

Introduction to VJing

collected by Simon Barker

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This is a collection of the notes collected for the discussion on Vjing I hosted during the 2005 Intersect Festival. I am not an English graduate, so please excuse any Gramatical errors and use of quotes. This should give you a brief outline on the artform and a base for which to continue your research. If you have any questions please contact me.

What is a VJ?

Quoted from Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_jockey)

“the word VJ is also used to represent [video](#) performance artists who create live visuals on all kind of music. It originates from a parallel with [DJs](#), although most VJs nowadays have more to do with [musicians](#) than with DJs. Often using an analog [vision mixer](#), VJs blend and superimpose various inputs over clips. In recent years, musical instrument makers have begun to make specialty equipment for VJing. The evolution of computers has allowed for VJ-specific programs to be produced and has allowed for easier accessibility to the art form.”

Big Names / Crews

Peter Rubin (USA – Amsterdam) Peter Rubin was the world’s first live-mixing video jockey. He developed the art form 1979, and his base of operation was the Amsterdam club Mazzo, an ultra hi-tech multi-media environment he designed and directed between 1979-88.

U2 – ZooTV (92/93)

Coldcut (Ex-art teacher & computer programer Duo – wrote our first VJ program VJamm)

Light Surgeons (Unkle, started 1995, pioneered VJ culture in the UK late Nineties)

UVA – United Video Artists (U2, Kylie, MTV, OnedotZero)

DJ Shadow/COD (in tune & on time live-> CD/DVD)

Hexstatic (UK's first completely AV album Rewind in mid 2000 – hopefully coming next year for a performance and advanced workshops.

Large budgets allowed money spent on production – including shooting on film.

Local **Pitch Black** – Mid 90's – first album 99. Made of Paddy Free & Mike Hodgenson.

History

Early examples of video art could be seen in Len Lye's 1929 film "Tusalava" which pioneered 'direct animation'. This was the process of drawing and scratching designs directly onto film had a "VJ" aesthetic.

Andy Warhol was one of the first artists to bridge the gap between popular culture and art. In 1966 he created the show 'The Exploding Plastic Inevitable' (EPI) to introduce the music of The Velvet Underground & Nico in the United States. This show can be seen as the first step towards what we now call a DJ/VJ performance. During the whole show there was a synaesthesia of music, image, color and light.

Withough easy projection systems early pioneers began work using liquid-slides, disco balls and light projections on smoke to give the audience new sensations. Some of these experiments were linked to the music, but most of the time they functioned as decorations. This followed on until the mid 80's when technological improvements allowed easier access to the video production process – video tape, analogue mixers & home computers.

During the early nineties we saw another generation of video products reach the mass market. Analogue mixers with effects, such as the Panasonic MX-50 became much more common. A strong Japanese scene started to develop – based in the 'fuck the system' subcultures of Japanese youth, their style had strong manga inspired style. Large clubs started involving Vjs in their large scale events.

Currently there are members of the 8000 vjcentral.com community, it began in 2002 and has become a strong community of visual artists.

Content creation

Style is an individual aesthetic which characterise's your content and mix, different VJ's shows vary as much as the music they play to. How you create your footage will depend on the skills you have and what you are willing to learn. Video editing programs are relatively easy to learn and there are plenty of courses and downloadable tutorials that can get you started so they are a good place to start with your content creation. Starting by making some simple loops which you can play with through a hardware mixer or VJ software then you will develop a feel for what kind of content works and what direct you wish to go with your content. Vj apps like Resolume have so many ways of remixing your material live that a relatively small amount of material can go along way.

Software

Here's a selection of the most popular VJ software live performance applications:

Grid / GridPro | www.vidvox.net

OSX, Easy clip playback, GridPro now also has a big effect system & Video capture support.



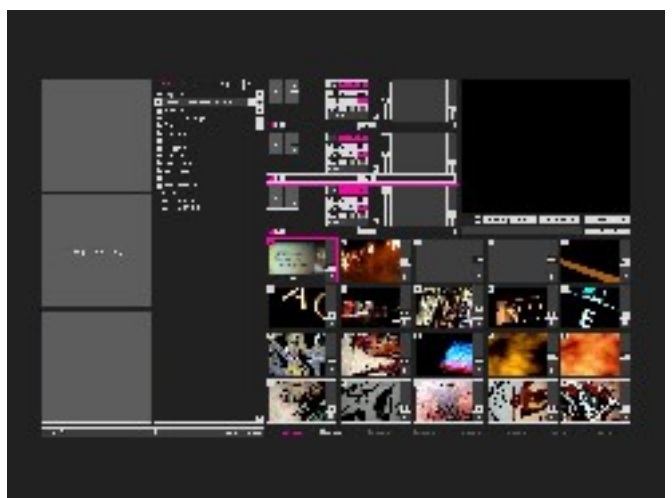
Modul8 | www.garagecube.com/modul8

OSX, Built on a powerful 3D engine, Video capture support.



Resolume | www.resolume.com

Windows, Very powerful effects system,



motiondive.tokyo & MD-P1



Others include – VDMX, Electronica, Vjamm, Flowmotion, OpenTZT, Pilgrim.

<http://www.vjcentral.com/software>

Hardware

Most VJ software & hardware support the music standard **MIDI**. Allowing almost every piece of music controllers to work without a problem for Vjs.

Edirol MD-P1 – Hardware/Software Controller combo – awesome for a starter package, comes with clips, works on both Mac & PC.

Keyboards – **Edirol PCR-30**, **Korg MicroKontrol**

Resolves **ReACT** Controller

Mixman DM2 – with a bit of hacked software can use this \$100 toy to control MIDI capable software. Pic - <http://www.dse.co.nz/isroot/dse/images/products/K0061~LGE.JPG>

Hardware Video Mixers

The most important part of Vjing besides the playback medium (PC/DVD)

Most common mixers were originally Panasonics **MX-10** & **MX-50**. Now the most common and best is the **Edirol V4** also the **Korg Crossfour**. Also hardware effects units - Korgs **Entrancer** & **Kaptivator**.

<http://www.vjcentral.com/hardware>

Video Standards

There are 2 main formats - **NTSC** (720x480/60hz/29.97fps) **PAL** (720x576/50hz/25fps) think of it like power – in the USA they use 110v (NTSC) and in NZ we use 220v (PAL) – they both power something but are not compatible. New Zealand uses the PAL video standard and this is technically 25 frames per second, be careful to keep video projects in this standard otherwise your video will come out glitchy and you may not be able to play through a video mixer.

High Def – the future, basically computer resolutions on your TV.

Early available video cameras shoot in HDV – 1080i (Sonys FX1) – new cameras coming out especially the Panasonic HVX-200 – allow 720p 60fps – this will be the first true *cheap* (sub \$US10k) non film camera that you could shoot a feature film on.

Progressive/interlacing – Projectors, Plasma's and Computers all output a progressive signal whereas most DV camera's capture interlaced. If you are not familiar with these concepts a quick google will school you up, here is the first one I found about the subject

<http://www.animemusicvideos.org/guides/avtech/video2.htm> but there are plenty more articles.

Basically when you play interlaced video on a progressive screen you will see jaggy edges, the simple answer to use the deinterlace filter in your editing program.

Codecs - Again there is plenty more information on this topic that you can find with a quick search on vjcentral. Basically most Mac based VJ's are using Quicktime Photo-JPEG at 75% quality setting at 640 x 480 (Square Pixels, Progressive/ No fields), and most PC based VJ's are using PIC Video Motion JPEG at quality setting 18/20 again 640 x 480 Square Pixels. If your computer is less powerful than about 1.6 Pentium or equivalent or has a 4300rpm drive then you may experience dropped frames or slow playback with more than one layer, in this case render your files at 320 x 240, this is known as 'half-res, the quality is less however you will get better performance out of your VJ app. It is recommended that you also render at 640 x 480 so when you have access to a faster computer your 'future-proofed'.

Cables (BNC, RCA, Svideo, VGA)

Google the highlighted words or search vjforums.com – all of this has been discussed in length on vjforums.com.

Presenting

Although Plasma's are coming down in price, their weight and still select availability mean that projectors are the usual medium for most performances. As light source projectors are less intrusive to the environment than a active light source.

Projectors are rated by how bright or 'powerful' they are and this is measured in lumens. Lumen ratings vary widely between manufactures and it isn't uncommon for projectors to lose up to half of

their brightness as the bulb clocks up hours of use, so lumens should only be used as a guide.

Roughly 1200 lumens is the rating of a low powered projector, with 1500 to 2500 lumens being the standard rating for projectors at gig's.

For large screens at bigger events projectors of 2500 to 5000 lumens can be used and at the very top end of the market there are 10000 lumen projectors that can be rented at up to \$1600 a day.

Just as a reference, large out door LED (Light Emiting Diode) screens that can be seen in the day cost \$25,000 a day.

Current Situation

Internationally – there are VJ's all around the world now.

AVIT worldwide - As of this year AVIT is four years old and has organising chapters in the UK, Germany, Portugal, North America, Latin America. It is a festival that showcases the VJ scene.

Main ones being LA & UK. Hundreds of Vjs register – large scale performances.

<http://www.avit.org.uk/>

Various other festivals – Eyewash NYC, Mapping festival, Geneva, interactivity festival , Hague

Local scene – Pitch Black, Salmonella Dub, Fly my Pretties, Axis of Weevil, lotech, Axis of Weavils, Nektar, WarpTV and many more.

Finding out more

Check out **www.vjcentral.com** - biggest community forum, lots of freely available information, opinions.

Google – honestly the best way of finding anything – keep your searches to obvious keywords.

mic.org.nz – moving image centre, creative nz funded, promotes modern video and visual art, with exhibitions, workshops (such as these) and facilities. The plan is to include inhouse video and audio production [facilities](#) for members for short film and media projects.

In a more professional sense – ourselves, **lotech.media**, are the NZ representatives for Edirol video mixers & the MD-P1. We basically stock these to allow easy access to stock and repairs for NZ Vjs.

Links

<http://www.vjcentral.com>

<http://www.cosignconference.org/cosign2003/papers/Dekker.pdf>

<http://www.octapod.org/jeanpoole/archives/000985.html>

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/newroutes-issue3-videojockeys.pdf>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vj>
<http://www.vjs.net/about.shtml>
www.edirol.com

Events / Organisations

<http://www.mappingfestival.com>
<http://www.avit.info>

www.mic.org.nz

Local VJs

www.lotech.co.nz
www.warptv.co.nz
www.nektar.co.nz
www.paulbradley.co.nz
www.optrix.org

<http://www.vjcentral.com/members/default/category/186> – NZ VJ Listing