

# Are Music Videos Still Important in Canada?

Article by Dominique Blais

[www.marseillemusique.ca](http://www.marseillemusique.ca)



## About Dominique Blais

Guitar teacher for various public and private educational establishments for over a decade, Dominique Blais was also involved in more than fifty recording projects in Montreal, Toronto, Moncton, Edmunston, New York and Los Angeles.



**Dominique Blais**

*(Photo : © Julie Cardin, 2007)*

In addition to have worked at Steve Vai's personal home studio in Hollywood and been guitar player for Radio-Canada (CBC) Television, Dominique has also produced several albums; some of these he has promoted for airplay on several radio stations across Canada whilst others had been nominated for awards at the Canadian Country Music Awards and the East Coast Music Awards.

Until 2003, while Vice-President of The Show Must Go On Productions, a concert promotion company based in Canada and USA, he organized and promoted many concerts and special events and toured with North American and European artists, both in Canada and in the USA. He promoted concerts for many artists such as Motorhead, Vince Neil (Motley Crue), The Misfits, Anthrax, Voivod, Marky Ramone, Skid Row and others.

He also worked (between 2003 and 2008) at SODRAC (Society for Reproduction Rights of Authors, Composers and Publishers in Canada) where he has worked for many departments, namely Recruitment and Member Services as well as Audio Licensing (Independent labels) and Audiovisual Licensing (Videocopy Distribution).

Dominique Blais devotes his time to teaching classes within the "Music Business Administration" program at Montreal's Trebas Institute and Marseille Musique.

Should you have any question or comments about this article, feel to contact the author at [info@marseillemusique.ca](mailto:info@marseillemusique.ca).

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We all know that the music video business has drastically changed. I remember when I was young, I used to watch regularly music videos on my TV and that was the main way for me to discover new artists and music. For sure, radio stations were omnipresent, but since I was young and since I couldn't attend concerts due to my age, for me, there was nothing like seeing my favourite artists on TV!

I know, it's weird, but these days' music video channels are less and less involved in playing music videos, instead, they offer various shows such as reality shows and other music oriented shows, but not as much videos as before.

One typical question I always get from my clients and students: "Is it worth it the investment to produce a music video these days?"

Well, since there are numerous ways for people to access music and music videos; some points should be taken into consideration prior to properly answer this question.



From Left to right :  
Dominique Blais, Rejean Laplanche (Musique Plus), Marky Ramone (The Ramones), Dez Cadena (Black Flags), Jerry Only (The Misfits) & Rebecca Makonnen (Musique Plus)

(Photo credit : © Marc Chicoine, 2002)

« since I couldn't attend concerts due to my age, for me, there was nothing like seeing my favourite artists on TV! »

The main one, from far, is the financing. The production cost of a full-length music video is quite often a big headache. A regular, *not too fancy* video may easily cost anywhere between 50,000\$-75,000\$. Why is it so expensive? Producing a video requires a lot of resources and there is a lot of fees attached to it such as artists' make-up, stylists, union fees, copyright clearance firm, music licensing, image licensing, equipment rental, video producer, lighting crew, camera crew, montage crew and the list goes on and on.

Unlike a feature film, the credits are not displayed on the screen at the end of a music video, but believe me, you'd be really surprised to see how many people were involved in this project. Eventually, there are costs attached to each single person involved in the project and it's adding up real fast!

So, if you don't have this kind of money at your disposal, what would be your options then?

Under a certain criteria, Canadian-controlled record labels, record or video production companies and Canadian citizens (or landed immigrants) including producers, managers and artists are eligible to apply to the VideoFACT grants. The VideoFACT award covers up to 50% of the music video production budget to a maximum of \$25,000; whether it is in English or in French.

As stated on VideoFACT's website, they granted on February 6<sup>th</sup> 2009, a total of \$763,875 (Canadian currency) for the production of music videos, EPKs and websites. That clearly shows that there is a lot of money available out there, but don't get me wrong, grants are not really as easy to get. Quite often, you must enjoy or have a certain exposure in your career and a good distribution deal in order for you to get a grant.

Assuming you don't have access to grants, what would be your next options then?

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Perhaps you should consider producing a shorter video, getting sponsors, endorsement deals, etc. Have you ever consider contacting the Film/ TV schools looking for interns?

In case you are an artist and you're not really comfortable with certain contractual aspects or the negotiation behind it, I would suggest you to hire a music business specialist who can help you out with this matter.

Since the traditional video TV stations are most likely not going to play your video due largely to the fact that they don't play that much of music videos anymore and that they are not really involved in new talent development, you are going to have to think about new ways of getting your video available to your fans out there.

A short music video could be an affordable alternative option since you can post it on YouTube and therefore you won't have to deal with traditional TV stations. From a realistic standpoint, the Big Four labels (Universal, Sony/BMG, Warner and EMI) still enjoy a lot of supremacy comparing to indie labels before the video TV Channels. But today and with all the online platforms such as YouTube, you can create your fan base by uploading your own music video without any negotiation or contractual material. There is so much content available on YouTube that it is becoming similar to a jungle out there. But personally, I still believe that if you are creative enough and your music is quite original, you are going to make it!

UMG (Universal) is the most viewed channel ever on YouTube, with 3.4 billion views and a collection of more than 9,200 video clips. That's a lot a views, I know, but one question remains, how do they manage to get so much people on their channel? Well, it is surely not just a matter of video quality; in fact, it is a mix of marketing strategies including traditional TV stations, radios, print medias, etc. Therefore, you cannot really compare your "indie" product with UMG's products.

**But what is the situation comparing to MySpace?**

**According to Digital Music News, a recent study reveals that the top ten songs on YouTube totalled nearly 24.5 million daily views on the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of February 2009. But on Monday alone, the top ten songs on MySpace were played almost 13.4 million times.**

**Yes indeed, videos are all over the place, but honestly, you are going to need a fantastic/unique idea for your video concept and surely an appropriate budget, in order to create a real buzz over the net. And if you don't have access to non-traditional distribution networks such as cell phones companies, MySpace would be a good place for you, your music and for your video!**

**To sum up, you must find ways to produce non-expensive videos while keeping in mind that regular video TV stations might just never play them. Personally, I believe that short videos are the best affordable solution considering that you can post and withdraw them yourself on YouTube and on similar websites, and get plenty of exposure, but again, it all depends on your marketing campaign.**

**Finally, in this jungle out there, it is up to you to find your own way to stand out! Be creative and respect your budget!**

**To learn more about the music business, please contact Dominique Blais at Marseille Musique in Montreal, Qc.  
514-544-7305  
[info@marseillemusique.ca](mailto:info@marseillemusique.ca)**