

Duran Duran, Rio (1982)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3W6yf6c-FA>

Subject content focus area

Media language

Representation

Contexts

Background context

- Formed by John Taylor and Nick Rhodes in Birmingham in 1978, Duran Duran is an English new wave and synth-pop band. The band soon became one of the most successful bands of the 1980s.
- The MTV cable channel and Duran Duran were launched at about the same time, and so each helped the other reach greater heights. MTV were looking for music videos to air and Duran Duran wanted exposure.
- Many of the band's videos were shot on 35mm film which gave a more polished look than other artists and they also collaborated with professional film directors.
- The band's fashion-model looks and glamorous sense of style was emphasised through their music videos and their reputation was built through them.
- "Rio" the single was released on 1st November 1982 and was the title track for the band's second studio album which was released on 10th May 1982.
- The song became a top 10 hit in the UK Singles Chart, peaking at #9 on 11 December 1982.
- "Rio" is one of the band's most recognisable songs, predominantly because of its well-known music video, which clearly depicts the glamour and excess so common in the 1980s.

Part 1: Starting points - Media language

- The video for "Rio" has little in the way of a cohesive plot, it is simply five good looking men cavorting on a yacht, trying to vie for the attention of Rio, a beautiful female. The setting is a yacht which is clipping through blue Caribbean waters at an incredible pace and several stretches of white sandy beaches. Champagne and cocktails are in abundance and phones appear on silver platters from unseen hands, all of which hints at a lavish playboy lifestyle.
- The opening of the video uses point of view shots, perhaps through a telescope or binoculars, to give the audience a series of extreme close ups of an attractive female. She is seen smiling, laughing and looking directly at the lens suggesting she likes the attention. This quickly cuts

to a series of broken images which magically reassemble and we see the female, presumably Rio, sunbathing on the dock. As the shots complete, we also see one of the members of the band lying on his stomach focusing his binoculars directly on her, zooming in on her thighs and bottom.

- A wide shot of a beautiful white sandy beach has Rio exit the water in a style that references Ursula Andress in the 1962 Bond film 'Dr No'. Drummer Roger Taylor approaches her but, in a comedy moment, is bitten by a crab and after a quick eye-roll to show her disapproval, Rio kicks him away into the water.
- After more singing on deck, another wide shot gives us Rio sunbathing on a raft in the ocean. A pink phone is delivered to her on a silver platter whilst another is given to the boys on the deck. A further attempt at sweet-talk is thwarted when Rio yanks the telephone cord pulling lead singer Simon Le Bon, into the water below then simply sits back and laughs.
- A black and white dream sequence shot mainly in close up sees John Taylor, the band's bass guitarist storming the beach with a rifle, only to end up next to the stomach of a sunbathing Rio whose champagne glass magically fills from above suggesting more decadence and excess.
- Almost four minutes in and Rio is still in close up looking exasperated by the boys' attempts to woo her but by the end of the video another close up has her share a cheeky wink with the audience, suggesting she has enjoyed all of the attention.
- The boys continue to sing and the yacht heads for home.

Media contexts - Cultural

- Duran Duran's cultural timing was perfect. With the launch of MTV, a 24-hour music channel, the band's promotion was easy - each song came with a lavish promotional video. These videos reached out to the public and gave them five minutes of pure escapism.

Part 2: Starting points - Representation

- For the most part, the band members are dressed in brightly coloured designer suits portraying themselves as a bunch of well-travelled, decadent playboys. They appear to be living a dream lifestyle which epitomised the wealth and excess of the 80s.
- At the start of the video, the audience is given keyboardist, Nick Rhodes's point of view through his binocular lenses. He focuses on Rio's bottom and thighs and the audience is forced to gaze upon this female as an object to be looked at. Throughout the video this gaze continues. The boys are constantly vying for her attention and the camera shots focus on her body from a variety of angles. Rio is seen as exotic, with her bronzed skin and all over body paint, causing the boys to desperately try to gain her attention.

- However, Rio's feisty nature shows through when their continued advances are deflected through side leg kicks and yanked telephone cords. Instead of being a passive female, arguably seen in some of the band's other videos, Rio has a personality and can hold her own against a group of five boys.
- *These representations can be linked to feminist theoretical perspectives as the video can be seen to both uphold and subvert the idea of the female as passive object of the male gaze.*