

Vevo, Fuck You

I remember when *I* was the one they were looking for. I was an *entrepreneur*. The Chief Exec. Head to toe in pin-stripe and gold plating. Lapelled vest with white-on-blue polka-dot braces and Versace cufflinks. I was your source of entertainment *au courant*; a trailblazer. Never seen the likes of which before. Impossible to neglect. Burnished-leather loafers adding verve and finesse. I was the original Player. Mr. M. E. G. A. Video. They cast aspersions and character-assassinations. It was *scandalum magnatum*: the typical defamation casual to most federal objectives. But I kept my back straight and my upper-lip Sisyphian stiff. I was pervasive, the face of the firm – I had to. After all, I was both your reliable friend and your frequent lover. Yet now you barely remember. And now that suit once so immaculate and crisp is emaciated and blemished. The collar coils to the lower neck and the shirt is stained Pinot Noir, the lingering smell of yeasty-perspiration and Old Spice roll-on deodorant still tangling from the seams. And the soles of the Tom Ford's now flap as I walk the sidewalk, revealing the uncoordinated socks underneath; the mundane and tragic reality of gracelessness manifest in a pair of holey under-garments.

What callous behaviour permitted such a fall from precedence? Was this the malevolent prescription of some hypocritical bureaucratic-clerk? A conservative defence of infringement upon the client's fourth-quarter investment? Or just like my cellular phone keypad and monophonic ringtones, perhaps I too have become outdated – obsolete. The latest chunk of grey matter to be steam-rolled and framed. Hung-up in a gallery of nostalgic interfaces and logos: reduced to nothing but surface. 'Part and parcel' they told me. But now they – the *new* artists – drag you flailing from your early retirement. They dress you up like some old rockstar gimmick and charge their cattle-prods. Static bolts of electric zap behind you as they force you down the catwalk. Cameras flash in Mexican wave, forming a circular aura of perpetual, *infuriating* buffering. I was here once before, but it was all so different. What was once a gaze of admiration and respect is now a glare of sincere indifference. An object of both pastiche and parody – ambiguously situated in the contemporary half-way-house of an ostensibly 'post-post' –modern culture. A brooding troupe of Photoshop formalists picking under their nails and sighing into their iPhones.

Occasionally I'm invited to their penthouse corporate boardroom, as a sort of historical case study; the bastard offspring of the fruits of my labour, secreting silver spoons from their drooling holes. Not so much as even a polite rattle of the saber. All sat in forest-green Chesterfield office chairs – fit with polished chrome base and user-weight tilt tension control – eyes aligned to the 16:9 Celexon Premium InterLink D-P at the head of the room. A *tour de force* of online consumption. Pure and unhindered. And with a quick wave of Pot Lucker's selfie-stick the HD-ready pie chart disappears. Except now there's a bad taste in my mouth. Jay Double-U is climbing his moist-palm up Pirate Bae's boudoir garter-brace, eyes poised at the green-satin lingerie at its summit, whilst Bon Vevo is busy tonguing Your-Tube's rouge-lips in the corner of the room. Wetflix looks over and curls her index-finger towards me, as if to say, 'Stream if you want to go faster, baby.' I lean towards her spoor when all of a sudden – '*What the fuck* is this traffic cone doing here?'

'Six Frappuccinos, and make it fast buck.'

This cute and innocent orange-laced cone is anything but. I can see the piano-key-grin behind his slick branded smile a mile off. They think they're all so polished; gleaming white pixels on the screen. But I've seen them, clawing over one another amidst the overflowing and copper-stained dumpsters behind the old Blockbusters. Like a swarm of frenzied Termites they devour, knots and strands of pristine celluloid bustling over their thorax, in puddles formed from oozing salivary glands and rusty, fetid dumpster-fluids. I've seen the orange-laced cone squatted against those oxidized sewage pipes to dumpsters' immediate left, top to toe in strips of acetate and black thermoplastic, eyes rolled back into his cranium and an occasional sub-squeak from his jugular as he slowly grinds a lubricated copy of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 against his exposed oboe. Gyrating in orgasmic filth. A scene of real carnage. VHS cassettes are gobbled up and digested. Gramophone records, greased and inserted. Test cards in 1080p.

Long ago were the days when you looked deep into my soul. When you *really* understood me. That requited love: lost. Many a night was spent in each other's company: the residues of boredom, interest and recommendation. My sleek, crisp interface, your devout, watchful eyes. I used to say to you in such solicitous care, 'You have watched 72 minutes of video today. Please wait 54 minutes or Click here to enjoy unlimited use,' in what now seems a vain effort to limit your insatiable appetite. Think of all the endless leg cramps and stinging eyes you now face. All the whirring and hot plastic sticking against your thighs. All those nights curled up under your thin duvet, in one of those dirt-cheap, unbranded IKEA-looking double beds, with no headboard and a creamy, tacky floral-like pattern laced around the rim. Your eyes bloodshot from the lurid screen and the insidious glow of dim street lamps squirming in past your grey, short curtains. Your feet cold and rigid, the smell of ashtrays thick around you. And deep down all you really want to do is get some kip cause you're feeling somewhat tired and you know you've got stuff to do tomorrow. But J Double-U and that fucking orange-laced cone are still there on your screen, with unlimited, effortless consumption. So you close the pop-ups and new-windows and keep watching; documentary after documentary of progressively lower-budget anti-corporate conspiracy flicks, insomnia slowly creeping in.

But what do I know? I'm old news: as old as the hills. And just like the sleep-deprived media-junkie, I too want some shut-eye; to catch some zees. I exit the glass-monolith, open-plan after open-plan of strictly regimented and catatonic stares: eyes burning into the florescent tubes in front of them; hands placed silently on their knees. My door is one of many. It looks almost anonymous out there, at the edge of the city. Like one cosmic-ly large Brutalist housing-block, doors standing in monotonous uniform; small, pale-blue boxes atop a vast concrete sheet. I go to take out my keys, squinting my eyes towards the latch... *'DOMAIN HAS BEEN SEIZED.'* Someone turns the brightness up to full beam and a grainy voice echoes over the loud tannoy: 'Mr. M. E. G. A. Video, you are hereby under arrest for the following charges of Criminal Copyright Infringement, Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering, Conspiracy to Commit Racketeering, Wire Fraud, and Embezzlement.'

'Jesus H. Shit...Those bastards are trying to freakin' extradite me!'

And before you can say refresh, copter blades are howling towards me. Sirens are wailing and megaphones are barking orders. A cacophony of red of blue swirling lights. Sentences crackling on and off on radio transmitters. Neighbours slamming their doors shut. It's everyman for himself out here. Bunch of ungrateful swines. A swathe of cerebrally-challenged and pork-bellied, pie-faced coppers are running in slow-motion, unholstering their Smith & Wesson MP 9mms, open-mouths bellowing proverbial rights. The soles of my Tom Fords in corresponding slo-mo, waving to the jellied-eels behind me. How long will I be stuck on this island? Behind these bars. Pirate or martyr, criminal or hero? You close the tab and my heart cuts. You're sailing away on their luxury-yacht; strip-teases and champagne overflowing. You pirouette and wink, mascara blotched and lipstick smudged. A hand runs up your abdomen as you hopelessly cry 'SKIP'. They're all laughing and coughing up IPs. They've made it to international waters. But I remain, the scratches in my concrete-cell read: '404// Server Not Found', and I mutter to myself, over and over, in quiet envy, 'Vevo, Fuck You.'

Charlie Mills