume of Katy Perry's voice in "Dark Horse Ft. Juicy J" varies significantly (0:51) from the long shot to the close-up. The same happens in the fast dolly shots around the members of One Direction in "Drag Me Down." In "Gangnam Style," the sudden close-up of the singer and the dancers (0:33) is highlighted with the increasing noise produced by an industrial fan.

Another common resource in the music videos that are parodied through sound in their musicless versions are the variations in the speed of the image; the slow-motion shot is often accompanied with the slowing down of the soundtrack that results in a deeper and distorted sound. Here, sounds play a key role in the "chronography" and "temporalization" of the shot, animating its perception through particular parameters: tempo, sustain, amplitude (Chion, 1994). This happens in the first scene of the musicless video version of "Thrift Shop," by Macklemore and Ryan Lewis. The slowing down of the scene where the singer appears with his mouth open translates into a sound hyperbole, introducing a scrawny cry. Something similar happens when David Bowie jumps in "Dancing in the Street" (0:21) and in the dance routine of Bruno Mars in "Uptown Funk" (0:47).

The sounds in videos without music also serve to give voice to the characters that did not have it in the original music video: the exclamations of the protagonists of Madonna's "Bitch I'm Madonna," and the laughter and voices of the smiling characters that pretend to sing "Happy," by Pharrell Williams. It is common to use sound to misrepresent certain gestures of the characters for comedic purposes: The sound of the screams and the head flipping of Shakira and Rihanna against a wall in "Can't Remember to Forget You" turn these movements into deliberate head banging (0:32); the violence with which the singer of Prodigy flexes his body in "Firestarter" (0:20, 0:27) is turned in a strong sneezing with the new sound; the sensual gestures of Ariana Grande in "Focus" (0:27) become yawns. Other times, the effects are more scatological in the musicless video version: The video for Rihanna's "Stay" integrates stomach growls in the shot of the singer's abs (0:33) and flatulence sounds when the singer seems to be in pain (0:44), and the video for "Dancing in the Street" integrates a burping sound when Mick Jagger appears facing David Bowie (0:35).

In a large part of the musicless videos, dancing has a fundamental weight because when the music is removed the dance movements lack justification. The dance routines of "Gangnam Style," "Dancing in the Street," and "Oops! . . . I did It Again" become ridiculous without music, and the parodic effect is present throughout the duration of the musicless videos. Sometimes the absence of music and the sound representation of the movements of performers turn the musicless videos into surreal narratives. For instance, the choreographies of the original music video of "Firestarter" by Prodigy and "Chandelier" by SIA are turned into spastic and chaotic movements in the musicless videos, and at times it seems that these scenes come from a thriller. Something similar happens in "Bitch I'm Madonna." Here, the characteristic absence of what Chion (1994) calls "materializing sound indices" (pp. 114–117) in music videos becomes an abundance of diegetic sound indices that reveal the narrative codes of the genre.

However, the inclusion of these dance routines and voices in the musicless videos guarantee the presence of musical parameters as relevant as rhythm and melody, especially in the case of songs with very rhythmic and repetitive choruses, as in the case of Prodigy. In the case of "Uptown Funk" and "Happy," the sound of the dance steps and the regular and constant phrasing of the voice (characteristic of the soul and funk genres) serve to maintain musicality in musicless videos.

In other cases, as in "Thrift Shop" and "We Can't Stop," the musicality is more difficult to identify because of the fragmentation of the shots in which the singers appear, which prevents the regularity of the phrasing. However, the length of both videos allows for the identification of musical rhythms in the

disposition of shots and the gestures of characters. There are also examples of videos without any rhythm or melody, such as the musicless video version of "Stay," which is actually the only musicless video in the sample that lost all the musicality. This is because it parodies a video with long sequences for a slow ballad and does not include the scenes where Rihanna sings, missing the characteristic vococentrism of music videos. Thus, it can be deduced that, generally, the original music remains present in the musicless video versions, despite that it cannot be heard, and that the musical style of a song is relevant in the musicality of musicless videos.

In the most recent productions of House of Halo, there is a tendency to add music to the musicless video versions. The musicless video version of Meghan Trainor's "All About That Bass" consists of brief inserts of electronic music associated with a character from the video (0:14, 0:59), which contrasts with the soul style of the original song. The musicless video version of Drake's "Hotline Bling" includes a new soundtrack based on telephone ringtones that fit in a plausible way, and occasionally with pinpoint accuracy (0:50, 1:15, 1:28), with the choreography, while the parodic effect is strengthened with the song's chorus that repeats "call me on my cell phone." In other cases, the musical inserts are recognizable and are loaded with intertextual connotations, as in the brief fragments of NSYNC's "Bye Bye Bye" (1:14) inserted in the musicless video version of One Direction's "Drag Me Down" and the fragment of Madonna's "Like a Virgin" (0:53) inserted in Lady Gaga's "Bad Romance." In both cases a link is established between the artists and the songs, and this link is open to numerous interpretations by the consumer. The allusion does not have to be musical. In the case of the musicless video version of Madonna's "Bitch I'm Madonna," we can hear Diplo (the producer of the album) say "Hey that's Britney" (0:33) when Madonna walks past him, mistaking the "Queen of Pop" with the younger artist who was supposed to become her successor. There are even structural allusions to the clichés of music genres, like the insert of a rap base in the musicless video version of Katy Perry's "Dark Horse ft. Juicy J," when an Egyptian chariot moves like the lowriders that frequently appear in rap and hip-hop music videos.

### Conclusions

The musicless video is a meme video of recent creation (less than four years) that stands out for its contracted depiction of the narrative of the official music video, in terms of duration (with three exceptions), and a rhetorical addition, from the audiovisual point of view. The musicless video does not stand out so much for its multiplatform broadcasting as for its ability to give a new meaning to the official music video. Users find enjoyment and pleasure in the creation of this kind of content and in sharing it with the YouTube community. The musicless video became consolidated in 2015 and has great capacity to go viral and take advantage of the traffic generated by the official video releases that they are parodying. In this sense, six of the 10 musicless videos uploaded to YouTube in 2015 are parodies of official music videos released that same year.

With regard to the second research question, the results indicate that the dynamics of Web 2.0 have allowed professionally made content, like music videos, to coexist in the same space with amateur products generated by Internet users: videos created with users' own material or with material taken from professional productions that have given rise to very popular audiovisual phenomena in recent years, like the lip dub, the flash mob, and the musicless videos. There is growing corporatization in the creation and



dissemination of this type of content by professional channels hosted on YouTube, such as College Humor and House of Halo, which represent more than half of the musicless videos in the sample (60.1%).

In contrast, the study has shown that YouTube's viewers give, comparatively, more "likes" (73.8%), fewer negative votes (17.2%), and fewer comments (24.7%) to musicless videos than to the original music videos. Therefore, the parody turns the musicless video into easily spreadable content with great engagement capacity. These results suggest a new line of research that would involve the careful analysis of the elements that generate engagement in musicless videos, as this would help us to identify the reasons why users "enjoy" this type of content and share it with the online community. Finally, it would be relevant to analyze in the future whether this phenomenon is temporary, is consolidated, or is being professionalized.

Parody is also central to explain why musicless videos are so successful in social media and why they obtain more "likes" than the original versions. As Joseph S. Plazak states (2015), "these 'likes' represent social alliances, as do YouTube 'video responses' and user comments" (p. 210). This interaction can be understood both as a sign of recognition to the author and as a way of expressing self-position about the original video or artist and reinforcing his or her online persona. But, in both cases, it is a way of celebrating and strengthening the sense of belonging to a community and developing what Gee calls "affinity spaces" (2007, p. 98). Besides, musicless videos contain the three features that Knobel and Lankshear (2007) have identified in successful online memes: humor, intertextuality, and anomalous juxtaposition. All three may appear combined, and they guarantee the spreadable capabilities of these products.

The fourth research question has led us to identify a series of practices and patterns that characterize the musicless video. We have proven how the removal of the music track gives more weight to the diegetic sound in the creation of meanings (parodying the typical narrative fragmentation of music videos) through the integration of sounds or musical fragments that generate new interpretations of the visual elements. On the other hand, we have shown that, while the musicless video is a phenomenon that occurs in many different genres, it maintains the musical style in the voice and formal parameters of the images, which reinforces the theory that defends the musical sense of the images in music videos.

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## Appendix

**Table A1. Links to Official Music Videos and Musicless.**

Name	Performer	Official music video	Musicless video
“Gangnam Style”	PSY	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bZkp7q19f0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bZkp7q19f0</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6ZSZbNfSpk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6ZSZbNfSpk</a>
“Oops! . . . I Did It Again”	Britney Spears	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CduA0TULnow">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CduA0TULnow</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cm0evQaHIE4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cm0evQaHIE4</a>
“We Can’t Stop”	Mile Cyrus	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrUvu1mIWco">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrUvu1mIWco</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7csZON-IxxI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7csZON-IxxI</a>
“Stay”	Rihanna ft. Mikky Ekko	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF8BRvqGCNs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF8BRvqGCNs</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPo6DMraYXU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPo6DMraYXU</a>
“Happy”	Pharrell Williams	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6Sxv-sUYtM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6Sxv-sUYtM</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPWgRbBTBwA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPWgRbBTBwA</a>

"Dancing in the Street"	Bowie and Jagger	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9G4jnaznUoQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9G4jnaznUoQ</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_li_d_YviZ4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_li_d_YviZ4</a>
"Thrift Shop Feat"	Macklemore and Ryan Lewis	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QK8mJJJvaes">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QK8mJJJvaes</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rpjIA-z080&amp;t=19s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rpjIA-z080&amp;t=19s</a>
"Uptown Funk"	Mark Ronson ft. Bruno Mars	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPf0YbXqDm0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPf0YbXqDm0</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82ydFQZtGBw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82ydFQZtGBw</a>
"Bad Blood"	Taylor Swift ft. Kendrick Lamar	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcIy9NiNbmo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcIy9NiNbmo</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZnSW66Asxw&amp;t=40s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZnSW66Asxw&amp;t=40s</a>
"Focus"	Ariana Grande	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lf_wVfwpfp8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lf_wVfwpfp8</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oofdys0aX3c">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oofdys0aX3c</a>
"Firestarter"	Prodigy	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmin5WkOuPw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmin5WkOuPw</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDXNfe2W8c8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDXNfe2W8c8</a>
"All About That Bass"	Meghan Trainor	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PCKvCPvDXk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PCKvCPvDXk</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZqNI1MEvxA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZqNI1MEvxA</a>
"Bitch I'm Madonna"	Madonna ft. Nicki Minaj	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hPMmzKs62w">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hPMmzKs62w</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X579raKjc7Y">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X579raKjc7Y</a>
"Chandelier"	SIA	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vjPBrBU-TM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vjPBrBU-TM</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3wx60nKkt4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3wx60nKkt4</a>
"Dark Horse ft. Juicy J"	Katy Perry	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KSOMA3QBU0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KSOMA3QBU0</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDwMTptcMd4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDwMTptcMd4</a>
"I Want to Break Free"	Queen	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4Mc-NYPHaQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4Mc-NYPHaQ</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbKh0Y_QCrc&amp;list=PLpKpmDmd_bnZ3sspZVbm-enYNIciHIE1H">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbKh0Y_QCrc&amp;list=PLpKpmDmd_bnZ3sspZVbm-enYNIciHIE1H</a>
"Stitches"	Shawn Mendes	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbfpW0pbvaU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbfpW0pbvaU</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjKMv6XYZCM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjKMv6XYZCM</a>
"Can't Remember to Forget You"	Shakira ft. Rihanna	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3mP3mJDL2k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3mP3mJDL2k</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rpimzBjbAs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rpimzBjbAs</a>
"Hotline Bling"	Drake	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxpDa-c-4Mc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxpDa-c-4Mc</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6v3hyr7vBdo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6v3hyr7vBdo</a>
"The Way You Make Me Feel"	Michael Jackson	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzZ_urpj4As">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzZ_urpj4As</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=om8kt8gi93Q">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=om8kt8gi93Q</a>
"Drag Me Down"	One Direction	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jwgf3wmiA04">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jwgf3wmiA04</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1OhtPgemmU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1OhtPgemmU</a>
"Bad Romance"	Lady Gaga	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrO4YZeyl0I">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrO4YZeyl0I</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LizfO5GywKU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LizfO5GywKU</a>