

A MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION PRODUCTION

# Dreamworlds 3

## Desire, Sex & Power in Music Video

"After watching *Dreamworlds 3*, students may continue to look at music videos, but they will never see them the same way again."

- Michael Kimmel | Professor of Sociology, SUNY Stony Brook

Running Time: 60 minutes

For further information about this film or to arrange interviews or speaking engagements, please contact:

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## SYNOPSIS

*Dreamworlds 3*, the highly anticipated update of Sut Jhally's groundbreaking *Dreamworlds 2* (1995), examines the stories contemporary music videos tell about girls and women, and encourages viewers to consider how these narratives shape individual and cultural attitudes about sexuality. With new narration and hundreds of up-to-date images, *Dreamworlds 3* offers a unique and powerful tool for understanding both the continuing influence of music videos, as well as how pop culture more generally filters the identities of young men and women through a dangerously narrow set of myths about sexuality and gender. In doing so, it inspires viewers to reflect critically on images that they might otherwise take for granted.

## SECTIONS

Introduction | Techniques of Storytelling | Constructing Femininity | The Pornographic Imagination | Ways of Looking | Female Artists: Trapped in the Pornographic Gaze | Masculinity & Control

## CREDITS

**Written, Narrated, and Edited** by Sut Jhally  
**Additional Editing** by Andrew Killoy  
**Post-Production Supervisors** Jeremy Earp and Andrew Killoy  
**Production Assistant** Jason Young  
**Production Assistance** John Seely  
**Sound Engineering** Peter Acker and Armadillo Audio Group  
**Music** by Joe Bartone  
**Graphics** by Sweet and Fizzy and Andrew Killoy

## PRAISE FOR THE FILM

"After watching *Dreamworlds 3*, students may continue to look at music videos, but they will never see them the same way again."

- Michael Kimmel | Professor of Sociology, SUNY Stony Brook

"The role of media images in our everyday lives has never been more powerfully demonstrated."

- Robin Rieske | President, Action Coalition for Media Education - Vermont

"An invaluable teaching tool. Does a superb job of presenting difficult truths about our hypersexualized, hypermasculinized culture. Never has it been more important for us to confront those truths."

- Robert Jensen | Professor of Journalism, University of Texas

"There exists widespread cultural sensitivity to fairness and tolerance, any many significantly-noted eruptions of bigotry or misogyny seem to be met with the disclaimer that the issue might somehow open a cultural debate. Arguably, though, the debate never really occurs, and few serious outlets have investigated the cultural and pop-cultural causes and relationships of these issues and overall social consciousness. Of these few serious studies that offer useful, logical information while providing a forum for debate is Sut Jhally's *Dreamworlds 3: Desire, Sex & Power in Music Video*. A follow-up to *Dreamworlds* and *Dreamworlds 2* (1991 and 1995, respectively), *Dreamworlds 3* continues the investigation of the social constructs of music videos and how they draw from, reinforce, and shape cultural ideas and ideals about masculinity, femininity, and individualism... *Dreamworlds 3* is an important and useful work. For its study of the interplay between the larger culture and music videos, it is highly recommended for collections that focus on pop-culture; for its investigation on the objectification of people, it is essential for women's or gender studies; for the deconstruction of narrative and film techniques, it is important in film and media studies; and for anyone at all invested in the debate regarding the media's influence on culture, it is highly recommended overall."

- *Educational Media Reviews Online*

"...An intelligent meditation on the severely limited and limiting images of women (and men) in the reigning music videos."

- C.E. Emmer | Emporia State University

"...Invites far-reaching reflection upon the mutually reinforcing relationship between the content of music videos and the popular culture they reflect and define... Highly recommended for all public and academic libraries."

-*Library Journal*

"Young adults are exposed to a barrage of media, including music videos, and they should be encouraged to critically evaluate the messages implicit within the medium. If this is one of your goals in the classroom, *Dreamworlds 3* can serve you admirably. When we showed it to our Psychology of Women class, the film resonated particularly

with black women, some of who expressed a general frustration and ambivalence toward hip hop portrayals of women. Several young women, as well as men, stated that the film has helped them to better articulate their own reactions to music videos. The film does not demand that the audience adopt Jhally's conclusions, but instead asks that viewers begin to develop their own critical eyes."

- Harmony B. Sullivan and Maureen C. McHugh | *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*

### **RESPONSES TO *DREAMWORLDS* (1991) AND *DREAMWORLDS 2* (1995)**

"While some cry 'censorship' and 'free speech,' Jhally argues for access and analysis."

- Bruce Watson, *Bulletin*

"Incisive."

- *Newsweek*

"A scathing examination of pop video's use and abuse of women...a fascinating and jarring depiction."

- *Los Angeles Times*

"Dr. Jhally has done us a great service...If we want to fight pornography with intelligence rather than fear, this video is a great place to start."

- Dolores Curran, Alt Publishing Company

"[Sut Jhally] calmly, logically, and persuasively moves you to understand how the images portrayed could and probably do lead to sexual violence against women."

- Linda Hancock, Assistant Director, Office of Health Promotion, Virginia Commonwealth University

"If you want to look at behaviors and attitudes, you need to look at what's in the environment. These images are a significant part of the lives of young people."

- Fred Pelka, *On the Issues*

"*Dreamworlds* illustrates the stereotype that women want to be aggressed against – and enjoy it."

- Don Kower, *The Washington Times*

## BIOGRAPHY OF SUT JHALLY

Sut Jhally is a professor of Communication at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst as well as the founder and executive director of the Media Education Foundation. One of the most popular teachers at the University of Massachusetts, he became nationally known after the original *Dreamworlds: Desire/Sex/Power in Music Video* spurred threats of a lawsuit from MTV. The increased recognition and demand for the video following this incident led to the founding of the Media Education Foundation in 1991. Over the ensuing 18 years, Sut Jhally has been the executive producer of more than twenty-five videos produced and distributed by the Media Education Foundation.

Jhally is the author of *The Codes of Advertising* and *The Spectacle of Accumulation: Essays in Cultural Politics*, and co-author of *Social Communication in Advertising* and *Enlightened Racism*. He is also co-editor of *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America* and *Hijacking Catastrophe: 9/11, Fear & the Selling of American Empire*. He has written broadly on issues of popular representation and is regarded as one of the world's leading cultural studies scholars in the areas of advertising, media, and consumption.

### THE DREAMWORLDS STORY:

Almost two decades ago, Sut Jhally, a professor of Communication at UMASS Amherst, found that many of his students were uneasy about the media environment that shaped their lives. They were hungry for both analytical tools and for a vocabulary with which to reexamine media clips in order to analyze and critique female representation in music videos. As his collection of media clips grew, he decided to take the music out of the clips, in an attempt to de-contextualize the images, allowing students to examine the representations without distractions. He eventually developed a succinct package by transforming his classroom critiques into a narration that accompanied the video images. After many revisions informed by classroom response, Jhally completed his process in 1990 with the production of a 55-minute long videotape that incorporated images from over 160 rock videos, entitled: *Dreamworlds: Desire/Sex/Power in Rock Video*.

First offered through a narrowly targeted brochure, Jhally distributed one hundred copies of his video to fellow teachers in communication and women's studies (with proceeds going to the UMASS Department of Communication), before he received a "cease and desist" letter on March 25, 1991 from MTV Network's legal department. MTV warned that if he did not stop distributing the tape (and recall all those already distributed), legal action would be initiated on the ground of copyright violation. Jhally sent a letter to MTV refusing to comply and instead asked MTV to "support and encourage free and open expression of important social issues and First Amendment speech rights." Jhally was prepared to go to court to defend his position, and his convictions were supported by many, including the Massachusetts Teachers Association, which appointed a lawyer for him.

The resulting widespread media coverage, including stories in *Newsweek*, the *New York Times*, and the *Boston Globe*, placed a spotlight on the free speech rights of media critics.

In his interviews, Jhally asserted that his work was protected under the fair-use provision of the copyright law (Title 17 U.S.C., Section 107). This provision allows educators and others to use or duplicate portions of copyrighted materials for the purpose of critical analysis. Many constitutional lawyers advised Jhally that *Dreamworlds* offered a very strong case for “fair use.” They suggested that since there was little case law in this area, *MTV vs. Dreamworlds* would have been a precedent-setting constitutional case, dealing with the power of huge media corporations to curb criticism and discussion of their public materials. Since MTV was itself fighting attempts to censor lyrics it broadcast, its ironic attempt to stifle Jhally’s criticism garnered considerable media attention. With its image suffering in the print media, MTV chose not to pursue legal action. The media coverage, however, became a catalyst for Jhally’s future successes by increasing sales of *Dreamworlds*. That is why Jhally, preserving his sense of humor, credited MTV’s Legal Department in the acknowledgements when he made the updated *Dreamworlds 2: Desire, Sex, and Power in Music Video* in 1995.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information about this film, including information about supporting the distribution of *Dreamworlds 3*, please contact:

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*For further information about marketing and press kits for this film, please contact:*

Alexandra Peterson, MEF Marketing Coordinator  
TEL 413.584.8500 ext. 2205 EMAIL [alex@mediaed.org](mailto:alex@mediaed.org)

United States | 2007 | 54 mins | Shot in Mini-DV | Color | Beta/DVD/DVcam | NTSC |  
Aspect Ratio 4:3 | Stereo | In English/English Subtitles (DVD)

The Media Education Foundation produces and distributes documentary films and other educational resources to inspire critical reflection on the social, political and cultural impact of American mass media. MEF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

## FACT SHEET

- \* “According to a recent survey of adolescent girls, the media is their main source of information about women’s health issues.”<sup>1</sup>
- \* “The average young adolescent watches 3-4 hours of TV per day.”<sup>2</sup>
- \* “In advertising, women’s bodies are often dismembered into legs, breasts or thighs, reinforcing the message that women are objects rather than whole human beings.”<sup>3</sup>
- \* “More than half of these female students (58 percent) have been harassed by one man, and a little less than half (48 percent) have been harassed by a group of men.”<sup>4</sup>
- \* “Two-thirds of students (62 percent) say that they have been sexually harassed, and a similar number (66 percent) say that they know someone personally (such as a friend or classmate) who has been sexually harassed. That means that about six million college students encounter sexual harassment at college.”<sup>5</sup>
- \* “Boys and men rape girls and women somewhere in the United States every 2 minutes.”<sup>6</sup>
- \* “MTV, MTV2, CMT, BET, VH1 are all owned by the Viacom corporation which is headed by CEO and president Phillippe Dauman who is a Caucasian male.”<sup>7</sup>
- \* A study released in 2005 said that of the 13,400 members of the Directors Guild of America, only about 1,000 or 7 percent are listed as female directors.”<sup>8</sup>
- \* More than 1 million women are stalked by intimate partners every year.<sup>1</sup>
- \* 1 in 5 college females will be the victim of rape or attempted rape.<sup>9</sup>
- \* On college campuses, 90% of rape victims knew their assailant<sup>10</sup>
- \* A sexual assault occurs every 2.5 minutes in America<sup>11</sup>
- \* 1 in 6 women has been the victim of sexual assault<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Commonwealth Fund. “The Media, Body image and Eating Disorders.” National Eating Disorders. 2005. February 25, 2008. <<http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/nedaDir/files/documents/handouts/MediaBI.pdf>>

<sup>2</sup> Levine, Michael, “The Media, Body image and Eating Disorders.” National Eating Disorders. 2005. February 25, 2008. <<http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/nedaDir/files/documents/handouts/MediaBI.pdf>>

<sup>3</sup> Media Awareness Network. “Sex and the Relationship in the Media.” Media Awareness Network Website. <[http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women\\_and\\_girls/women\\_sex.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_sex.cfm)>

<sup>4</sup> Hill, Catherine and Silva, Elena. “Drawing the Line: Sexual Harassment on Campus.” December 2005. American Association of University Women. <<http://www.aauw.org/research/upload/DTLFinal.pdf>>

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- 6 U.S. Department of Justice. "2000 National Crime Victimization Survey." Feminist.com. <<http://www.feminist.com/antiviolence/facts.html>>
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- 8 Lemire, Christy. "Chicks directing flicks: Where's the Love?" CNN.com. August 7, 2007. <<http://www.cnn.com/2007/SHOWBIZ/Movies/08/07/female.directors.ap/index.html?eref=rs>>
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- 10 Sweney, Kathryn. "Campus Rape: Silent Victims Help Available at UND, But Myths, Fear of Inaction Prevail," Grand Forks Herald,. March 19, 1991.
- 11 Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network. "Every Two and a Half Minutes" RAINN.org. February 25, 2008. <<http://www.rainn.org/statistics/minutes.html>>
- 12 National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women. "Violence Against Women Act 2005." Endabuse.org. February 25, 2008. <<http://www.endabuse.org/vawa/factsheets/SASA.pdf>>

### QUOTES FROM THE FILM

- \* "Whether it is rock music, or country music, or pop, or hip-hop, the presence of female bodies have become one of the easy solutions found by creators of music videos to the problem of how to both get attention and tell a compelling story that connects the music to visually arresting images."
- \* "Just as music video tells us a story of female passivity, it tells an equally powerful story of masculinity being tied to power, intimidation and force."
- \* "The women of the dream world are fragmented and presented as a number of simple and disconnected body parts."
- \* "What these attitudes reveal is that the danger and violence is inside our relationships and not outside. When you objectify women and use them for props of male power and prestige then violent language and violence itself will not be far behind."
- \* "The challenge of female artists is to try and stay true to their own vision of themselves but the pressure to conform is relentless and the conventional techniques that are adopted are easy to identify no matter the genre. Female performers must take on the fantasy roles that the pornographic imagination dictates."
- \* "These images and stories have worked their way into the inner identities of young women who view their own sexuality through the eyes of the male authors of that culture."
- \* "Examining the stories that music videos tells us about both male and female sexuality, about what is considered normal, allows us to do more than just understand one aspect of our culture. It gives us a way to think about how the culture in general teaches us to be men and women."