

## JORGE TORREGROSSA > AUTODEFINIDO

By Tite Barbuzza



**ME, MYSELF AND I.** I'm a film director, and right now I'm preparing my first full-length feature. They asked me to direct Najwa Nimri's videos because of two short films of mine, *Desire* and *Women in a Train*, which were seen by quite a lot of people. Carlos Galán of *Subterfuge* and Javier Bellot, Najwa's press officer, had seen them and decided I was the ideal person to come up with what they called 'author's videos'. I'm not really sure what that means, but they gave me complete freedom. Up to now, doing videos has been a hobby, and I've been lucky enough to only do those I've wanted to. This year, after doing Najwa's, I got loads of calls but only said yes to *Cultura Probase*. I'll do their first video *Opium*, which will be released in October. They sent me their CD, *Rituals*, and I got in touch with them immediately. I like working with people whose music I'd listen to at home. Also, directing the first video of a group who you believe in is a bit like being their fairy godmother.

**I WANT MY MTV.** When I was studying (at the Tisch School of Arts at NYU) we were all mad to make music videos, as it was a quick and fun way to make quite a lot of money. Over there a huge amount of money is

invested in them because there is a realisation that they are the main criterion in selling records. That's why there are American pop videos that cost more to make than a Spanish feature film. Here the video doesn't reach the same number of viewers because MTV and VH1 and similar channels don't reach the entire spectre of potential consumers, who are Spanish 14 to 25-year-olds. Not yet. And that is directly reflected in the budgets they work with. One great cliché is that videos form an immense field of experimentation with image, bla, bla. They are definitely a much more creative experience for a director than advertising, where you are given everything prepared. But a lot of money is invested in advertising, not in videos. And this circumstance limits experimentation. I love Chris Cunningham's work, videos from Jean Baptiste Mondino or what they do with Björk, but to do something like that here is completely out of the question.

**A QUESTION OF IMAGE.** Making a video, an ad, a short- or full-length film, a TV movie or a video-game, aren't all that much different, each one has its own requirements, working conditions, but in the end the image keeps moving. I think the borders have been erased and we who work in this area are basically image-makers. Our culture is eminently visual and we're producing consumer material, which is in constantly rising demand. The question is whether it will be in any way memorable or disappear without trace in the stream of moving images we feast upon every day. For me the basic difference that exists when I plan a film or a video is the narrative. I like narrative film and non-narrative videos. I think that perhaps in the 80s, when they started, it was considered important to tell a story. It was a new format and you had to make it as simple as possible, so it would be digestible. Twenty years later videos have autonomy of their own as a visual product and I think they have to provoke sensations and fascinate for purely visual and or aesthetic reasons.

**THE PROCESS.** The music conjures up images for me and from this point the video is conceived. Afterwards I meet the group/singer, and see who they are, how they move, how they dress, develop the idea. Once the concept is clear and decided, I explain it to my team bosses, as a video is the fruit of the work of many people, not only the director. We get vital contributions from the director of photography, art director, stylist, set

designer and post-production effects operators. Normally I discuss the project with each one of them and it is adjusted in order to accommodate their needs, while still reflecting what I have in mind. And it's impossible to ignore a fixed budget that has to be respected.

**VIOLET IS THE COLOUR.** Chromatics is one of the first factors I consider. It comes from the music. I listen to the songs time after time, and soon they begin to have symbolic and emotional connotations, which establish a direct relationship with a colour or group of colours. I always give a fixed palette of colours to the photography and art directors. In the case of *That Cyclone* the music had a calm feel, but something threatening too, so we decided that green would dominate in the video. On the other hand, *Following Dolphins*, the original version produced by Raúl Santos, was full of underwater sound effects and had an electronic mix. So electric blue and violet were used in the video.

**MOVEMENT VS. RHYTHM.** The shoots tend to be short considering that renting the set and having a crew of 10 or 20 people working dramatically increases the budget. However, they are the most spectacular part of the process. In the shooting of *Following Dolphins*, Najwa had a great time because it was like being in a fairground: she had to go up on the crane several times and move herself around, the camera placed above, so as to give the impression she was floating and swimming. The music gave shape to the rippling movement and the rhythm. Many times these terms are confused.

It appears that for a video to have rhythm the camera can't stop moving for a single second and there have to be a thousand shots, constantly cutting from one to another. Rhythm is more than this; you can achieve it in a single shot; a good example being the last REM video. In the one I'm doing now for *Cultura Probase* I've set myself the challenge of not moving the camera at all, and that all the shots will be the same. The dictatorship of videos like those of Ricky Martin and Britney Spears must end! The post-production process is vital. Firstly it passes through the editing room where it takes shape. The editor's job, just like in cinema, is decisive. He is faced with material he has never seen before, because he hasn't attended the shoot, and is much more objective than the director. He sees what will work and what won't. The idea of the video's rhythm is formed during the

conception, the shoot responding to this idea, but it is in the editing that the final rhythm is stamped on it. From there it moves on to the effects, which is the most expensive part of the process. Then you can see the final look, the textures take shape, are filled with colour effects, the hue of the colour is adjusted, etc.

**MAKE IT HAPPEN.** The music comes first. Always. You have to help the music to make its mark. The visual stamps are easier to remember than the audio ones. It's a question of visualising the music, of giving it the images it contains within. I hate videos that impose something on the music, for example the aesthetic of a certain film, which has had some recent success, but has nothing to do with what lies behind the song. I suppose that when you're working with music you think it's easier, but like everything in life, it's also a question of choice.

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