

johnny5

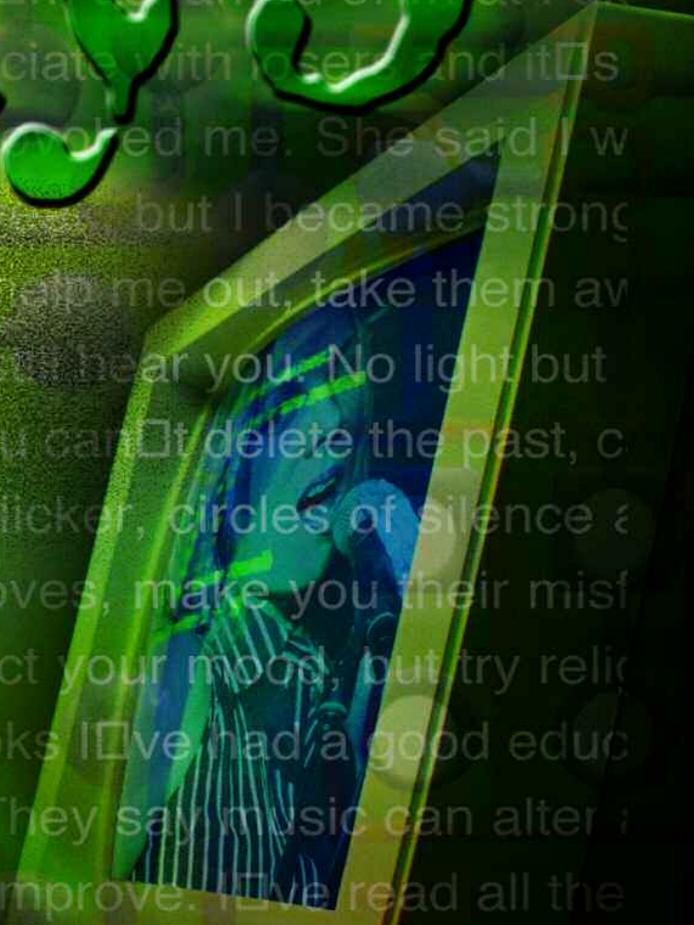
in March 2004, UK artist ANEMO completed their music video for the hip-hop/rock crossover track Johnny5. Mark White reports.

The word 'anemo-' is what's known as a changing form word. It is added to other words changing their meaning. Its root is Greek, meaning 'of the wind.' Hence, you can make words like Anemometer (an instrument for recording wind speed) and anemophilous (flowers and grasses pollinated by the wind.) The Brighton based Rock Band, Anemo, is a changing form band. Now the band has taken the next step and committed a music video to celluloid.

Anemo's discography is the work of songwriting duo Hazelle Woodhurst and Kingsley Sage. With an assortment of songs that differ greatly from one another, Anemo does exactly what it means. But with such a wide variety of sound and style, how was the visual medium of music video applied to 'Johnny 5?' Kingsley describes 'Johnny 5' as a "Hip-Hop/Rock crossover with a heavy beat which is a type of music becoming increasingly relevant." Listening to the track, I understand where he's coming from;

however, what I find more intriguing is this sincere and foreboding social commentary.

'Johnny 5' tells the story of an individual who, in a fit of rage and suppressed strength, deals a fatal blow to an argumentative companion. Already we have a gruesome beginning, but this anti-hero makes his way to the Internet, where a full confession is made. His chat room moniker is Johnny 5, and in his own way is absolving himself from his sins. Once confession is made, the soul can carry on. This is a very powerful theme that tragically seems more common place, as people isolate themselves from reality and delve into a virtual world increasingly more real. "We can be whomever we want and be perceived how ever we want through the Internet. We don't have to live our lives in the usual dull fashion," Hazelle says. "We can be someone else; another character completely. Being anonymous means freedom where no one can trace you." This honesty and heart of the song provides a bit of insight into the merits of the band.



ANEMO



It's a much more biting subject than one would expect from a female fronted band. Hazelle explains, "Female fronted bands shouldn't be interpreted any differently from male bands," and goes on further to say, "We are only different in that we try to embrace a range of musical styles within our sound, rather than just falling into the Linkin Park, Incubas etc category. We still love doing songs with this hard edge within our catalogue" Upon reflection, these statements are not opposites.

Women can rock hard, just as men can. The interpretation of the music shouldn't change simply because it's a woman

singing. But Anemo is different, as most bands try to be. All bands have their influences, but still try to define their own sound. Anemo has it's own sound. Johnny 5 has a distinctive sound. But it's more than just a song; it's a story. To give it full justice, that story needed to be visualised.

UK GMTV Producer, Nick Neelson was given the job as director. Nick had recently been recognised for securing presenter John Stapleton's nomination for the prize he eventually won in the Royal Television Society Journalism Awards for the coverage of the Iraq war. As fulfilling as war coverage may be, Nick enjoyed being on the set directing his first music video. "When you try to inject energy into something on screen, you really have to go for it," Nick said. "But the band got into it and that helped a lot. No one hung back at all. No one was being self-conscious."

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He was able to bring a professional element to a medium that was new to the band. As Nick pointed out, "There were the usual moments to rethink things, but it went smooth and stayed on schedule." Nick used his own crew for the professional element. His studio editor was Carl Anson, a veteran with the music video format. Carl has worked on several Hip-Hop videos and chiefly enjoys this genre as it gives him the opportunity to get creative in a way the news does not allow.

Character direction was a new experience for Nick, but fortunately he had talent on his side. Main

character and Johnny 5 himself was Canada's own Sandy DeWolf. Sandy is currently studying his law degree as Sussex University, but is no stranger to the stage. He has been a part of Shoestring Repertory Theatre in his hometown of Moncton, New Brunswick, before life and marriage eventually brought him to Brighton. He still loves acting and plans to keep it up. Obviously this man knows what he's doing. Watching him on set was fascinating. His transformation into character was subtle yet complete. As Johnny 5, you could see his passion, anger and fear. Instead of commenting on his own abilities or the character, Sandy could only describe the song's addictive power, "It took me five days to get the song out of my head, I swear to God. It was just there." Wow. That statement gives heaps of insight into the appeal of this band.



Kate Robinson, Sandy's character counterpart, was not to be outdone. Although Kate is not an actor, she is a musician and comfortable in front of a camera. This was obvious as she came in guns blazing, and pretty much surprised everyone on set. Director Nick said, "Kate certainly found plenty of volume." For someone with such a small frame and build, she can bellow out an argument like no one else, even when filming is taking place in a small flat at nine in the morning.

The band itself was in good form but tragically injuries can be unavoidable as Kingsley noted regarding his keyboard. "Everything is exaggerated which can be hard when you're playing to a pre-recorded track. I ended up with a blister on each thumb from hitting the bloody thing so hard." Perhaps blisters aren't quite Rock and Roll, especially the description of a "goosey mess" when they burst. Personal injuries aside, the band seemed to enjoy the attention. Even Hazelle and her sister/backing singer Erika

enjoyed every bit of the hair and make-up artists at their beck and call.

All the elements were there. An unbelievable crew, actors of substance, and a song with a strong social and philosophical subtext. Hazelle explains it that most songs are a commentary

"Johnny 5 is about the undisclosed areas of love."

about love in some form but can tend to make this black or white: "Johnny 5 is about the undisclosed areas of love. The greys, not black & whites. This technology has taken over our lives. There is no fourth wall anymore, and that's a very interesting idea." Anemo makes no apologies and rightfully so. Their music and the stories they tell are a part of society and all around us. Johnny 5 could be the next person at the water cooler, or the one doing your tax return. It's music we can relate to. It's music with something to say that people understand. Anemo can contribute greatly to music. Hopefully this is the beginning of many songs to come. Watch this space!

