

Music with Balls with Terry Riley

Music with Balls is a music video commissioned by the Dilexi Foundation as part of their Dilexi Series, which has been broadcast on San Francisco broadcasting station KQED in 1969. The Dilexi Series "represents one of the first efforts to present works created by artists specifically for television" (BAMPFA Berkeley, 2017). Other videos in the series included works by Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, Ann Halperin and Andy Warhol.

"No restriction, regarding length, form, or content, were imposed upon the works, except for Newman's [founder of the Dilexi Foundation] stipulation that they be aired weekly within the same time-slot. Upon their completion, the 12 works were broadcast during the spring and summer of 1969." (Vasulka: Terry Riley, 2017) *Music with Balls* was broadcast on April 16, 1969, and was the first of the 12 videos to be shown on television. Goals of the series had been to "broadcast the works of artists on television", but also to "command an interest for their aesthetic success, innovative use of the medium, position within the greater oeuvre of the artists involved, and for the way in which they capture the tenor of the times." Under these aspects, *Music with Balls* has been seen as "[a] highly successful work", because it "take[s] great advantage of the medium itself" (ibid).

Respected film scholar Gene Youngblood, who specialises in alternative cinemas, has written at length about the video in his seminal book *Expanded Cinema*, calling it "a fabulously rich mantra of color, sound, and motion. Huge spheres sweep majestically across the screen trailing comets of shimmering ruby, emerald, and amber. Contrapuntal trajectories intersect, pierce, and collide. Keying, debeaming, wipes, and dissolves result in phantasmagoric convolutions of spatial dimensions as Riley is seen in several perspectives at once, in several colors, alternately obscured and revealed on various planes, with each pass of a pendulum. The composition builds from placid serenity to chaotic cacophony to bubbly melodiousness with a mad yet purposive grace. Acoustical space, physical space, and video space become one electronic experience unlike anything the cinema has ever known." (Youngblood 1970, 295).

For more information about *Music with Balls*, you can watch the video in its entirety above, you can read Youngblood's full text here or listen to Arlo and Robyn talking about its production in the video below.

References:

BAMPFA Berkely. 2017. "The Dilexi Series: Music with Balls, Burnt Weenie Sandwich, What Do You Talk About, and Conversations in Vermont." Accessed 12.06.2017.

Vasulka: Terry Riley. 2017. "Pacific Film archive presents the dilexi series." Accessed 12.06.2017.

Youngblood, Gene. 1970. *Expanded Cinema*. Studio Vista Lt: London.