

## From scene films to scene videos: communities documenting communities

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### Abstract

The activity of local music scenes has at times been documented by members of those communities in films that differ from commercial audio-visual products in their mode of production, their aesthetics and the way they represent the reality of musical activities. The collaborative character of local scenes and the DIY ethos of many of them help shape these works, where artistic intentions and experimentation coexist with their use for self-learning or the construction of personal memories. This article identifies the features of these scene films, both in documentary and fiction, and explores how technological changes and the digital age have influence them.

**Keywords:** scenes, music films, DIY, digital cinema, technology, home movies.

### Author biography

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Popular music and the moving image have always been close. At least since the end of the nineteenth century, when Thomas Edison worked both in the development of recorded sound and recorded image, the industries of music and cinema have often reinforced each other. Even before the consolidation of sound film, music performance was a common topic in movies: Rick Altman (2004) pointed out that marching bands and dancers were the subjects of the films most often installed in Edison's Kinetophones, and pioneer film-maker Alice Guy Blaché made more than 100 'phonoscènes' for the Gaumont company, usually starring opera or cafe-concert singers (McMahan 2006), including Belle Époque stars like Felix Mayol or Armand Dranem. Altman (2004) also identified a tendency to use popular songs both in film, vaudeville and nickelodeons, highlighting a connection between these industries also evident in the premiere of the Vitaphone sound system in 1926. That event started with a speech by William H. Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, in which he announced 'a new era in music and motion pictures' (Chion 1997). That sentence links the two media through the emergence of a new technology, but also - and perhaps more strongly - through commerce. The audience celebrated the presence of popular singers and hit songs in film, and at the same time songs and performers became more popular through their presence in movies. Classical Hollywood cinema is full of examples: stars like Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra or Dean Martin were singers before they were actors, and songs such as "Cheek to Cheek", "Over the Rainbow" or "Que Sera, Sera (Whatever Will Be, Will Be)" were first heard in films. The more recent emergence of television and the digital age has played down the importance of cinema, but the bond between music and the moving image has grown stronger, given the current role of music videos as the main medium of music consumption. As a quick example, Ed Sheeran's "Shape of You" is the only song with more than 2,000,000,000 streams on Spotify (Beaumont-Thomas 2019), while 34 music videos have more than 2,000,000,000 views on YouTube (MyTop100Videos 2020).

It is useful to think about pop following Simon Reynolds description as 'an audio-visual phenomenon, a hybrid art form in which lyrics and personality are as important as music' (Reynolds 2010: 224). However, this audio-visual nature also appears outside the culture industry, or at least in its margins. The evolution of image and sound recording technologies has made them increasingly accessible, turning music and - especially - movies from something we mostly consume into something we also produce. This phenomenon is particularly visible in local music scenes, where the historical commercial logic of filming music has coexisted with - and, in many cases, has given way to - different intentions present in these communities, such as documentation, artistic expression or self-learning through experimentation. The audio-visual works that result from this context turn out to be, therefore, quite different from commercial ones, as their different intentions tend to be connected with particular aesthetic features, production methods and modes of representation. These features shape a tradition of scene films that has evolved and grown more common since the 1970s, existing today in the form of films and videos in social media and web projects. This article traces the characteristics of this tradition and its relation with the nature of local scenes and technological changes, using examples from different moments and places, exploring the scene approach in fiction films and in the contemporary underground scene in Galicia in the Northwest of Spain.

## Home movies for a different kind of family

In 1966, Jonas Mekas filmed the Velvet Underground's first public appearance, at a Psychiatrists Convention in New York. That footage plays with lights, rhythms and colours, capturing reality and experimenting with it through the use of the camera. The objects and people present are not easy to identify, but we can see the band on stage with Gerard Malanga and Edie Sedgwick – important Andy Warhol collaborators – and also Warhol himself. That public performance was included by Mekas in his film *Walden: Diaries, Notes and Sketches* (Mekas, 1969), right after a different fragment, under the title 'Uptown Party', where Gerard Malanga and Nico (who would sing with the Velvet Underground) dance at photographer Stephen Shore's flat. These people were part of a community in which personal and artistic relations intertwined, an art scene that can be identified with the character of an 'overproductive signifying community' (Shank 1994: 121) Barry Shank had observed in his work on the Austin scene, where he found that the people who participated in that scene had, in general, a will to adopt an active creative role. The result was not just the appearance of bands, but also of magazines, record labels, venues or films.

Mekas' footage can be seen as an early example of scene film. As opposed to most mainstream music documentaries or music videos, scene films do not necessarily privilege the presence of stars or musicians and, instead, showcase the existence of a less hierarchical community. They usually do so through a similar approach to that of home movies: when Mekas is filming Lou Reed, Warhol, Nico, Malanga or Sedgwick, he is filming artists and at the same time he is filming his friends or acquaintances, without an evident main character. Many times he films them in private moments, and when he films a performance he does so without trying to meet the professional codes about that – or about filming in general: there are no spectacular camera moves, there is not an intention to get balanced framings, nor clear images, and the sound can often be unintelligible or, as in this case, not synchronic. Scene film-makers are able to play, to react and improvise, usually using cheap equipment, because these films are mostly aimed at the same community that appears in them. The existence of a scene creates an audience, a demand for diverse cultural activities and a space of collaboration where each of those activities creates a need for another one: designers can make posters or record covers for bands, writers can start fanzines and review concerts, photographers and film-makers can document important events, musicians can provide the soundtrack for films or different spectacles (as the Velvet Underground did for Warhol's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*), etcetera. Film is one of the things to do in the 'informal economy' comprised by the relationships within a scene (Cohen 1999: 240).

This notion of a community documenting itself reinforces the connection of scene films with home movies. James M. Moran pointed out that home movies evolved from representing families to offer 'an important tool for tracing common roots no longer nourished only by blood', in an era of 'families we choose' (Moran 2002: 60). Mekas said he worked 'in the home movie making tradition' (Kerr 2015). He is filming his life and, in a way, his family; the distinctive feature – apart from his experimental filming style before adopting video (Smith 2008) – is that the

people around him ended up being very relevant artists (John Lennon, Allen Ginsberg, Yoko Ono, Stan Brakhage, George Maciunas, Barbara Rubin...). However, if we look at similar clips from any unknown local scene we will get a similar impression as when we watch home movies from an unknown family: Pierre Bourdieu (2003) argued that watching a slide show of home pictures is always boring because those images are dominated, both in their extension and their aesthetics, by external functions. We need to know the people in the pictures to fully understand their meaning.

The fact that we do not know many of the people in scene films, and the general lack of effort to introduce them to the audience (as opposed to the general use of titles to identify who is who in conventional music documentaries) shows again their horizontal nature. In them, we see people performing music, but this is not always the central element. For instance, in *The Slog Movie* (Markey, 1982), David Markey's film about the Southern California hardcore scene, many of the people who appear are part of the community without being musicians. These people are filmed walking around town, eating and drinking or even doing a Ted Nugent impersonation, highlighting the 'other diverse lifestyle elements' (Bennett and Peterson 2004: 8) apart from music. This is visible in most scene films in different ways. Some of them are particularly centered on performance through style, such as *Death is their Destiny* (Captain Zip, 1978), where Captain Zip filmed London punks in King's Road. Some of them pose for the camera, individually or in groups, and showcase particular haircuts, tattoos or make-up. Other 'lifestyle elements' sometimes shown in scene films include fanzines and posters, like in episodes 5 and 10 of *Arquivos Kino-Pop* ('Kino-Pop Archives') (Pêra, 2019), a series where Portuguese director Edgar Pêra compiled his footage of bands – mostly from the Lisbon area – in the late eighties and early nineties.

Markey's films emphasize humor in a similar way to home movies and amateur films, having people performing jokes or parodies for the camera. In *Reality 86'd* (Markey, 1991), the film-maker documents a number of members of the Southern California scene on tour, and we can see the roadie Joe Cole playing dead over a tombstone with his name, just before getting up shouting 'I'm alive! Hail Satan!' and imitating a zombie. These small bits of acting function as in-jokes, and that fun character is also present in some of Markey's fiction films, like *Desperate Teenage Lovedolls* (Markey, 1984). This project was started by Markey and his partners in the fanzine *We Got Power*; Kim Pilkington, Jennifer Schwartz and Jordan Schwartz. In it, three girls form a band, run away from home and confront gangs and rival bands on the streets. *Desperate Teenage Lovedolls* ended up being a local hit and even having a sequel, *Lovedolls Superstar* (Markey, 1986), despite its nature: 'We were surprised to see this beyond low budget film take off the way it did. This film was made to entertain our small circle of friends. It was filled with in-jokes we thought no one would understand' (Markey, n.d.).

Humor and playfulness are often present in scene films. The New York and London punk scenes from the seventies were documented in *The Blank Generation* (Kral and Poe, 1976) and *The Punk Rock Movie* (Letts, 1978) respectively, and both films have that fun character in common with Markey's movie, even if it does not stand out as much. In Ivan Kral and Amos

Poe's film, even though most of the footage was filmed at the CBGBs, we can also see someone running through the street with a TV and smashing it while we hear Television's 'Little Johnny Jewel'; or members of Marbles wearing monster masks in a flat. Letts' film, in turn, ends with Johnny Rotten destroying a children's record player as someone laughs off-camera. Humor and in-jokes show another feature of scene films: the sense of intimacy and trust. These film-makers have access to spaces, attitudes and actions usually impossible to watch by people from outside the scene. In *The Punk Rock Movie* we see people injecting heroin and the penis of a member of teenage punk band Eater. In *Mutantes* ('Mutants') (Larriba, 2018), a film about Galician self-managed venue Liceo Mutante (in Pontevedra, Spain), we get to see the assembly of members discussing their money problems or the presence of rats in the building. This privileged access, as it happens with home movies, gives scene films great documentary value, as opposed to some efforts from outsiders. Don Letts explained how *The Punk Rock Movie* captured a different vision of the London scene because of his initial role as DJ in The Roxy, one of the main nightclubs where punks gathered:

I found that because I was the DJ and people knew me – they thought I was a crazy nigger and they couldn't figure out why I was there in the first place – I could get what the TV cameras couldn't get; the real background, the real truth. Every time they'd announce that [television show] *London Weekend* were coming down to film, all the guys that are really important stayed away. The rest of kids found some more safety pins and some more make-up and jumped around in front of the camera – and it's a real distorted view of the whole thing (The Modpoppunk Archives 2002).

The scene feels confident with filmmakers from the community because of their regular presence there. *The Blank Generation* has been described by Matthew Fleury as 'presence filmmaking' (Fleury 1976, cited in Rombes 2005: 48). That term underlines how many of the features of scene films come from the immediacy of punk: these film-makers are people who usually were part of the scene in different roles and just decided to grab a camera and document things happening around them. Letts was a DJ, Amos Poe wrote for *New York Rocker*, Ivan Kral played guitar in the Patti Smith Group, David Markey made fanzines and played in SIN 34 or Painted Willie... The general absence of voice-over in scene films also highlights the idea of 'being there' as the key element of these films. Scenes need someone to document them as usually the media do not pay attention to them or, when they do, they do so in a sensationalist way – especially if the scene is associated with a deviant style: 'The emergence of a spectacular subculture is invariably accompanied by a wave of hysteria in the press' (Hebdige 2002: 93). Sometimes the horizontal nature of the scene gets misrepresented by paying attention to particular members of it, but – probably because of their immediacy and because of being addressed mainly to the community itself – many of these films were shot and published before bands from those scenes became famous, and they hence lack the revisionist quality of documentaries centered on names like the Ramones, Sex Pistols or the Clash.

However, when someone films a scene he or she can have several motivations. The first one that comes to mind is documentary: making a record of those events, both for the film-maker himself/herself and the community. For instance, Ivan Kral filmed the footage of the scene in *The Blank Generation* because he feared being deported back to his native Czechoslovakia (The Blank Generation 2020). In those cases, it is also normal to share the camera, increasing the communal nature of scene films and making it possible for these film-makers to appear in the footage as well: Kral is seen playing with The Patti Smith Group in his film, and Markey doing so with SIN 34 in *The Slog Movie* or with Painted Willie in *Reality 86'd*.

In some episodes of *Arquivos Kino-Pop* we can also watch Edgar Pera, but mostly we see him through self-portraits in mirrors. The idea of making oneself present in a document of the scene can lead us to think about the social nature of it. Sara Cohen pointed out in her study *Rock Culture in Liverpool* how bands could provide

a means of escape where fantasies were indulged but it could also play an important cultural and social role, providing an outlet for creativity and a means by which friendships were made and maintained. Basically, most people were in bands for these social and cultural factors. (Cohen 1991: 3)

The participation in a scene in non-musical activities can play a similar role. The mere act of documenting it can help a film-maker to be noticed and to receive some of what we can call subcultural capital, as he or she contributes to the community. As Galician film-maker Carlos Peñalver puts it:

Many times you feel burned up, because you are in one of these projects, with horizontal structures, and you do not know what to do... Where can I help? Everyone is doing their thing... and in my case it was perfectly clear: my task is this [making videos]. (in Tenreiro, in press).

This social nature underlines again the closeness between scene films and home movies, which also serve to give cohesion to a family. The freedom implicit in home movies gets combined with the DIY ethos and the acceptance of amateurism in local scenes, turning scene films into a good place both for self-learning and artistic experimentation. For instance, *Mutantes* was made as Álvaro Larriba's dissertation to obtain his Audio-Visual Communication degree. Edgar Pêra started to film by himself because 'the example of DIY bands was an inspiration. In cinema, back then, people were waiting for prizes, no one thought about taking a camera and making films on one's own initiative' (Almeida Santos 2019). In a similar vein, Don Letts explained how he wanted to express himself through cinema but saw no way to enter that industry until he became part of the scene:

[...] that was a ridiculous dream for a black man back then; after all, we were expected to become bus drivers. Fast forward six years and the whole punk rock DIY ethic had exploded. So while my white mates were picking up guitars, I

picked up a Super 8 camera and reinvented myself as Don Letts, the film-maker.  
(YouMustCreate n.d.)

Using Jonas Mekas as an early example of scene film can help to point out the same fact Letts and Larriba exemplify, and to summarize the nature of scene films: scenes are great contexts for artists to develop their aesthetic views and technical skills without the restraints of a professional context, where there would be some pressure to create a profitable product and, probably, to appeal to different audiences, without the community being the main one. In 'presence filmmaking' there is, in turn, room for intimacy and for experimentation, hence they become a special kind of film where one can meet artistic aspirations, emotional ones, social ones or all of them at the same time.

### **Fiction, presence, authenticity**

Most of the scene films discussed previously were documentaries or, more precisely, 'documents', where the activity of the community gets captured. Nevertheless, some of these features also appear in some fiction films created within the scene or, in a less intense way, using the scene as a setting or as an aesthetic reference. *Desperate Teenage Lovedolls* is an example of the first kind, where the mode of production has the freedom of DIY: no studio, no screenplay, no professional equipment – an Elmo Super 8 sound camera and some household lamps as movie lights (Markey n.d.)– and no professional team, with David Markey credited as director of photography, writer, editor and director. The spirit of the scene is present through this parallelism between the collaborative and impulsive nature of punk and the collaborative and impulsive nature of the film. The fictional characters are also played by people from the scene (like Steven McDonald, Jeff McDonald and Janet Housden from Redd Kross; Dez Cadena from Black Flag; Vicki Peterson from the Bangles or Jordan Schwartz, co-author of *We Got Power!*, one of the fanzines of the scene and some locations (like the Cathay de Grande) are places where people from the scene used to hang out and the soundtrack includes songs from the bands of the scene. David Markey has pointed out how *Desperate Teenage Lovedolls* and *Lovedolls Superstar* had some documentary quality of their own:

The Lovedolls films capture the dark side of Hollywood in the 1980's. To walk down the clean streets of Hollywood today, one sees a Disney-fied shopping mall. The Hollywood captured in these films is seen in its truly sketchy, druggy & hooker filled glory. (Markey n.d.)

We can link that documentary quality with the idea of 'presence': when a film comes from the scene, even if it is fiction, there is some reality present through people, places, style and music. This element of reality lets us identify some fiction works as scene films, especially when someone from the scene plays one of the characters and their life – and musical activity – gets intertwined with the story, like it happens in *Aos nossos amigos* ('To Our Friends') (Mota, 2017), where Afonso Mota films his friends – people and bands around Lisbon label Cafetra Records –

mixing real concerts and situations with scripted stories and an elusive character: 'I think you can feel that there is a very personal aspect in the choice of each person, and at the same time an attempt to protect them' (Vieira Lisboa 2017). This balance, where reality is present but also hidden, is somewhat summarized by a voice over at the beginning of *Downtown 81* (Bertoglio, 2000) that says 'the story you're about to see is not true. It isn't false, either'. This film stars Jean-Michel Basquiat as a homeless artist – he was, in fact, homeless at that time – but also Debbie Harry as a fairy princess who gives him money. This, of course, is not real, but the presence of Harry (or Amos Poe in a different sequence) in this film shows how some members of the previous period were still participating in the post-punk New York scene. Even if it is a fiction, the structure of the film, with Basquiat wandering through town meeting different characters and artists, gives us glimpses of the emergence of hip hop culture (with appearances from graffiti artists Lee Quiñones or Fab Five Freddy and rapper Melle Mel), and performances from no wave bands like DNA and James White and the Blacks. Important venues like the Mudd Club and – more importantly because of their not public nature – rehearsal spaces are also seen in the film, revealing again the confidence the bands had in the team that made the film: director Edo Bertoglio and producer Maripol were already documenting the scene through photography, and writer-producer Glenn O'Brien wrote about local bands for *Interview* magazine as well as presenting television show *Glenn O'Brien's TV Party* (Kaufman 2001).

The involvement of the scene in the film and its tongue-in-cheek humour – including jokes about promoters, record labels or competition between bands – links *Downtown 81* to the Lovedolls films and allows us to identify them as scene films, even if the mode of production of Bertoglio's film can differ from the usual one in this tradition. A professional company, Rizzoli, got involved in the film and provided a \$300,000 budget before going out of business (Kaufman 2001), but that did not change the participation of Bertoglio, Maripol and O'Brien in the scene. Again, the feeling is that of a community documenting itself. Today, after the film's late premiere in 2000, the fictional side of *Downtown 81* is overshadowed by its ability to document the scene – 'an extraordinary real-life snapshot of hip, arty, clubland Manhattan in the post-punk era' (Kelly 2000) – and the city – 'It's as a documentary that *Downtown 81* is most successful, particularly at those moments when the somewhat unfocused filmmaking allows us to [...] catch glimpses of a vanished cityscape' (Kehr 2001). That documentary quality is common to some other fiction films that use scenes as a setting or inspiration, like *Smithereens* (Seidelman 1982).

However, documents also showcase a particular point of view, and some films dealing with a scene end up being controversial within it if people from the scene find it inauthentic. That is what happened, in some way, with *Jubilee* (Jarman, 1978). In this film, the London punk scene spaces are not a setting, but some people (Jordan, Adam Ant, Siouxsie Sioux, Steve Severin, the Slits), some music and the aesthetics from that community are present. Apparently, the original idea Derek Jarman had for the film was to record the environment Jordan lived in on Super-8. However, as Tony Peake points out, 'when he mentioned this idea to his producers, they saw that cashing in on the burgeoning punk movement might mean box office. They suggested a feature [...]' (Peake 2003). That feature went on to contain 'a critique of punk [...]' alongside an admiration for its outspoken nature' (Scovell 2018), where punk's fascination for

fascism and commodification are presented. The reaction? 'Many of those associated with punk hit out at the film' (Scovell 2018). The most notable critic of *Jubilee* was Vivienne Westwood, who wrote an open letter to Jarman and printed it into a t-shirt, including homophobic remarks - '[I ain't enough of] a voyeur go get off watching a gay boy jerk off through the titillation of his masochistic tremblings' (Westwood 1978) along with a quote from Chris Brazier's review of the film in *Melody Maker* - 'An irresponsible movie. Don't remember punk this way' (Westwood 1978).

This controversy shows how the vision of 'outsiders' can be rejected by scenes, or at least by part of them. As Sara Cohen pointed out, the relationships that make a scene

involve a regular circulation and exchange of: information, advice, and gossip; instruments, technical support, and additional services; music recordings, journals, and other products. Such relationships comprise an informal economy. Through them, knowledge about music and the scene is generated, distinctions are made between being inside or outside the scene, and the boundaries of the scene are thus marked. (Cohen 1999: 240)

That knowledge about the scene is acquired through being present in it, and is, again, what allows some film-makers to get access to places, people and moments. However, the main difference between a film like *Jubilee* and scene films lies in the identification of the film-maker with the community. As his 1976 diary shows - 'the instigators of punk are the same old petit bourgeois art students (...) who are now in the business of reproducing a fake street credibility' (quoted in Scovell 2018) - Jarman did not feel part of the London punk scene, even if he was, with Letts and Julien Temple, one of the first directors to document it, and the first one to film the Sex Pistols (Whatley 2019). In turn, the London punk scene didn't feel his vision as their own. This isn't a community documenting itself, but a subjective view of that community. And those subjective views are more likely to be criticized.

For instance, *The Slog Movie* documents a scene close in time and space - California, early eighties - to those documented in *The Decline of Western Civilization* (Spheeris, 1981) and *Another State of Mind* (Small and Stuart, 1984), with people like Keith Morris from Circle Jerks appearing in the three films. However, Penelope Spheeris, Adam Small and Peter Stuart were not members of the scenes they were documenting, and their films did not share the improvisational and intimate tone of Markey's movie. Instead, they are closer to conventional documentary, using more interviews and, in the case of *Another State of Mind*, introducing some ethnographic ideas, like a slam dancing explanation staged in a studio. The reception of these movies within the communities they portrayed was not enthusiastic. Ryan Murphy and Alexandra Juhasz (2013) quote punk people who viewed Spheeris representation of the scene as 'somewhat condescending' or objectifying. Small, in fact, thought *The Decline of Western Civilization* was 'sensationalistic' and wanted to show a different side of punk, but he and Stuart recalled the lack of cooperation from the audience and the musicians in the making of their film and its premiere ended up with the destruction of their projector (Small and Stuart 2004). Also, the inclusion of a girl named Valerie in one of the sequences was rejected by 'all the guys in the

film', who characterized her as a 'poseur'; this disagreement between film-makers and members of the scene revealed, for Murphy and Juhasz, 'an ideological divide [...] between the documentarians and their subject' (Murphy and Juhasz 2013). Both for fiction and non-fiction works, the absence of this divide is, probably, the essential feature of scene films.

### **New technologies and new directions**

Communities have been able to document themselves because of their access to cameras or tape recorders. Even if some scene films get to be professional projects – or, most likely, if the film-makers that made them get to be professional afterwards, like David Markey – in general these kind of films cannot be expected to make any profit, and therefore they rely on cheap equipment. This connects the usual mode of production of scene films with a DIY ethos and gives freedom to the film-makers, both if they are learning how to use their tools – like Don Letts when filming *The Punk Rock Movie*, a movie that would lead to more conventional efforts like *The Clash: Westway to the World* (Letts, 2000) – or if they are aesthetically experimenting. For instance, Jonas Mekas filmed his early diaries with a Bolex 16mm camera, before switching to video at the end of the eighties and to digital cameras for the final part of his career (Smith 2008). His avant-garde work was always made with non-professional cameras, the same equipment that would be used for home movies. However, both the look of his work and its distribution changed with technology, and the same has happened to scene films: the emergence of digital technology and the Internet has opened this tradition in new directions, while the essence of it remains the same.

Today almost everyone has a video camera, at least the one in their mobile phones. The scene film-makers discussed above used inexpensive equipment, but at the time most of them were working not everyone had a camera, and hence owning one still indicated a special interest in cinema. In conversation with Pier Paolo Pasolini in 1967, Mekas pointed out that there were seven million 8mm and 16mm cameras in the United States (Mekas 2014); as of February 2019, 81% of United States adults owned a smartphone – that is, approximately 200 million people (Pew Research Center 2019). As a consequence, scenes are now still documented by people with some kind of film-making interest or training, but also by anyone who feels the urge to do it in a particular moment, as now everyone has the ability to react to reality and film it. Until recently, carrying a camera required some planning, but now if something unexpected happens at a concert there will probably be lots of cameras recording it. And, if nothing unexpected happens, people could still feel the urge to film their experience, as we live in a time of what Gilles Lipovetsky and Jean Serroy called 'cine-narcissism', where every person 'wants to regain spaces of personal autonomy, construct himself by appropriating the exterior (...). I film, therefore I am' (Lipovetsky and Serroy 2009: 25). Almost everything is filmed right now, and the activity of scenes, especially music performances, is not an exception.

This change leads to another important one: if up to this point we were talking about 'scene films', now we should broaden the terminology. We still have scene films (*Mutantes* can be seen as one of them), but mostly we have scene clips, the kind of short digital videos we can find on YouTube and social media platforms. Many of these scene clips are even more immediate than

films like *The Blank Generation* or *The Slog Movie*, as they can have no editing of any kind and are often uploaded shortly after filming. This tendency increases the number of different perspectives present at concerts, something specially visible in mainstream events, where movies like *Radiohead Live in Praha* (Chalupa et al, 2010) or *All Tomorrow's Parties* (Caouette, 2009) have been made by editing footage from multiple fans – in the first case, in a non-professional production organized by the fan community. However, in local contexts this is different, and the tradition of scene films is followed more closely by regular scene film-makers, who now work with digital devices and use short clips as a format but still show some interest in film language. There is an evident connection between these people and predecessors like Markey or Letts, as the content of their work is quite similar, but there are also some significant differences. After the emergence of digital technology, every scene probably has more active film-makers. The documentation of concerts and other activities is going to be more exhaustive, and online distribution makes it easier for scene clips to reach a local audience, but these works are less likely to go beyond their primary context. First of all, they are not considered films and hence they will not benefit from the attention of the press and the circuit of art film festivals. Besides, many of the films previously discussed gained relevance because they got associated with controversial subcultures or because bands from their scenes became popular, and the probability of that happening in most contemporary underground scenes around the world is small: the tolerance for defiant styles has increased with time, and the media are not likely to give importance to activities from the cultural periphery, as most relevant scene films come from New York, London or California. Nevertheless, the relevance of scene clips is not in particular examples, but in the general trend and how it follows and complements the functions of scene films. I will trace some of the main characteristics of scene clips by focusing on the contemporary underground scene in Galicia.

One of the first differences between this new trend and scene films comes from the use of short clips instead of longer features, which can lead to a separation between the kind of intimate and playful material – that still emerges in scene clips – and concert clips. For instance, there are many examples of humorous clips in the Galician underground, some of them made by film-makers and some of them made by the bands themselves. Under the first kind we find things like *GON, LAST SURVIVOR* (Tombilla, 2012) where photographer and music video director David Tombilla films a member of Unicornibot parodying Bear Grylls; or *Cómo conocí a vuestro contenedor* ('How I met your trash can') (Palometis, 2016), an absurd reportage about the recording of Contenedor de Mierda's self-titled EP, including the appropriation of right-wing Spanish propaganda and directed – under a pseudonym – by film-maker Ángel Filgueira. Under the second kind we find things like *Petroglifos de Mogor* ('Petroglyphs of Mogor') (Metralletas Lecheras, 2011), where Metralletas Lecheras talk about aliens in the carvings of the title. This shows how the bands, but also the collectives and venues that form the scene, can either create collaboration networks with people interested in film-making or make the videos themselves.

Another important thing we can observe in these four clips is that Tombilla and Lamprea Explosiva's videos include promotional references to an upcoming album or concert. That fact shows how the need for documentation is now joined by a need for promotion, as almost any

band, venue and collective has now social media pages that have to be fed in order to get an audience and videos are considered 'one of the best-performing types of content you can post to social media' (Ira, 2019). The immediacy of scene clips makes them more useful for this purpose than scene films. Nevertheless, these different motivations are not exclusive; they overlap. Film-maker Gael Carballo, a former member of PORNO collective in Ourense, explained in an interview how he started filming concerts

for a utilitarian reason, on the one hand to make publicity for PORNO, but on the other one I liked the idea of generating an archive, some sort of compilation of data and images; an archive about this happening here in this moment (Carballo 2017)

As we see here, the promotional motivation coexists with an intention of documentation. We have also identified an aspect of self-learning in the work of some scene film-makers, and in some films and clips we see a more personal nature, with a person keeping memories of his or her life. Participation in a scene can be essential to the formation of an identity (Shank 1994) and, as Hebdige pointed out, different young people 'bring different degrees of commitment to a subculture. It can represent a major dimension in people's lives' (Hebdige 2002: 122). The closeness to home movies becomes evident in features like *PORNO* (Carballo, 2014), where Carballo films people celebrating a birthday or visiting towns in the coast of Galicia. Two topics – celebrations and tourism – are also present in some way in the work of David Markey: in *The Slog Movie* we can see people cutting a SIN 34 cake and the same band, in which Markey played drums, taking pictures and walking around San Francisco.

However, as Thurston Moore's liner notes for that film show, David Markey 'shot Super 8 film whenever he could afford the time and money to do so' (Moore n.d.). The decrease in the price of cameras and, specially, in film and developing, opened up a different way of working that can be linked with Carballo's notion of creating an archive. Until the digital age, some film-makers organized their footage in longer films, as Mekas did with his diaries – organized by periods, topics or particular people, such as *Scenes from the Life of Andy Warhol* (Mekas, 1990). This is similar to what Edgar Pêra did in his *Arquivos Kino-Pop*, where the scene footage he filmed before the digital age is edited into chapters around important figures (Pedro Ayres, Xutos & Pontapés) or spaces, like Lisbon's Rock Rendez-Vous. Nowadays, the context is different and some of these film-makers create online spaces in which they can keep uploading their continuous work, as Mekas did with his website in recent years, occasionally in a collaborative way. Sometimes this happens just through the constant use of a Vimeo or YouTube channel without any other purpose, and sometimes it can be the result of a more elaborated discourse, like the case of Prenom Arquivo, also in the Galician underground scene. Prenom is a creative studio formed by Rubén Domínguez and Mar Catarina, known in the scene for their music videos. In 2018 they decided to start this archive with a political intention, as Catarina pointed out in a debate at Santiago de Compostela's Mostra de Cine Etnográfico (Ethnographic Film Showcase). There she explained that the idea of Prenom Arquivo came up after she did an internship in TVE (Spanish public television) and saw how they classified their work. At the

same moment she discovered *Pasou o que pasou*, the online archive of TVG – the Galician public television:

As I see it, the concept of individual memory is as important as the collective one – the way a society constructs its own memory. The time I spent watching *Pasou o que pasou* was very interesting for me, and the footage had an incredible quality, but every time you tell a story you leave a different story aside. That's why I thought it was interesting to talk about the hidden archive, the marginal archive, the stories that are not present, that are not showed because they are not legitimized. (Catarina 2019)

Their intention was, therefore, to react against official documents made by the press and the institutions, and pay attention to people often ignored while, at the same time, keeping memories of their own life. That led her and Domínguez to film and edit new material, but also to edit some footage they had that goes back to 2007, and to ask a few more scene film-makers (the aforementioned Carballo, Teresa Ferreiro and Carlos Abeijón) to submit their work. The result goes beyond concert videos and represents the different features of scene films. In *La casa de Juan* ('Juan's House') (Abeijón, 2019), we see Juan Fernández Navazas – a member of the bands Cuchillo de Fuego and Los Collares de Perlas – showing the strange and tiny apartment where he lived in London to Abeijón – a member of THE or QVEK – all in a tone between joke and intimate confession:

Well, here is where I live. Bethnal Green (...), I live where Throbbing Gristle lived. Exactly where the people at the school [Fernández Navazas worked as a teacher] told me not to live when I did the interview. (...) Well, I have already signed so... This is it, it has been my pleasure to show you my house, I hope you are well in Galicia, eating fucking great. I eat sandwiches in buses everyday... but I am fine, I keep on. I did not shave. Lots of kisses, mum.

This comment turns this video, made in 2012, into the kind of message emigrants sent home when living abroad, and again connects scene films with home movies. The experimental side is especially present in works by Catarina, where she plays with the editing, mixing members of different bands and backstage footage and breaking the usual synchrony between sound and image. In *Rafa e Farfisa* ('Rafa and Farfisa') (Catarina, 2018) she does so while increasing the documentary quality, editing together images of musician Rafa Anido playing his organ and archival footage of a Farfisa factory assembly line, and also introducing a title with comments by Anido explaining where he found his instrument.

As we have seen, the digital age has multiplied the presence of scene films and opened them into new tendencies, making their nature more complex. Its traditional balance between personal memory, collective documentation and artistry gets complicated by the growing presence of cameras and the importance of exhibiting the self on social media, both for individuals and for collective projects like bands or associations. This can sometimes get scene clips closer to a commercial purpose (note how Gael Carballo talked about 'publicity') that was

somehow less evident in works from the seventies and eighties. However, we still find a community documenting itself; we still see the presence of humor and intimate, private moments; and we also find the ability of these works to embrace experimentation, with the essence of DIY still present (giving professionals a chance to work differently). All these features show how the tradition of scene films is still alive and evolving, and in many cases still functioning as a counterbalance to the commercial use of music and images by promoting more relaxed modes of production, a less hierarchical representation of musical activity and greater aesthetic freedom.

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