

My So-Called MTV

Less music, more television?

I can't turn on MTV and know that I'm definitely going to see videos anymore.

MELISSA HALPERN, BARNARD COLLEGE, N.Y.

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What

EVER HAPPENED TO THE 'M' IN MTV?" asks Eric Ferreri, 21, a senior at the U. of Connecticut. "I used to come home from middle school and high school and watch videos all afternoon, but now I'm lucky to find videos on MTV at all."

MTV has changed significantly from its initial 24-hour-a-day music video format, and many college students feel that with the introduction of so many non-music programs — like *The Real World*, *Singled Out*, *Road Rules* and *Sandblast* — it has largely been a change for the worse.

"As a college student, my time is very limited," says Melissa Halpern, a senior at Barnard College, N.Y. "I can't turn on MTV and know that I'm definitely going to see videos anymore. It's disappointing because it seems like MTV is making me work, or adjust my schedule, just to see videos."

It seems unavoidable — students have less time, and MTV is airing less music. It's not like the old days, when you could spend a quiet evening with Adam Curry and kill several hours watching Devo and Van Halen videos.

"When I first started watching MTV, I loved it because it exposed me to all different kinds of new music all the time," says Andrea Williams, a sophomore at the U. of Connecticut. "But with all the non-music programs on in the evenings and weekends, which are the only times I have free now, I don't feel like I know what's going on in the music world anymore."

Television killed the video star

The fractionalization of MTV has been gradual.

With the introduction of *MTV News* in 1987 and *House of Style* in 1989, the programming began moving steadily away from its 24-7 music roots. The schedule now includes cartoons, sports, fashion, soap operas, game shows, news, movie specials and even reruns of a former network series (*My So-Called Life*).

"I think some of the programs, like *The Real World*, are conceptually good," says Brian Woodward, a senior at Bentley College, Mass. "But when they run it four seasons in a row, plus all of the reruns of past seasons and similar shows like *Road Rules*, it gets to be incredibly repetitious."

That the network airs two or more continuous hours

of one show — known as block programming — is another major complaint of students.

"The thing I can't stand is when they run five or six hours of straight non-music shows on the weekends," Ferreri says. "I'm finally able to watch MTV at different times than during the week, and sure enough, they're running 400 episodes of *The Real World*."

Halpern also says she misses the diversity of the old, non-block formatting. By grouping videos into genre-specific shows like *MTV Jams*, *Yo! MTV Raps* and *Alternative Nation*, viewers get less of a potpourri than in the past.

Not that it's all bad — many students say they enjoy some non-music shows, particularly *Beavis and Butt-head*, *The State*, *The Maxx* and *MTV News*.

"I understand that viewers need variety," Williams says. "MTV just needs to mix things up again and place a little more emphasis on music, like they did in the past. The non-music shows aren't bad. It's just that I miss watching videos."



In the beginning, there was Martha (and Mark and Alan and Nina and J.J.)... and it was good.



"Now it's time for that big Dating Game...er...Singled Out kiss!"