

BOYS ON FILM

MUD WRESTLING! YACHTS! MAD MAX-STYLE DYSTOPIA! DURAN DURAN'S LEGENDARY VIDEOS PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN MAKING THEM GLOBAL SUPERSTARS. WE TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THEIR 2D CAREER...

STEVE HARNELL

Few would argue that Duran Duran's contribution to the visual iconography of the Eighties is almost peerless. Like Michael Jackson and Madonna, they embraced the new medium of the pop video and chartered new waters with ever-more ambitious productions, from the Indiana Jones-style adventure of *Hungry Like The Wolf* to the playboy thrills of *Rio* and the post-apocalyptic *Mad Max* chaos of *The Wild Boys*.

Their matinee-idol good looks, a not inconsiderable acting ability within their ranks, a raft of nailed-on pop classics and an ambition to work with some of the most creative visual minds of their generation made for the perfect recipe. Grabbing the opportunity that the burgeoning MTV platform presented, Duran Duran effortlessly surpassed the performance video conservativeness of many of their peers to push the genre relentlessly forward. Truly, MTV and Duran Duran were a match made in satellite heaven.

Speaking to Mark Ronson in the recent BBC documentary *There's Something You Should Know*, John Taylor explains: "When we first came to New York, I remember our managers meeting with these guys that were putting MTV together and they were like 'We can't play *Stairway To Heaven* all day like we do on the radio. We need to get into new music. It would be great if you guys could give us something.'"

LOOK ALL AROUND

Key to the band's small screen success was director Russell Mulcahy and the soon-to-be legendary video-making team of former 10cc members Kevin



Duran Duran's spectacular video oeuvre careers through multiple genres - adventure travelogues, action flicks, high-fashion send-ups and much more besides

Right; *Planet Earth* balanced the band atop an FX-generated ice platform and contained dancing cameos from various Run Runner club friends



Above; *Planet Earth* also played on the theme of the four elements, blending band members with images of air, fire, earth and water

Godley and Lol Creme. Australian director Mulcahy had already made his mark with Buggles' *Video Killed The Radio Star*, but it was his collaborations with Duran Duran that cemented his legacy as one of the most important music promo directors of the Eighties. He would eventually hook up with Duran on no less than 10 occasions.

The band's video for debut single *Planet Earth* was a relatively low-key and artful studio-shot performance affair, making a major play of their New Romantic roots. Shot in Mulcahy's North West London studio, it was originally intended to cash in on the band's success in Australia, where the song was a Top 10 hit, but nobody knew what the boys looked like.

Speaking on a Duran-centric episode of the *Video Killed The Radio Star* documentary series, Simon Le Bon explained: "We knew that Russell had made a great video for [Ultravox's] *Vienna* and we were quite happy for him to give us a rough idea for [*Planet Earth*] and storyboard it."

"It was shot on video, so it was very cheap to do," added Nick Rhodes. "Afterwards, Russell was layering all these effects – he was shooting through glass with mattes on the glass. That was how they created it. We really didn't know what it was going to look like. That was the beginning for us and it crystallised with each video we made after that."

GOT YOUR PICTURE

But Duran's ambitions stretched far beyond simple performance set-ups and smash-and-grab cash-in promos. Like many bands, they made canny use of the old cliché that sex sells, and the controversial X-rated video for their third single *Girls On Film* made them stars around the world. With MTV still yet to be launched, the band targeted video jukeboxes at clubs in the States with the raunchy promo, directed

A betasled cowgirl astride a devilish horse dancer... well, naturally. All this sexy surrealism made *Girls On Film* an instant cult hit



Right; more *Girls On Film* action, with a lifeguard's paddling-pool rescue turning into a somewhat raunchy clinch



Left; the split-screen video for *My Own Way* toyed with matador and flamenco imagery and featured a guest spot from a parrot. Of course...



by Godley & Creme. Featuring mud wrestling, pillow fights and topless models aplenty, the clip was soon banned by the BBC and elsewhere globally. The directing team made notes for the promo while on holiday, and Los Angeles mud wrestling nights and fashion shows in the South of France soon made their way into the Duran mix. Filming was undertaken on a closed set at Shepperton Studios, but after getting wind of the entertainment that was on show, onlookers did their best to get a look-in from behind curtains and doorways.

Godley explains: "I get the feeling Duran would probably have preferred it if [the video] was a bit more arty... a bit more towards style and fashion. It maybe was a bit soft porn. I think the high heels and fur coats should have gone!"

The band claim tongue-in-cheek humour was the order of the day but there's no doubt the straightforward nudity is what really made waves – intentional humour or not. A heavily-edited version of *Girls On Film* eventually made its way onto MTV, but by this time the headline-grabbing Duran were already entrenched at the vanguard of the new video-making generation. Such was the notoriety of the video that Le Bon was later to comment that the scandal overshadowed the song's message of fashion model exploitation. Godley & Creme would later employ similar shock tactics for Frankie Goes To Hollywood's *Relax* promo, earning them another ban (and assuring iconic status) in the process.

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Duran then hooked up once again with Mulcahy and the stopgap release of *My Own Way*. If that was rather underwhelming, better things were to follow. Their next collaboration on *Hungry Like The Wolf* would go down in video history as one of the most impressive, ambitious and widescreen efforts to date.

With a budget of a then-whopping \$200,000, EMI sent the band abroad to shoot an unforgettable *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*-style adventure. En route to an Australian tour, the band stopped off in Sri Lanka with Mulcahy in tow to essentially improvise a mini big screen adventure. Hilariously dubbed "Indiana Jones is horny and wants to get laid" by guitarist Andy Taylor, the video finds our hero Le Bon lost in the jungle with trusty bandmates on the lookout. Simon explained: "*Hungry*... was our first location video. It



Above & right; Simon and Sheila Ming finally get down to it at the climax to *Hungry Like The Wolf*. Vogue model Ming also appeared in Whitney Houston's *Saving All My Love For You* promo



had a real story of me getting lost in the jungle and the other guys trying to find me. It had a cute girl in it and it had excitement – and wild animals!" Mulcahy added: "With Duran, it was a bit like being a tourist with a big camera. I had very much a cinematic vision, they had a vision with their music, and with their management it was a vision of 'Let's make this big and stand out from the rest'. We just wanted to raise the bar."

"On first glance, it looks like a guy chasing a girl – slightly uncomfortable, actually," Le Bon explained to the BBC recently. "But it's us chasing our career, trying to make it happen. We were so hungry. We would chase, we would grab and we would achieve. That's what that song is really about."

Although five days of preparation by the crew went into scouting out locations, the video was essentially made 'guerrilla' style, hastily improvised and largely done on the hoof with minimal storyboarding. Extras – including the little boy

"THE NAME'S BON... SIMON LE BON"

THE BAND'S 007 VIDEO IS A CAMP ALL-ACTION THRILLER WITH A PUNCHLINE



For *A View To A Kill*, Duran Duran's noble entry into the canon of great Bond themes came with a tongue-in-cheek Eiffel Tower-set video featuring the band spliced into actual footage from the movie. Nick Rhodes, sporting one of the most elaborate coiffures of his entire career, looks like he spent several days in hair and make-up before the shoot. Elsewhere, the group indulge in various acts of surveillance and subterfuge and Simon blows up a helicopter in a completely unconnected part of the world via remote control. Does it make sense? No, not really. Is it a lot of fun? You bet Roger Moore's tuxedo it is.

Despite the launch of a charm offensive in later years designed to characterise their songwriting collaboration with John Barry as being wholly positive, the band's hook-up with the veteran composer wasn't without friction. Barry also had a subsequent run-in with A-ha when they worked on *The Living Daylights*. However, *A View To A Kill* was the first and only time that a Bond theme made it to No.1 in the US.

who is shown Le Bon's photograph – were non-acting members of the public recruited in Sri Lanka. Cinematic references include nods to *Apocalypse Now* as Le Bon's head rises, Martin Sheen-like, from a river, and there's a scene-stealing turn from a tiger-like woman played by Bermudian model Sheila Ming.

Mulcahy admits that the unconventional approach to filming was predicated on budget constraints. Getting involved in film-making bureaucracy and red tape would have multiplied its costs many times over. The 'Wild West' days of video-making may have cut corners, but as is often the case, necessity was the mother of invention.

"WITH DURAN, IT WAS LIKE BEING A TOURIST WITH A BIG CAMERA. WE JUST WANTED TO RAISE THE BAR."

RUSSELL MULCAHY

MODEL BEHAVIOUR

DURAN DURAN'S 2011 MOCKUMENTARY IS A FEAST OF HIGH-GLAMOUR ROLE REVERSAL



Proving that they're still the best-connected band amongst the fashion glitterati, *Girl Panic!*, the 2011 single from *All You Need Is Now*, makes for a superb latter-era entry in Duran Duran's video discography. At nigh-on 10 minutes in its full-length form, it manages to reunite world-renowned Eighties and Nineties supermodels for a Jonas Åkerlund-directed promo that pokes fun at the excesses of the band's pop heyday.

The assembled throng of gorgeousness play the part of Duran Duran, while the real band members knowingly camp it up as Savoy Hotel staff. Naomi Campbell leads the way as Simon, Eva Herzigova is Nick, Cindy Crawford plays John, and Helena Christensen takes the Roger role (there's even room for Yasmin Le Bon herself, who turns up as a random guitarist).

Each are interviewed in character, reflecting on their life in the music business – it's all very meta – and there are also cameos for Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana as well as the editors of *Harpers*. Cue much debauched lolling around on beds, Champagne guzzling, and even some product placement for Swarovski.

George Michael may have got there first with his *Freedom '90* video, but Duran's little black book of supermodel contacts remains absolutely impeccable.



Above; surely one of the most indelible images of the Eighties, Le Bon and company pout their way gamely through *Rio* while spoiling a set of very pricey suits



Above; never knowingly under-cheekboned, John Taylor powers through *The Reflex*, shot in Toronto during the Sing Blue Silver tour, 1984

Although the video proved to be transformative for the band's fortunes worldwide – it went onto heavy four-times-daily rotation on MTV – Andy Taylor has less positive memories of the shoot... he was hospitalised with a serious stomach virus after drinking water from a lagoon.

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Exotic locations, glamour, adventure and beautiful women now went hand in hand with the Duran brand, and these elements all crystallised on what has become one of the most iconic music videos of all time. Their brash, colourful promo for *Rio* perfectly encapsulated a band who were figuratively and literally riding the crest of a wave. "The yacht was such a powerful image with us," Nick later explained to the BBC. "And the coloured Antony Price suits... it really worked beautifully."

While taking a well-earned break in Antigua, the band were contacted by their management team about filming a video for their 1982 album's title track. Shot over the course of three days in May 1982, the fivesome fully played up to their international playboy reputations. *Rio* was influenced by fashion magazines of the time, with bright plastics and pinks and blues much in evidence.

"[The *Rio* video] was wild," Mulcahy recalled for the BBC. "That one we made up on the spot in the morning. I'd say 'I need a bed, I need a mirror, I want to put it on the beach'."

"The classic shot eventually ended up being Simon on the front of the boat with the boys hanging off. The cameraman was sitting at the top of the boat with no harness, handheld, hanging on [as the mast swayed from side to side]. The boys were in their tailored expensive suits getting splashed with seawater... ruining the suits, of course."



Rio actress Reema Ruspoli never flinched, even under multiple applications of paint, seawater and Champagne. She went on to marry an Italian prince.

For all the posing, though, there's a likeable element of humour throughout the *Rio* video. Andy Taylor has his toe bitten by a crab and falls into the waves as he tries in vain to impress one of the supermodels. Le Bon falls mid-phonocall into the sea, banana skins are slipped on, and ridiculously-coloured cocktails are drunk underwater.

Simon's favourite part is the split-screen sax solo section with Nick gallantly battling with his instrument while perched precariously atop a raft, and a rather more rugged John on a mountain top – the latter footage apparently shot by a German tourist and included by Mulcahy when he realised he didn't have enough material. Other sources claim it was the Rhodes segment that used a tourist's camera when the crew ran out of film stock. Whatever the truth, Mulcahy stitched the pieces together so seamlessly that few would notice the difference. The video's love interest this time was a body-painted Reema Ruspoli – her knowing wink would seal her place as an icon of the Eighties.

Rhodes sees it as one of the band's greatest achievements: "For me, the thing that stands out in the *Rio* video more than anything else is the humour in it – it's ridiculous and slapstick. It worked with the energy of the song. A lot of the videos I liked best really had great humour in them. If we hadn't have been in Antigua it wouldn't have happened there – it could have been in Coventry!"

Below; Simon brings the post-apocalyptic angst for *The Wild Boys* shoot. It won a Video Of The Year gong at the 1985 Brit awards.



GONE TOO FAR THIS TIME

Danger, of various degrees, seemed to follow Duran around at this point. After Andy's hospitalisation on the *Hungry Like The Wolf* shoot, John and Simon escaped almost certain death when they were seen swimming only feet away from sharks as filming for the *Rio* video wrapped. A quick-witted captain managed to warn them in time before they became New Romantic shark food.

While the band's video for *The Reflex* was rather more straightforward, it still boasted an eye-catching special effect that became almost as famous as the song itself. Though it's essentially an in-concert clip, at one point a waterfall appears to fall out of the video screen onto an audience below. The basic animation now looks incredibly dated, but back then it was a state-of-the-art sensation.

Far more memorable in the long term was Duran's dystopian vision for their 12th single *The Wild Boys*. Mulcahy was once again behind the lens, and it remains one of his finest achievements. Returning to

Shepperton where they shot *Girls On Film*, capturing the *Mad Max*-style fantasia was a daunting prospect. Mulcahy recalls: "I remember Tony, the Director of Photography, coming up from Miami before the shoot. He saw the set, went 'OK' [shrugs], then went behind the curtains and had three joints."

"There was an unfortunate accident on the windmill sequence, where the wheel stopped and [Simon] was stuck underwater. There were no safety guys around so we all jumped in and untied him, because he was really strapped in there. Thank God he's got big lungs."

Le Bon disputes the story that his life was genuinely in danger – from an outsider's point of view it does also seem unlikely that no one was on hand to ensure his safety on the set, but the singer does admit his recollections remain somewhat hazy. "As far as I'm concerned, a kind of myth has evolved that I nearly drowned. I can't figure how that could have been... at no point did I feel frightened that my life was in danger. For many years I lived under the idea that people made it up to make the whole thing appear more interesting, more dramatic. But maybe something did happen that I was so stupidly unaware of that made it more dangerous. I was often somewhere else in those days."

Rhodes adds: "*The Wild Boys* was the pinnacle for us of the over-the-top Eighties video. After that we did *A View To A Kill*, which was shot on the Eiffel Tower, but it wasn't anywhere near that kind of budget."

In addition to their groundbreaking collaborations with Godley & Creme and Russell Mulcahy, Duran Duran also worked on videos with influential photographers Dean Chamberlain and Ellen von Unwerth, Chinese director Chen Kaige, and documentary filmmaker Julien Temple – most famous for his work with the Sex Pistols and the Polish Brothers. As Nick summarised: "Video is to us like stereo was to Pink Floyd". The greatest video-making band of all time? Few would argue with that. ■

"THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT WHERE SIMON WAS STUCK UNDERWATER. THANK GOD HE'S GOT BIG LUNGS."
RUSSELL MULCAHY