Analyzing Music Videos: Lovari

Overview
In this lesson, students will learn about singer, songwriter, and actor Lovari, using his interview with the Queer Newark Oral History Project and prior knowledge about elements of music to his song and music video "Paparazzi."

Grade Level
3-5

Time
Total: 40 minutes (5 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes background, 10 minutes music analysis, 10 minutes music video analysis, 5 minutes conclusion) plus optional extension to be assigned as homework

Objectives
Students will be able to:
- Summarize the intertwined history of sound and image.
- Determine the effectiveness of an artist's musical expression.
- Reflect on how an accompanying music video changes the experience of a song.
- Analyze lyrics and other musical elements such as tempo, dynamics, and sound effects.

New Jersey Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards
1.3A.5.Re7a: Demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how selected music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes, or contexts.
1.3A.5.Re8a: Evaluate musical works and performances, applying established criteria, and explain appropriateness to the context citing evidence from the elements of music.
1.3A.5.Re9a: Demonstrate and explain how the expressive qualities (e.g., dynamics, tempo, timbre, articulation) are used in performers' and personal interpretations to reflect expressive intent.
1.3A.5.Cn11a: Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

Resources Needed
- White or chalkboard, paper, or another material for collaborative list
- Printed copies of "Paparazzi" lyrics
- Paper and writing utensils
- Instructor device with internet access and projector connection

Warm-Up
Work together to make a list of how students encounter music, such as YouTube, Spotify, radio, in other media (movies, tv, etc.), and in music class. Review the list and mark which sources involve visuals and which do not.

Background
Explain to students that music has been accompanied by images throughout history using the information below.

From "Sound and Image in the Era of Recording Technologies" and "The Rise of MTV" from TeachRock
Until Thomas Edison first recorded sound in 1877, sound and image were always experienced as one. It had been that way since music was first made. One saw a performance as one heard the music, whether it was a neighbor playing guitar or an orchestra in a concert hall. But suddenly, with the advent of recording technology, a listener could replay just the sound from a performance, and a performance that had already past. It was nothing short of a revolution.

It may be, however, that there is a human desire to see as one hears. For just as soon as Edison's invention revolutionized the experience of listening, the audience for those recordings wanted to see something as they listened. Recordings, whether in the form of 78rpm shellac discs or later cassette tapes, had images to accompany the music stored on them. The images could focus the listener's experience. Some argue that the first "music video" was made as early as 1894, when Joseph Stern's and Edward Mark's recording of "The Little Lost Child" was promoted with moving slides and marketed as an "illustrated song." Though the average American did not yet own equipment to play a recording of the song, over 2 million copies of the sheet music of "The Little Lost Child" sold following its appearances in the "nickelodeon" theaters of the era.

When in 1927 technological advances in film allowed the successful synchronization of sound and image in a "moving picture, the film demonstrating this new technology was The Jazz Singer, which, not surprisingly, featured the acting and singing of recording star Al Jolson. Then, it seemed, sound and image had been restored to their original relationship, arriving to the audience's eyes and ears together. But more was coming.

In 1929, Bessie Smith, "The Empress of the Blues," could be seen and heard performing "St. Louis Blues" in the moments before a feature film played in the movie theater. Of course, the present-day "movie theater," at which one attends a single film, was not yet a fixed concept. Movie houses coupled feature films with "shorts" of various kinds, and some even incorporated them into larger bills that included live dancers, musicians and comedians. In 1945 Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five released their massive hit "Caldonia" as a "soundie," to be played on a visual jukeboxes called the "Panoram." With the emergence of television, new opportunities extended the possibilities. On The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet a young Ricky Nelson began performing songs at the conclusions of the show--and the audience hungered for more. These are just a few examples among many.

Though the music business remained focused on selling recorded music during its first hundred plus years, there was an awareness that music culture was a thing of both sound and image. With MTV, the fullest possibilities of giving the eyes and ears a shared experience would be explored as never before.

The MTV "Music Television" network launched on August 1, 1981. It was the first cable station dedicated entirely to music videos, supplemented only by brief news bits and introductions by its VJs (video jockeys).

Music had always been on television. There were variety shows with dedicated portions for live performances, programs such as the 1950s The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet that featured Ricky Nelson singing, and the 1960s show The Monkees, the lead characters of which were a Beatles-like Rock and Roll band. Occasionally there were music "specials" such as the USA Network's "Video Concert Hall," which showed music videos for an hour or more. However, MTV's 24-hour-a- day "music television" model was something new, creating a heightened demand for the production of music videos.

In the network's earliest years, MTV played almost anything they received. Many videos were low-budget and hastily made representations of a band's live performance. However, the marketing power of MTV's "visual radio" concept was quickly embraced by artists and the music industry as a whole. The music video became a platform for creativity as well as a powerful promotional tool. Throughout the 1980s and into the mid-1990s--all before the Internet—MTV was the most influential music outlet worldwide.

Music Analysis
Share with students that they'll be studying the song "Paparazzi" by the singer, songwriter, and actor Lovari, as well as its accompanying music video. Provide a printout of the lyrics to "Paparazzi" (Appendix 1) and play the song for students. After the song is over, have students write a summary of what the song is about and note what elements of music indicate this (lyrics, but also dynamics, tempo, timbre, articulation, etc.).

Share this quote from Lovari's interview with the Queer Newark Oral History Project: "When I was listening to the beat, I had flashing camera sound, I was like 'all right, reminds me of paparazzi,' which is where I came up with paparazzi." Ask if students recognized the flashing camera sound in the music. Does the sound alone evoke the cameras of the paparazzi? In other words, is Lovari's music effective at expressing his intended message?

Share this additional quote: "I write really personal lyrics…everything is personal. It might sound, like, sassy or fun or whatever, but all my lyrics are personal." Ask what students can infer about Lovari from the lyrics. Then provide this additional context to the interview quote: "'Paparazzi' is personal because I'm saying…'You think you know everything about me. One date is not enough to read my mind.' Right there I'm telling you that I had an experience where somebody took me out on a date, they judged me on first date." Ask students to compare this quote to their own interpretations of the song lyrics. Does Lovari effectively express his personal experiences through this song?

Music Video Analysis
Play the "Paparazzi" music video for students. After the song is over, have students summarize what the music video is about and note what elements of the video indicate this (words, characters, images, etc.). Compare and contrast their summaries to the summaries written before seeing the video.

Ask students to recall what Lovari wanted to communicate through this song (the sound of paparazzi's flashing cameras, personal experiences) and their answers about whether he reached those goals through the music alone. Next, ask them to reflect on whether their answers are different now that they've seen the music video. How does it change their experience of music to have a visual alongside it?

Conclusion
Return to the list of music encounters generated at the start of the lesson and look at the items on the list that don't involve visuals. Ask students how those encounters might be limited because they only involve sound, reflecting on the history and analysis they did during class.

Extension (Optional)
Have students repeat the warm-up exercise with an adult at home, asking the adult to list the ways they encountered music when they were the student's age, then work with the student to mark which sources involved visuals and which did not. Then, have the student write a paragraph summarizing the adult's list and connecting their experiences with the history of sound and image reviewed in class. Printed copies of the history can be provided for reference.

Appendix 1: “Paparazzi” Lyrics

You don't know 'bout me.
I don't know 'bout you.
Here is some advice I'd take if I were you.
You're like paparazzi all up in my face.
Better back up off me.
Get up out my space.

You think you know everything about me.
One date is not enough to read my mind.
Online, you've posting lies about me.
Drama free. It's not worth my time.

You don't know 'bout me.
I don't know 'bout you.
Here is some advice I'd take if I were you.
You're like paparazzi all up in my face.
Better back up off me.
Get up out my space.

You tried having people run up on me.
Coming 'round and wasting my time.
They learn really quick to step off me.
I will always speak my mind.

You don't know 'bout me.
I don't know 'bout you.
Here is some advice I'd take if I were you.
You're like paparazzi all up in my face.
Better back up off me.
Get up out my space.

You aint Page Six.
Get up off this.
Good Day New York,
You're not their sort.
Perez Hilton mentioned me again.
Got a question. Why you so mad?
You aint Page Six.
Get up off this,
Good Day New York,
You're not their sort,
Perez Hilton mentioned me again.
Got a question. Why you so mad?

You don't know 'bout me.
I don't know 'bout you.
Here is some advice I'd take if I were you.
You're like paparazzi all up in my face.
Better back up off me.
Get up out my space.