

Chapter 9

AMV Remix: Do-it-yourself anime music videos

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SECTION ONE

Background to AMV as a cultural practice: Setting the context with “Konoha Memory Book”

The catalyst for this chapter is a 4.25 minute fan-made anime music video called “Konoha Memory Book” (DynamiteBreakdown, 2008a). This was created over 4 months during 2005 by one of the present authors, Matt Lewis—also known online as Dynamite Breakdown, Maguma, and/or Tsugasa—when he was 15 years old. It was sourced by Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear in 2006 while doing work on “remix” in relation to the theory and practice of “new literacies.” Artifact led to creator and ongoing email communications, resulting in this chapter.

“Konoha Memory Book” is set to Nickleback’s song, “Photograph,” and contains hundreds of video clips taken from across the first series of the Japanese anime *Naruto* (DynamiteBreakdown 2008b). The lyrics speak of someone looking through a photograph album and how the photos jog long-forgotten memories about growing up poor, skipping out on school, getting into trouble with the law, hanging out with friends, first love, etc. The narra-

tor is leaving his hometown. Despite all that's happened, he's leaving reluctantly and with at least some fond memories.

Matt uses this basic thread to follow Naruto—the principal protagonist in the series—through a range of adventures. The first verse of the song is accompanied by clips presenting the main characters—Naruto Uzumaki, Sasuke Uchiha, Sakura Haruno, and their ninja *sensei*, Kakashi Hatake—and conveys a sense of some of the mischief and danger Naruto and his fellow ninjas-in-training enact and encounter while developing their skills and characters: e.g., playing truant from school (synchronized clips show students escaping through a school window and running outside) and getting in trouble with the law (clips show someone holding up a record sheet to a sheepish Naruto).

The initial segue to the chorus moves from bright, yellow and red colors—matching the singer's comment that life is better now than it was back then—to darker, more muted images emphasizing bittersweet memories recounted in the song. At this point the video includes many close-ups where an individual is standing at a remove from others, often with text (e.g., “Time to say it” and “Good-bye”) superimposed over images and aligning with the lyrics as they're sung. The initial chorus closes with scenes from a beloved elder's funeral. “Good-bye” does double work here, synching with the song and saying farewell to the master *sensei*. The remainder of the song follows a similar pattern. At times there is a literal synching between lyrics and images (e.g., mention of cops in the lyrics is matched with images of law keepers in *Naruto*). At other times the “synch” between lyrics and images has a kind of frisson to it, like the image of Naruto kissing Sasuke (a boy) as the singer recalls *his* first kiss. This “move” references the corpus of Naruto/Sasuke relationship fiction and music videos made by fans. Sometimes, the synch between lyrics and images is more conceptual—as when the lyrics speak of missing the sound and faces of childhood friends, while the clip sequence emphasizes how Naruto, Sasuke, Sakura and their *sensei*, Kakashi, have formed a close bond over the course of living and training together. Second time round the chorus is used to “up” the visual tempo with a bricolage of images that suggests time passing. This bricolage includes pages of the original print-based *Naruto* manga series superimposed over images from the *Naruto* anime series. This speaks directly to *Naruto* having both manga and anime forms, and links to the concept of the photo album at the heart of the song. An image of Naruto running away from the reader is superimposed over other clips, again emphasizing the sense of time passing. This same animation of Naruto is repeated in the closing bars of the song as the singer explains that it's time to leave his hometown and move on.

Matt first uploaded “Konoha Memory book” to AnimeMusicVideos.org (aka AMV.org), the premier website for anime music video creators and aficionados (<http://www.animemusicvideos.org>). AMV fans found it and sub-

sequently uploaded it to YouTube for others to view. “Konoha Memory Book” has now almost two million views across these accounts. It won all sections at the 2007 Anime Expo in Los Angeles, although contest rules permitted just one official prize: the Popular Vote Award. It has spawned copycat videos using the same song and Naruto video clips. Many fans on YouTube identify it as their “all-time favorite AMV.” Possibly, though, the stand-out fan tribute is a *karaoke* version of “Konoha Memory Book” on YouTube. “Konoha Memory Book” remains one of Matt’s favorites among his 45 published AMVs to date.

Time spent watching anime music videos online opened up the world of anime to Matt, who is now an avid fan of a range of series.

The first AMV I officially saw was “Narutrix” [an AMV faux movie trailer parodying the Matrix movies] which is what got me into *Naruto* [the anime series] and downloading anime in general. After that I saw an AMV for *Azumanga Daioh* [another anime series] and decided to give it a shot.

When Matt first began making AMVs in 2005 he’d produce “like one a night, but they weren’t amazing. After ‘We Will Fight for Her,’ one of my first major AMV projects, I spent a LOT more time on AMVs.” It’s not unusual for Matt to spend hundreds of hours remixing an AMV, particularly if he plans to submit it to a competition, on top of hundreds of hours spent watching anime online, downloading resource files, searching for appropriate scenes, and so on, before starting production and subsequent editing iterations.

Matt mainly creates in-canon fan videos: situated within a single anime universe, like *Naruto*, rather than constructed from clips taken from different series. To date most of his creations have used the *Naruto* series and movies as their anime source, although he’s also used *Street Fighter Alpha*, *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann*, *Digimon*, *Fullmetal Alchemist*, *Tenjou Tenge*, and *Azumanga Daioh*. He categorizes the bulk of his work posted to his AMV.org account as “action” genre (34 of 45) and the remainder as comedy, parody, sentimental, or drama AMVs (many are assigned to multiple categories). As Matt explains, “I really enjoy making action AMVs due to the rush one can get from it; I like that feeling in the back of my head that just goes ‘Woah . . . !’” He also enjoys making drama AMVs “cus with it you can try to express a storyline or bring out a trait of a character that not many notice or get to see.”

Many of his AMVs are accompanied by “spoiler” alerts, warning viewers that key plot points to the anime series featured in the AMV will be given away. Matt remixes his AMVs with audience strongly in mind. This includes using superimposed text or other devices within the AMV itself to help viewers interpret his video clips. In “Before We Were Men,”

I wanted to show all the things that the two had gone through up to the fight that they have near the end of the series. Also I tried to throw in a bit of fan service with the text [i.e., words like “passion,” “angst” appear at specific points in the video] and the ending along with keeping the theme of the video feed effect at the beginning and end [i.e., a visual effect that makes the video look like it’s playing on a television monitor].

Matt’s information page for this AMV (posted to AnimeMusicVideos.org) concludes with the all-caps text “WARNING YAOI-ESQUE ENDING!!!” “Yaoi” is a term used outside Japan by fans of Japanese manga and anime to describe a genre of manga and anime focusing on male/male love (Wikipedia, 2008). Yaoi texts are not necessarily sexual in nature or necessarily considered “gay” texts. Matt describes this particular AMV as yaoi because “The AMV overall has that kind of passionate feeling of the two longing for each other kind of sense. And in the end they’re just practically face to face in the rain, and with the lack of a visual and the rain still running it leaves you to think what might happen.”

Music videos

Anime music videos are a subset of music videos, which came into their own in the 1980s and have a long and interesting history. During the 1920s and 1930s, music and moving images began to be combined by professional movie makers and music producers to create what are typically referred to as “musical short films” and Vitaphone films (Wikipedia, 2009). These short music films were produced expressly to showcase new bands, vaudeville acts, and opera singers as well as to promote more established artists and their performances (Vernallis, 2004; Wikipedia, 2009). These films were played mostly in cinemas. By the 1940s, jukeboxes were playing “soundies”—a song combined with moving images printed on celluloid film. Produced primarily to promote musical artists, soundies largely presented artists performing their songs in studio settings (Austerlitz, 2007).

In the 1960s, major artists, including The Animals, The Kinks, The Beatles, and Bob Dylan, were experimenting with “song films.” Performers lip-synched their songs in the studio or real-world settings. Audio and film were then edited together to produce the song film (Wikipedia, 2009). Producers began experimenting with camera shot types and angles, with editing sequences within the song film, and with color. The launch of the television shows, *Countdown* and *Sounds* in Australia in the early 1970s and *Top of the Pops* in England in the late 1970s, signaled and stimulated the growing popularity of music videos as a distinct form of entertainment. Their fare included music videos showcasing up-and-coming artists and established bands and singers from different parts of the world (Wikipedia, 2009), as well

as live performances. Music video-focused television shows became popular in many countries subsequently.

In 1981, MTV was launched in the U.S., offering 24/7 music on television. The music video genre had become mainstream (Wikipedia, 2009), and music videos were carefully edited in synch with the music, lyrics, mood or theme of the song. Music videos soon became expected components of any mainstream music album launch. Increasingly, music video directors began experimenting with visual effects, adding animation and newly-invented editing effects (e.g., visual overlays, quick-cut editing, inserting photographs and found footage, experimenting with film effects) (Vernallis, 2004). There also was a noticeable shift in orientation, away from highly “representational” videos showing the artists and documenting their performance (*ibid.*), toward greater use of non-representational music videos. The latter included fully animated music videos and live action videos in which the artists did not appear. Some music videos began assuming explicit narrative forms; “telling a story” that added depth or intrigue to the song (*ibid.*) (e.g., Bonnie Tyler’s “Total Eclipse of the Heart” and its multiple layers of interpretation). The 1980s also saw many music videos becoming more conceptual in orientation, often defying narrative conventions altogether; such as Bowie’s “Ashes to Ashes” music video, where none of the characters in the video feature in the song, and the main character in the song (Major Tom) is absent in the video.

Current music videos draw on this varied history. They can be representational or non-representational, narrative or non-narrative, and draw extensively on pop culture trends (use of machinima, stop motion filming, anime conventions, etc.). Today’s music videos still employ a wide range of filmic and editing techniques, albeit more like those used in television commercials and movie trailers than in feature films (Vernallis, 2004): sudden shifts in shot length, unusual angles and framing devices, reversed film, tracking shots, slo-mo, unusual uses of focus, monochrome or saturated colour, atmospheric lighting, and so on.

As MTV’s emphasis shifted in the early 2000s away from continuously airing music videos towards “reality” shows, fan-made music videos—or “songvids”—seemed to gain momentum (Austerlitz, 2007), abetted by affordable or free access to easy-to-use digital video and audio software and networked spaces like YouTube for sharing fan works. Today, countless thousands of fan-made music videos span every conceivable music genre, running alongside commercial professional music video production. Bands recognize the importance of fan-made videos in terms of pleasure and promotion alike, often hosting music video contests and incorporating fan footage into commercial DVDs (Catone, 2008, p. 1).

Part of the pleasure of fan music video creation appears to be its DIY nature: exploring the meaning of the song through images to create one's own interpretation or narrative or commentary. While some fan-made music videos are highly representational, others reflect a much more experimental spirit. Some game and music fans use video game engines to film and create machinima music videos (e.g., Paul Marino's "Still Seeing Breen"; see also, Chapter 6 in this volume). Others synch still images to a favorite song, film themselves lip synching to a favorite song (cf., Gary Brolsma in "Numa Numa Dance"), or create kinds of fan fictions, where favorite movies (e.g., *Lord of the Rings*), movie genres (e.g., kung fu movies), or television shows (e.g., *Star Trek*) provide the source video to be synched with a chosen song.

Anime music videos

Anime music videos are fan-made music videos that use only clips from anime movies and series. Anime—animated Japanese cartoons—come in a range of genres (e.g., comedy, drama, adventure), storylines (e.g., saving villages from demons, saving the world from mecha-robot domination), themes (e.g., coming to terms with one's own character flaws, loyalty, environmentalism, the human cost of wars, dealing with bullies), and orientations (e.g., *shonen* anime targeting boys, *shoujo* anime targeting girls). Creating an AMV involves taking small clips from anime productions and splicing them together in new sequences synched to a chosen song.

The anime clips used as source video bring with them the universe, characters, storylines and themes of the series from which they came. This is often used deliberately by the remixer to add layers of meaning to the AMV itself. Viewers not familiar with the *Naruto* anime series when they first watch Matt's "Konoha Memory book" will likely miss much of its symbolism and many relationship references. The use of anime means that AMVs are mostly non-representational of the bands whose music is being used, although this is not hard and fast. For example, the winner of the 2005 "best video" award on AnimeMusicVideos.org was "Jihaku" by Tyler, set to the Foo Fighters' "Best of You," and included footage of the Foo Fighters performing live.

No definitive account exists to date of how and why anime music videos became a widespread fan practice. Some suggest they were developed initially by anime club members to show previews of movies or new series to attract new fans (Springall, 2004). Others suggest anime music videos are an outgrowth of fansubbing practices, where anime fans add English subtitles to original—often bootleg—copies of Japanese anime (Kirkpatrick, 2003). Some think AMV is a logical outcome of MTV music videos mixed with adolescent interests and experiences (Milstein, 2008). Whatever the original impetus, AMVs are massively popular do-it-yourself fan productions.

YouTube—currently the best-known user-made video content hosting website—simply states “millions” in response to the search term: “AMV” (YouTube, May 1, 2009).

Like music remixing (see Chapter 2 in this volume), anime music video making began well before digital technologies were readily and widely available. During the 1980s and well into the 1990s, creating AMV involved manually working two analog video recorders cobbled together with audio and video cables (Springall, 2004). While one recorder played the source videos, the other captured clips from the sources on a single video tape, building the AMV in a linear way, one small clip at a time. The music soundtrack was added when the clips were finally in place. Synchronization between song and clip sequence was often clunky at best (Springall, 2004). Digital technologies have made the AMV remixing process much easier, more affordable and widespread. An anime fan can now use the free video editing software that ships with most standard computers (e.g., Windows Movie Maker on PCs and iMovie on Macs) to create a good quality AMV. The creation of online fan communities like AnimeMusicVideos.org, and AMV competitions hosted at high-profile anime conventions, have also helped establish anime music video remixing as a well-recognized and widespread DIY fan practice.

Tim Park (2008), founder of AnimeMusicVideos.org, identifies the first recognized AMV as a 1983 creation by Jim Kaposztas, who remixed segments from *Gundam* and synched them with the Styx song, “Mr. Roboto.” Early AMV remixing was largely “underground.” Occasionally shown in British dance clubs in the early 1990s (Milstein, 2008), AMVs remained culturally marginal until quite recently. Park dates AMV’s coming of age to 1999, when Kevin Caldwell’s “Engel” scooped the prize pool in three major categories at a premier U.S. anime convention. “Engel” broke new ground with its flawless synchronization between song and the on-screen action, achieved with a laser disc machine and a VHS insert editor (Springall, 2004, p. 41).

2001 was a landmark year in AMV development and direction. “Odorikuruu,” by Jay R. Locke, spearheaded dance/fun AMV, which has become very popular within the AMV community. Locke spliced segments from 34 different anime and set them to the wildly infectious dance song, “Elissa,” by Mamboleo. “Odorikuruu” continues to set the technical and artistic benchmark for many dance genre AMV remixers (Park 2008). 2001 also brought quantum advances in technical sophistication within AMV productions. For example, E-Ko merged two different anime into the same frame in his “Tainted Donuts” AMV, using Photoshop, After Effects, and Final Cut Pro software to achieve this effect (Park 2008).

2003 brought the release of Koopiskeva's "Euphoria," still ranked the all-time Number One anime music video on AnimeMusicVideos.org. Paradoxically within a fan practice, many AMV exponents claimed they would stop making AMVs because Koopiskeva's AMV had raised the bar too high (Park, 2008).

The range and styles of fan-produced AMVs have continued to grow and broaden, albeit within one or other of two general forms: AMVs that remix clips from a single anime series (e.g., *Naruto*, *Evangelion*), and AMVs that remix clips from multiple anime series and movies. Within these two broad categories, popular types of AMVs include tributes to series or movies, character profiles or biographies, non-narrative or conceptual music videos that focus on a particular dimension of an anime series (e.g., loyalty or betrayal), videos promoting an anime series, compilations of specific events from different anime (e.g., characters falling down, characters kissing), celebrations of multiple anime series set to a favorite song, parodies of social or political events or of AMV making itself, and remixes used to tell stand-alone stories not necessarily connected to the anime from which the clips were borrowed (Springall, 2004; Park, 2008).

Popular genres include drama, action, horror, comedy, dance, romantic and sentimental AMVs (see AMV.org, 2008a; Springall, 2004). Matt describes "Konoha Memory Book" as being principally "sentimental" in intent because it focuses on "all the trials and tribulations, difficulties and memories that the characters of *Naruto* gain and share." "Engel" falls into the drama category, with its depiction of strong, warrior-like Japanese school girls, its fight scenes and its heavy metal soundtrack. This contrasts with the comedy of, say, "AMV Hell," which focuses on slapstick moments set to an eclectic and eccentric soundtrack comprising snippets from sources as diverse as the soundtrack to *The Passion of The Christ*, Lords of Acid's "Spank My Booty," and Shania Twain's "Man! I feel Like a Woman."

SECTION TWO

Creating an AMV

Becoming a good AMV remixer requires watching a *lot* of AMVs. Matt recommends that beginners "watch LOADS of AMVs." He gets "a lot of inspiration from other videos on technical stuff and effects. Just because someone else uses an effect doesn't mean you can't." Watching AMVs helps with working out personal preferences and dislikes with respect to video effects, transition effects, sequence editing, synching between images, music and lyrics, and so on. Reading comments left for anime music videos on YouTube

by (re)viewers provides rapid entrée to what insiders consider good and bad quality editing and remixing (e.g., avoid “cheesy” transition effects like the over-used checkerboard effect).

Matt arrives at developing a new AMV by different routes. Sometimes a song strikes him as eminently “AVM-able.” Other times, he has an idea that has grown out of an anime series that he would like to explore but keeps on the backburner until he hears a suitable song. The match between the selected song and the anime used in conjunction with the song is crucial: “If you use a Linkin Park song with shows like *Azumanga Daioh*, it’s totally pointless,” explains Matt. Linkin Park is a hard rock band; *Azumanga Daioh* is a light-hearted, humorous anime. Then,

Once I get the song I listen to it over and over again so I can get a sense of the song and am able to work with the clips without having to play the song at the same time, which makes it very hectic [i.e., listening to the song and editing clips simultaneously can be hectic].

Matt began remixing AMVs using Windows Movie Maker software and still considers it a useful starting place for beginners: “I always tell people use Movie Maker. Lots of people don’t think you can make a good AMV [using this software], but almost ALL of my [early] AMVs are made with it, and my recent ones use it to some extent too. Learn to use it, tamper with the effects and invent new things. I’ve found ways to create effects in movie maker that [expensive] programs like Adobe Premiere can do.” Good quality AMVs also can be made easily using iMovie. The principles for both movie editing programs are much the same. We focus on Windows Movie Maker here to make the most of Matt’s expertise. (For a range of excellent tutorial videos for using the latest iMovie release, that can serve in place of our technical descriptions below, see: www.apple.com/ilife/imovie.)

Source anime to be used in the AMV project can be ripped from a DVD or downloaded from the internet (copyright issues are discussed later). “Ripping” requires special-purpose software that copies the video file to one’s computer harddrive and converts it into an editable format (e.g., an *.avi file, a *.mov file). Popular DVD ripping software includes DVDFab (for PCs) and Handbrake (for Macs and PCs). Video downloading sites can be used to capture video from YouTube and other video hosting websites, like KeepVid.com and SaveVid.com.

Original, free-to-use-with-attribution anime can be found via CreativeCommons.org. Click on the “Search” option at the top of the page, then on the Blip.tv tab. Key “anime” into the search window and hit “Go.” Another option is to search Aniboom.com for anime, find animators whose work you like and then search for them on YouTube or other video hosting sites (e.g., Break.com, Revver.com, Vimeo.com, OurMedia.org) in order to download their videos and use them, after obtaining their permission to do

so. A third option is to visit Newgrounds.com, a user-created flash animation portal, and hand search their anime category: newgrounds.com/collection/anime.html.

Once the source anime is downloaded to the harddrive, it needs to be stored in a single resource folder to help keep the AMV project stable while working on it inside Windows Movie Maker or iMovie. It pays to keep careful note of where this folder is, in order to be able to access it from “inside” one’s video editing program. Setting up this folder under “desktop” makes it easy to locate. Likewise, setting the destination of downloaded files to the desktop makes it easy and quick to drag them to the resource folder and not lose track of what resource is where. Windows Movie Maker only works with Windows Media files (e.g., *.wma, *.wme, *.avi), and some *.mpg file types (but not *.mp4 or *.mov files). Zamzar.com is a useful free service for converting short video clips from one file format to another.

It is important to keep file formats consistent. When using Windows Movie Maker, the project will crash less frequently if all the video clips share the same file type or format. This same resource folder should include the song file as well. Songs downloaded from iTunes will not work with either Windows Movie Maker or iMovie since copyright restrictions are built into the song file. Original free-to-use-with-attribution songs and soundtracks can be found via ccMixter.org, FreePlayMusic.com, Opsound.org, and elsewhere.

Finally, it is important to ensure there is plenty of free space on the computer harddrive because video editing projects can gobble up computer memory quickly.

Building the project

We will focus here on the principles involved in creating a short AMV.

1. Import resource files into Movie Maker.

We open Windows Movie Maker (hereafter, “Movie Maker”), click on “File” in the top menu bar, and select “Import into Collections” (or just press the keys Cntrl + I) (see Figure 9.1). This opens up a file selection window. We locate our resource folder and click on one of our movie resource files inside it. We can also import video files by clicking on the “Import video” hyperlink in the task pane located on the left-hand side of the Movie Maker window (covered by the drop-down menu shown in Figure 9.1). It doesn’t matter in which order we import our movie files.



Figure 9.1: Importing the first file into a new video editing project using Windows Movie Maker software

An information window pops up to show file progress as each is converted into a format with which Movie Maker can work. Successfully imported files appear as thumbnail images in the “Collection” space between the task pane and the video player in the top half of the Movie Maker window (see Figure 9.1). If we import a number of collections or sets of video files we can move between them using the drop-down menu in the Collections section. This importing process is repeated until all the movie files we plan to edit at this stage are imported into Movie Maker. We can easily add more later.

This is a good time to first save the project. Saving a project at regular intervals is invaluable for guarding against losing work should the video editing software crash. There is a very important distinction to keep in mind here when saving the project: between “Save project as” and “Save movie file.”

Clicking on “File” in the top menu bar and selecting “Save Project” or “Save Project As . . .” saves your file as a Movie Maker project file. This is an editable file that will only play *inside* the Windows Movie Maker software. (It cannot be uploaded to YouTube or OurMedia.org or burned to a CD that can be played as a movie on another machine.) We *must* use this option while we are still working on our AMV: to add or delete files, edit files, move files around, add in transitions and effects and so on. Once our AMV is complete, and we are happy with the final results and want to publish it as a stand-alone movie clip, we can *then* click “File” on the top menu bar and select “Save Movie File. . . .” This will convert our project into a single movie clip that *can* be uploaded to YouTube, emailed to friends, and burned to a CD that will play on compatible media players on any computer. We cannot, however, go back “inside” this *movie* file to edit and tinker with things. If we want to make further changes we just open the project file inside Movie Maker and tinker there, before saving it as a *new* movie file. (The analogy

here is saving a text document as a Word file, which can be opened up and edited etc., and then converting this same file to a portable document file, or “pdf.” This pdf file can be read in Adobe Reader software, but the text cannot be edited.)

2. *Storyboarding clips.*

Now we have a pool of video clips imported into Movie Maker from which to draw. For the audio we will use The White Stripes’ song “Why can’t you be nicer to me?”

Movie Maker provides a storyboard for sequencing clips. Its layout is linear and runs along the bottom of the Movie Maker window (see Figure 9.1). To begin adding clips to our AMV project we simply locate each one we want within the collections pane and click-and-drag it into position on the storyboard, using the mouse and cursor. We can preview clips in the collection pane using the video player in the right-hand top corner of the Movie Maker window. This same video player can be used to review the AMV as we build it.

Ours will be a *compilation* AMV, drawing from a diverse range of different anime. The idea we want to realize in this anime music video is a montage of rather violent mecha-robots who are wondering why people aren’t nicer to them. The message of the video portion will be in tension with the song itself. Rather than portraying a solitary figure who is treated unkindly by others, it will suggest that people try and do nasty things to these robots because they are not being nice to others. The White Stripes open their song with three sets of heavy electric guitar downbeats immediately followed by a quick bridge to a repetition of these same sets of beats. The third beat in each set is slightly louder and held slightly longer than the other two beats. So, in our video, the first two beats of the song are synched to a clip of a normal, very static everyday scene, and on the third beat, this shifts to a clip of a mecha-robot stomping emphatically on a car. This same pattern—an everyday, fairly tranquil scene followed by a robot doing serious damage—is repeated for the entire opening sequence of the song.

As we work through this sequence, we find that our resource clips are way too long for our needs; they also contain a lot of extraneous footage that doesn’t suit our purposes. We need to clip them and make them shorter. There are various ways to do this and a quick Google search will pull up any number of how-to tutorials. We will begin by clicking on “Show Timeline,” an option found in the storyboard function menu (see Figure 9.2).



Figure 9.2: Switching between the storyboard view and the timeline view in Windows Movie Maker

The timeline view displays the actual run-time per clip in seconds, and this is where we work on refining the synch between clips and, later, between clips and our audio track.

In the storyboard we highlight the clip to be trimmed by clicking on it (once selected it will be surrounded by a heavy black outline). Placing the cursor over one side of this highlighted video clip changes the cursor to a red, double-ended arrow. Clicking-and-holding-down the left mouse button when this red arrowed cursor appears, then dragging the cursor, moves the video playhead (which appears as a blue horizontal line) to where we wish to cut the video (see Figure 9.3).

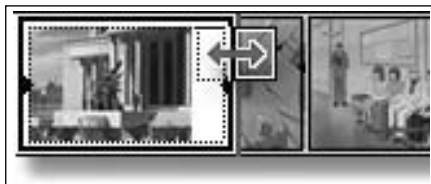


Figure 9.3: Clipping a video file to make it shorter or to remove extraneous footage

We release the mouse button once the playhead is where we want it, and this “breaks” our original selected video file into two clips. The clip segment to the right of the playhead automatically deletes itself. If we make a mistake, we can immediately reinstate this deleted portion by clicking on “Edit” in the Movie Maker main menu bar and then “Undo Trim Clip.”

If we want to use a portion of a trimmed clip elsewhere and want to *split* the clip into two, rather than *cut* it and *delete* a portion, we first highlight the clip we want to split. Using the video preview window, we then play the clip

to the point where we want to split it, and press the “Stop” button (marked by a square icon, and found next to the “Play” button). Still working in this preview window, we click the “Split” button (see Figure 9.4), and now have two clips instead of the one in our timeline or storyboard sequence.



Figure 9.4: Splitting a video into two clips

To rearrange the order of clips, we click-hold-and-drag them to where we want them in the sequence (this can be done in either the storyboard view or the timeline view).

Once we have roughed out a version of our overall concept using the clips to hand, we work methodically through our timeline, selecting each clip and then clicking on “Clip” in the top menu bar of Movie Maker, choosing “Audio” then “Mute.” This suppresses the soundtrack for each storyboarded video clip so that it doesn’t interfere with the song. Meanwhile, we are saving our project regularly.

Now it’s time to import our song and begin working more closely between the rhythm of the song, the song lyrics, our AMV concept, and the video files.

3. Importing our song.

We import our song into Movie Maker by clicking on the “Import audio or music” hyperlink in the task pane located on the left-hand side of the Movie Maker window. This opens a file location window. We locate our resource folder and click on our song file. The song file needs to be in a format such as *.wav, *.aif, *.snd, and *.mp3 (not *.m4a, for example). Once we’ve imported our song, it will also appear in our collections window pane,

marked with a musical note icon. We switch to timeline view for our project and click-and-drag the music file onto the timeline. The audio file now displays as a separate “track” beneath our video clips in the timeline (see Figure 9.5).

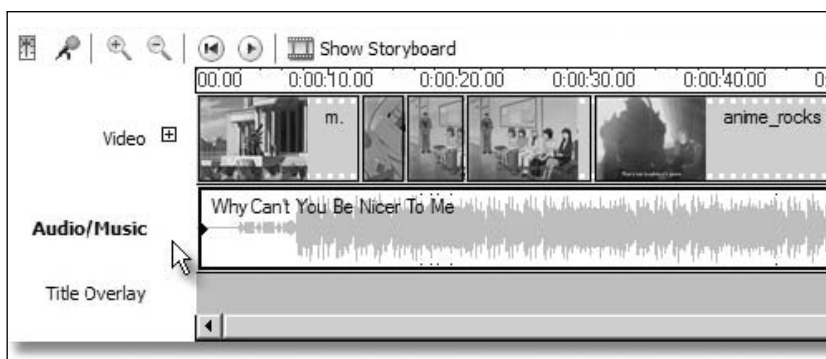


Figure 9.5: Adding a song file to an AMV project

Clicking and highlighting our music track means we can also listen to it using the same preview pane used for watching and editing our video clips. We use the “shape” of the sound waves in our audio track to help synch clip transitions. We pay attention to the rhythm of the action *within* each clip—if there’s running or other consistent movement we want to aim at lining this up with the beat of our soundtrack. Our music track can be clipped and split, just like a video clip and using the same processes. We can also add effects to the track, like fade out at the end of the song (see Chapters 2 and 3 in this volume).

4. Refining synch.

The process of creating an AMV now becomes quite recursive. We listen to snatches of song and fine tune where one clip ends and the next starts. We may go off in search of new clips that better match the lyrics or to fine-tune our narrative. We might find we need more video clips to match the length of the song. We experiment with transition effects (see below) and find that it throws our timing out, so we tinker with clip length, and so on, in iterations. Refining the synch between music rhythm, lyrics, mood (e.g., slowing clip transitions down during sad patches of music; increasing the rate of clip changes during frenetic bursts of music) is a trial-and-error, “let’s-see” process. We trim, split, and move clips until we’re happy with the project’s overall look, sound and feel.

We also leave some music at the start of our AMV for our title and enough at the end for credits.

5. Adding transitions and effects.

We can add two key types of effects to our video: transition effects and video effects. Transition effects govern the different ways one clip can change to the next (e.g., bars, bow tie, horizontal, circle out, fade). Anyone familiar with creating PowerPoint presentations will know about adding transition effects between slides. Video effects added to each clip itself can include fog effects, sepia toning with scratchy old-film effect, grayscale, slow down half, watercolor, etc.

To add transitions and video effects to our video we must be in “storyboard” mode. We click on the second entry—“Edit Movie”—in the Movie Task box on the left-hand side of the Movie Maker program. We then click on “view video effects.” This brings up a palette of different effects in the center of the Movie Maker window. By clicking on each effect icon we can preview the “look” of the effect in the preview window (where we earlier previewed video and sound). When we find a suitable effect we click on it and drag it down on top of the clip to which we want to add that effect. A small blue star appears in the bottom left-hand corner of each clip in the storyboard that has had an effect added. When we’ve finished adding effects, we play our AMV through to check that the effects do not distract from or undermine the mood or idea of the video overall.

To add a transition effect between clips we stay in storyboard mode. Between each clip there is an icon that looks vaguely like a ship’s semaphore flag (see Figure 9.2 above). This is where we click-and-drag our transition effects to when we decide which transition we want. The generic transition icon will change to match the icon for the transition effect we’ve selected and added (e.g., a successfully added keyhole transition effect will be indicated by a keyhole icon appearing between the two clips).

Staying with the “Edit Movie” portion of the Movie Tasks pane, we click on “View video transitions.” The palette of video effects is now replaced with a palette of transition effects. We preview each by clicking on the effect and clicking the “Play” button in the preview pane. Transition effects keep the AMV flowing smoothly from one clip to the next. They need to be in keeping with the music and concept of our music video (e.g., lots of gentle fade transitions won’t work so well with a fast-paced rock anthem). The trick here is to have watched lots of AMV beforehand and made a note of transitions we found particularly effective and then recreate them within our own AMV. The same holds for transitions (and video effects) that annoyed us because they were so common, clumsy, or over-wrought. We avoid them here since they will likely annoy others too.

For additional help with effects and transitions we can click on “How to add titles, effects, transitions” in the Movie Task box on the left-hand side of the Movie Maker window.

6. Finishing touches: Title and credits.

The title is usually the name given to the final AMV by the remixer and doesn't have to match the title of the song or any titles of anime it has used. For example, we can call our AMV simply “Be Nice” or “Robo-Love,” or whatever we like. Having a specific name, like “Konoha Memory Book,” makes it much easier to talk about one's AMV as distinct from the song and the original anime on which it drew. It's considered good etiquette to also list the name of the band and the song title somewhere in the AMV, such as in the final credits. Credits typically include the AMV source videos, the AMV remixer's online alias or real name, a website where more AMVs can be found, and sometimes a list of acknowledgments of people who have helped produce the AMV.

Staying with the “Edit Movie” portion of the Movie Tasks pane, we click on “Make titles or credits” and then on the “Add title on the selected clip on the storyboard option” above. This will display the title as soon as our AMV starts rather than creating a separate title sequence. Once we've clicked on the hyperlink, a text box appears and we key in whatever information we want to appear (e.g., name of the AMV, the band and song). We next click on “Change the title animation” and scroll through the different effects we can add to the title text. We choose the “Ticker tape” title animation, which will scroll our information across the bottom of the AMV when it starts to play. Making sure we have the first clip on our storyboard highlighted, we click on the “Done, add title to movie” hyperlink. We preview our title to ensure it hasn't thrown any timing or syncing out.

Adding credits at the end requires a similar process. Returning to the “Edit Movie” portion of the Movie Tasks pane within the main window of Movie Maker, we click on “Make titles or credits” and choose the “Add credits at the end of the movie” option. We enter text into the text box columns (e.g., Anime used—*Mobile Suit Gundam*, *Evangelion*, *Giant Robo*; Software used—Windows Movie Maker, etc.). We play around with how the credits will appear at the end of the video by clicking on “Change the title animation” and then scrolling down to the “Credits” subheading. We choose “Credits: Scroll, Up Side-by-Side”), so the credits look a little like 1950s movie credits. Clicking on “Change the text font and color” allows us to change the background color of the credits clip. Happy with how the credit sequence looks, we click “Done, add title to movie.” Movie Maker automatically adds this credit sequence to the end of our movie.

7. It's a wrap!

We watch our video a few more times once everything is in place to check for smoothness of transitions, that video effects add to rather than detract from the work overall, and that synching hasn't come a little askew when we tinkered with different things. We invite feedback from family and friends. We can also post an in-process copy to YouTube, hoping to attract useful viewer feedback on a work in progress.

When happy with the final video, we click on "File" in the main menu bar in Movie Maker, and choose "Save Movie File . . ." This brings up a dialogue box asking whether we want to save our movie to the harddrive, burn it to a CD-ROM, email our movie, save and upload it immediately to the internet, or use a tape in a hooked-up video camera to record it. Since the file size is quite large, we save it to an external harddrive attached to a USB port. We select the "My Computer" option and click the "Next" button, key in a title of the final movie (e.g., "Robo-Love"). Then we click the "Browse" button and locate our external harddrive in the drop-down file directory and click "Okay." We double-check the destination for the movie file, then click the "Next" button. We're asked to verify file quality wanted—which we do. Clicking "Next" again, sets the ball rolling and our file is converted from a Movie Maker project file to a neatly transportable *.wmv file.

SECTION THREE

Copyright issues

AMVs currently appear to be running beneath the copyright radar of music and other media companies (Lessig, 2008). Milstein (2008, p. 32) suggests this "industry ambivalence" is because companies see AMVs as providing free marketing for anime series as well as constituting resources through which to recruit "editors for making [movie] trailers and DVD extras" (ibid.). DIY anime music videos are actively promoted at anime conventions, and YouTube is loaded with AMVs using commercial anime and music without visibly attracting "cease and desist" orders from media company lawyers. This could change, but at present AMV creation seems relatively immune from the scale of litigious copyright and IP infringement bullying that plagues other areas of young people's popular cultural engagement. Instead, what seems more likely to be a pressing concern for AMV remixers is the use of peer-to-peer filesharing networks for sourcing anime footage. Peer-to-peer networks are increasingly subject to corporate and legal surveillance, especially in the U.S.

Useful educational responses within classrooms to copyright law can include discussion of fair use guidelines for teachers and students (see, for example, Gardner, 2008; Salpeter, 2008). Informed discussion can draw attention to how copyright laws function, how these laws can indeed protect creators' work and earnings—which is necessary—and how corporations should make a fair proportion of their stock available for cultural creativity (see also Chapter 3 in this volume). It is important, however, to ensure that discussion is genuinely *informed* and not *dominated* by “the school’s position” on copyright, which may have been shaped more by fear, by convenience, or by being ill-informed than by considerations grounded in the mission to *educate*.

Important ground can be laid in such discussions for helping learners and teachers alike to appreciate the ways in which overly restrictive copyright law and law enforcement can *and does* harm cultural development by removing important resources from the pool of “fair uses.” The landmark work of Lawrence Lessig (2005, 2008) is essential reading here. It illuminates how today’s generations of digital youth are being denied rights to create that previous generations (whose medium was print) took for granted. Any school failing to deal with these issues is renegeing on its responsibilities with respect to literacy education specifically, and education for productive and creative citizenship more generally. Within such discussion, promoting awareness of the Creative Commons system of author-assigned copyright licenses is an important educational contribution. Encouraging learners and colleagues to search for materials bearing such licenses helps sidestep copyright issues—especially with respect to using commercial music files. ccLearn licenses, in particular, are intended to help educators and students locate learning resources (see: discovered.creativecommons.org/search). This kind of educational work will (further) encourage participants to put their own work out there for free use, subject to proper attribution—thereby helping break the stranglehold corporations currently wield over cultural ownership and use. With many young people this will simply involve nurturing an extant disposition.

AMV meets language arts

Interestingly, Matt’s creative engagement as an AMV remixer involves him in understanding, appreciating, and doing many of the things English Language Arts educators ideally aim to encourage and develop. He consciously designs his AMVs to be interpreted on multiple levels. In his 2007 “Shinobi Ballad” AMV, for example, he aimed to “grab the emotion of struggle and triumph through the clips I put in, timing them well with the lyrics and making sure that I chose the right clips to pull out the most emotion for each section.” He wanted to focus primarily on “the symbolic aspect” of the characters’

struggles and triumphs “but also have many scenes that literally express the lyrics.” Likewise, Matt pays careful attention to narrative structures. His AMVs typically summarize key storylines from some anime series whilst simultaneously standing as complete self-contained stories. He identifies major elements in complex and episodic stories and melds them into engaging condensations of the original, much larger sequential story. Attending to mood, symbolism, theme, multiple layers of meaning, narrative structure, key character traits, etc., are as integral to Matt’s AMV remixing as they are esteemed understandings within language arts and English classes at school.

Explicit pedagogy and media education in schools

Cases like Matt’s challenge various established curriculum orthodoxies about media and literacy instruction. Some of these can be grouped around the idea of “explicit pedagogy.” In its widest sense, perhaps, it refers to focusing students’ attention on very specific tasks and concepts within a structured setting with a view to producing specific learning outcomes. As a “pedagogy” it begins from stating a specific goal for the immediate context and telling learners what they are to do and moves to demonstrating how it is done and then to guiding students’ practical efforts to apply the new concept, skill or technique. At the other extreme, “making it explicit” may involve little more than drawing attention to a concrete instance of what is being talked about, or taking the guesswork out of a moment in classroom life, pointing directly to what is relevant and separating it out from other contextual thoughts or talk. With a student like Matt, a teacher might make a link between the learner’s “optimizing synch” or “establishing mood” in an AMV and what is immediately at stake in an English literature lesson.

In media and literacy education, theoretical and analytical work done in research often provides motivation and means for importing substantial explicit pedagogy into curriculum and foisting it on learners. A typical example is the long-running fetish for teaching young people how to identify stereotypes in advertisements. It is assumed that young people *need* to be *taught* how to do this, and contexts are contrived—“learning opportunities” are created—for teaching them. Examples like those provided by Matt’s experiences with AMV throw this assumption into doubt. Such experiences, born of engaging as an “authentic professional” (Gee 2007) in the world of fan-based, amateurs-working-to-professional-standards (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004) AMV remixing, would call at most for the lesser strain of explicitness distinguished above: leveraging knowledge acquired within contexts of authentic social practice for “scholastic” learning being undertaken within settings that are very often anything *but* authentic. Within media and literacy education it is widely assumed that young people need to be taught key ele-

ments of design features, text structures, interpretive strategies, and critical analysis processes, among other things—the best countervailing efforts of popular culture resources like *South Park* and *The Simpsons* notwithstanding.

Obviously, clarity and focus are virtues in *any* context where meaning and purpose are at stake. The point, however, is that in many cases the perceived need to make things “explicit” in classrooms is a consequence of learning situations lacking the kind of authenticity within which facility and competence can be acquired in the ways Matt acquired them—whereupon all that is required is to make relevant connections and to transfer or leverage existing knowledge and competence for formal (analytic, critical, etc.) educational purposes. Furthermore, just as “making it explicit” can work *back* from something that is extant, it can also point learners *forward* to things they are likely to encounter within hands-on engagement in meaningful learning activities. In this sense, making something explicit takes the form of alerting learners to something that will likely lie ahead, so that when they see it they will be able to recognize it as an example of X (which may be educationally important or valid because of Y). There will be no need to *instruct* the point in a decontextualized manner before the event. Learners can make the connection *themselves* at points of application with minimal teacher intervention.

The key to this—a key that comes at educators in waves from accounts of young people surpassing themselves as learners within affinity spaces—is ensuring as far as possible that classroom learning meets the principle of “efficacious learning” that a sociocultural approach to media and literacy education insists upon.

In a sociocultural approach, the focus of learning and education is not children, nor schools, but human lives seen as trajectories through multiple social practices in various social institutions. If learning is to be efficacious, then what a child or adult does now as a learner must be connected in meaningful and motivating ways with “mature” (insider) versions of related social practices (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996, p. 4)

It is relatively easy to see what this involves when we look at cases of young people’s DIY media activity within affinity spaces like AnimeMusicVideos.org or in other popular cultural affinity spaces (see Black, 2008, for fan fiction; Gee, 2007, for video games).

Learning and identity: ProAms, affinities and appreciative systems

Dedicated and strongly invested AMV remixers like Matt aim to become what Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller describe as “ProAms”: “innovative, committed and networked amateurs working to professional standards”

(Leadbeater & Miller, 2004, p. 9; see also Gee, 2007, on “authentic professionals”). Even where their remixes fall short of the ideal, they nonetheless *know* what makes an AMV excellent. They are alert to the musical, lyrical and mood dimensions of “*synch*”—the connections between music and video, without which there is anime and music but no real connection between them. They appreciate the importance of “*concept*” as one’s vision for the video, what one wants viewers to think and understand, or how one wants them to feel. And they are attuned to the role of “*effects*,” with respect to their meaning, composition, appearance, and so on (Kalium, 2006). Matt’s concept of a high quality AMV emphasizes:

- Good quality video resources (e.g., within the AMV community, using footage downloaded from the internet—rather than ripped from DVDs—is frowned upon for quality-of-resolution reasons)
- Relevance of the song to the anime resource(s) used
- Excellence of the correlation between the song and the video clips; this includes synching lyrics with the video effectively
- Not using clips containing subtitles, series titles, or final credits

Matt’s understanding of what constitutes a good quality AMV has been gleaned from participating in a range of anime and AMV remixing “affinity spaces” (Gee, 2004). Affinity spaces are places of informal learning—physical, virtual, or a mix—where people come together and interact around and through a shared interest, common goal, or collaborative endeavor (Gee, 2004, p. 98). They comprise resources on which this group draws and that it shares, ways of providing feedback and responding to other members, collective expertise and troubleshooting advice, and networks wherein newcomers and experts alike work together in collegial and supportive ways. According to Gee, within affinity spaces “knowledge is both *intensive* (each person entering the space brings some special knowledge) and *extensive* (each person entering the space shares some knowledge and functions with others)” (original emphases; Gee, 2004, p. 98). Matt participates actively in spaces like AnimeMusicVideos.org, regularly watches and provides constructive feedback on other people’s AMVs, submits AMVs to anime convention contests, and participates in a range of anime cosplay and manga drawing discussion boards and art-related community sites (e.g., DeviantArt.org, Megatokyo discussion forums). For Matt, these activities are part and parcel of being recognized as someone “in the know” (who has intensive knowledge of AMV remixing) and whose work and opinions “count” among members of the affinity space. Participating in these spaces also enables Matt to draw on the extensive, collective knowledge and expertise of others in developing his own work.

Gee (2007, p. 172) elaborates upon these ideas in terms of learning contexts where one takes on a new identity and acquires an “appreciative sys-

tem.” The point about identity puts the emphasis on learning to be a particular kind of person-practitioner rather than on “learning *about*” or “learning *a subject*.” Matt has engaged in learning *to be* an AMV remixer, and at every point his quest has been to become *more of* and *better as* an AMV remixer. As Gee (2007, p. 172) puts it:

Learning a new domain, whether physics or furniture making, requires learners to see and value work and the world in new ways, in the ways in which physicists or furniture makers do. . . . [I]n any domain, if knowledge is to be used, the learner must probe the world (act on it with a goal) and then evaluate the result. Is it “good” or “bad,” “adequate” or “inadequate,” “useful” or “not,” “improvable” or “not”? . . . Learners can only do this if they have developed a value system—what Donald Schön [1983] calls an “appreciative system”—in terms of which such judgments can be made. Such value systems are embedded in the identities, tools, technologies, and worldviews of distinctive groups of people—who share, sustain, and transform them—groups like doctors, carpenters, physicists, graphic artists, teachers, and so forth through a nearly endless list.

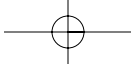
AMV remixers are just such a distinctive group, and their affinity spaces are, precisely, contexts where “identities, tools, technologies, and worldviews” are taken up, enacted, and negotiated within immersive and embedded practice. Participating in AMV affinities and taking on the identity of an AMV remixer aspiring to ProAm proficiency involves coming to realize that AMV remixers “look at and act on the world in quite distinctive ways because of their values and goals and [moreover] these values and goals are supported by and integrally expressed through distinctive tools, technologies, skills, and knowledge” (Gee, 2007, p. 172). As Gee notes, the same holds true for any kind of science (e.g., being a physicist, chemist, biologist) and, we would add, for mathematics and any kind of social science or humanity (e.g., being a literary critic, a poet, a creative writer, an historian, etc.).

Conclusion

This chapter does not imply that AMV remixing should simply be imported into school curriculum and classroom practice, any more than the fact that good commercial video games have sound learning principles factored into their designs means we should give classrooms over to game playing. Rather, the point is to understand how and why cultural practices like AMV remixing constitute social and learning systems that are conducive to learning effectively and that foster high levels of personal investment in achieving success. We can then try to apply these insights to educational purposes in ways that maximize opportunities for students to leverage their own social and learning systems in school-valued ways.

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