



# LISTENING WITH THEIR EYES

**Like the recording industry, the music video business has experienced massive changes in recent years. Even as budgets shrink, new technologies and delivery channels open up more creative, promotional and money-making opportunities.**

In this special roundtable discussion, three leaders in the music video field address these and other issues that confront them and their colleagues.

As Executive Producer/Owner at Revolution Pictures, **RANDY BREWER** has overseen video projects for Lady Antebellum, Reba and many others, including numerous videos for Carrie Underwood and the 2010 CMA Awards nominated "Hillbilly Bone," featuring Blake Shelton and Trace Adkins and directed by Roman White.

With more than 200 major-label music videos to her credit for artists including Alan Jackson, Rascal Flatts, George Strait and Keith Urban, Big Feather Films Owner **TREY FANJOY** has won many of the top honors in her industry, including consecutive CMA Music Video of the Year Awards for Taylor Swift's "Love Story" (2009) and Miranda Lambert's "The House That Built Me" (2010).

And veteran photographer **DAVID McCLISTER**, represented by Ruckus Films, has made a strong imprint in video by directing Lady Antebellum's 2010 CMA Awards nominated "Need You Now," as well as projects for The Band Perry, Dierks Bentley, Jake Owen, LeAnn Rimes and others.

**How have changes in technology over the past 10 years affected what you do?**

**FANJOY** On a technical level, it's constantly changing and has been since the moment I stepped into this business. But in the past couple of years, I think more directors have been shooting in digital formats than on film.

**McCLISTER** This year, I've shot everything from 35mm to 16mm to Red to Canon 5D — basically, about every format that's out there.

**How do you decide which format is right for any given project?**

**FANJOY** I take everything into consideration, including the age of the artist — from a beauty standpoint, whether we're going to go HD or 35mm.

**BREWER** With the technology of HD comes a cleaner, crisper scene, versus film, which gives you a more organic feel. Both are excellent options. It just depends on what approach you want to take and what the budget will allow.

**But haven't declines in the price of technology helped to offset budget cutbacks?**

**BREWER** There are definitely things you can do cheaper because of the changes in technology, such as a performance video or a run-and-gun video. The myth is that you can do a \$175,000 video for \$50,000. Production still calls for certain key line items to make that kind of video and HD doesn't solve those expenses. The idea will always drive the cost if you want to tell a great epic story. It takes money to make those videos and make them right.

**FANJOY** Ultimately, equipment prices are such a small thing. Take a big video like "Love Story." To shoot it with a Canon 5D or film, that's not the issue. You've still got dancers and choreography and costumes and art direction and all these other things. There's this huge misconception that just because we're in that do-it-yourself music video mode and everybody's got video cameras, everybody can make a (quality) music video. I can give a camera to my mother or my cousin in Oklahoma, but it's not going to be the same video you'd get if I do it.

**BREWER** When you're making a record for Carrie Underwood, would you go, "Let's give it to that guy down at Belmont because we can get him for \$200?" You wouldn't do that. You're going to get the best guy if you really believe in your artist, and the people with strong experience usually cost more. When I think of some amazing videos like Roman's video for (Taylor Swift's) "You Belong with Me," "Nothin' Better to Do," which David did for LeAnn Rimes, or Trey's "Love Story," they tell a story through Country Music, and fans eat that stuff up. I'd love to put a concert video or a performance video made with no budget against these really well-done epic videos and measure the number of hits on YouTube. I'm not saying that labels should spend tons and tons of money for every new



**"You're talking about an audience that has to feel like, 'I'm being entertained on my iPad.'"**

— Randy Brewer

Randy Brewer joins Kelly Clarkson on the set of her video for "Don't Waste Your Time."

artist ...

**FANJOY** I am!

**McCLISTER** I am too (laughter)!

**BREWER** I'm saying, really, look at what pushes things. In the age of competing on the Internet against (network and other professional programming on) Hulu television, you're talking about an audience that has to feel like, "I'm being entertained on my iPad."

**FANJOY** I've been really successful in working with new artists, and I've never broken a new artist by making it look like Amateur Time. It's always been that the videos that took the artist to the next level had epic content. Taylor Swift's "Our Song": explosive color, great art direction, beautiful 35 mm in your face. Keith Urban's "Somebody Like You": beautiful crane shots of Malibu Canyon and the Native American medicine wheel. Those are the videos that break artists.

# THE STATE OF THE ART OF MUSIC VIDEOS

by FETT

**BREWER** We just did a video for Lady Antebellum ("Hello World," directed by Roman White) that is so epic. Thanks to the songwriters, the content was so good and emotional. The video didn't really quite tell a literal story line, but Roman took it to a certain place. I have gotten more e-mails from people who were touched, who cried, who said, "This video changed the way I think." We couldn't have pulled off the storyline without the strong budget we had on that video.

**FANJOY** Outside the Country Music genre, would Lady Gaga be Lady Gaga without the incredible production value and those big art-directed, styled videos? I believe wholeheartedly in the ability of the format and the medium to make stars. And whether it's on CMT or YouTube, the content still needs to be stellar.

**McCLISTER** We're talking about songs or videos that are emotionally involved. They're like mini-films. The audience can watch them over and over again. It's not just a performance video where you can walk out of the room and listen to the song like it's on the radio.

**BREWER** The big question is, if that video tells a story and creates some emotion, will that person then send it to a friend who says, "Wow, that really touched me. I'm going to send it to my mom!?" And then all these

What other economic factors impact music video production today?

**BREWER** Musicians have their union. Songwriters have PROs. Everyone has their own protection in place but music video directors. People say, "Wow, that guy Roman White did a whole bunch of amazing music videos and they're selling for \$1.99;" but unlike songwriters, Roman is never going to see a dime for any of those sales, even though 99 percent of them are his ideas, unless that changes. This is what we love to do, just like a songwriter loves to write songs. There is a sense I get from directors of how hard it is to keep being creative in a time when maybe they don't get recognized enough financially for their ideas, especially when videos are not just a promotional tool anymore.

How are directors paid for their work?

**BREWER** Directors get paid 10 percent. When they do a \$40,000 performance video, they make \$4,000. Two years ago, they might have done a little bigger video on film for \$80,000 and made \$8,000. Although they spent the same time and did the same amount of work, they're expected to create the same great video but they're being compensated for less than half today.

**FANJOY** The same pay structure has been in place for 25 years. It's percentages. Music videos were promotional tools for broadcast only until the technology changed. Now, they're *product*. Everybody else — the songwriter, the producer, the singer — gets a piece (of the \$1.99 video sale) except the music video writer and director.

**BREWER** We've had labels tell us that the video came out and the sales actually changed. "It was dying at radio, your video came out and now the single is back."

**McCLISTER** Or the video saved the album.

**FANJOY** I did the first video for a new artist on Sony Music Nashville, Joanna Smith. They didn't have a strong budget, so Joanna insisted that I take a point on the video. We've talked about

links start to be introduced to new people, to new consumers. That's the strength of a really well-done music video and how they help artists in our new music business model.

Has viral online culture created an aesthetic that you're ever asked to emulate?

**BREWER** There are certain things you can do in that style. We've had treatments where people have said, "I want to do a real YouTube kind of vibe," and that's fine. But ...

**FANJOY** It's not how you build an icon.

**BREWER** And I don't see networks, HBO or large media companies going there. Yes, they're investing virally, but they're not going to make tons of content with their stars looking like a home video because it diminishes them.

**McCLISTER** All that viral content just makes my stuff look better (laughter).



"Whether it's on CMT or YouTube, the content still needs to be stellar."

— Trey Fanjoy

Trey Fanjoy with Taylor Swift.

"All that viral content just makes my stuff look better."

— David McClister

David McClister speaks with Sons of Sylvia lead singer and fiddle player Ashley Clark during the video shoot for "I'll Know You."

labels taking a risk. Well, if I come in at this point in the game with my 15 years of experience and I'm offering my services, I'm taking a chance on this artist too, so there should be some return for that. I think it's a great way for new artists who have smaller budgets to incentivize an experienced director to come to the table.

**BREWER** If we can survive through this time, there will be a gold rush for visual producers and directors, for people who create content. That content will rule along with good music. Everything is going visual. Young people watch more visual content on their smartphones and listen less to radio in their cars.

**FANJOY** It's a changing landscape and the industry needs to change with the technology. But I'm very optimistic. More and more outlets for videos are sprouting up everywhere. People listen with their eyes.

**DavidMcClister.com; RevolutionPictures.com; TreyFanjoy.com**