Enhancing Music Videos Through Animation: A Case Study of Tak Sangka (2021)

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ABSTRACT

Music videos (MVs) have become a medium for artists to effectively convey their stories and emotions, especially when animation is used in music video production. Although there are just a few music videos in Malaysia that employ animation to provide artistic creativity. This study aims to identify the key elements that comprise a music video and how animation enhances its visual appeal. To achieve these objectives, a critical examination of the literature is conducted to identify the key characteristics of the visual elements in a music video. Apart from that, there was a case study on an animated music video by Malaysian artist Yonnyboii, titled "*Tak Sangka*." Based on an analysis of this video, this study explores how animation can enhance the appearance and character to make them more attractive, emotionally appealing, and offer a more engaging experience for viewers. The conclusions reveal that the use of animation principles in the production of music videos helps create visually appealing and emotionally stimulating content, making the video more memorable. Lastly, the study demonstrates how animation is an excellent asset that can be used to enhance music videos and foster a deeper emotional connection with viewers.

Keywords: music videos, animation , visual elements, principles of animation

INTRODUCTION

Music is often regarded as a universal language, capable of bridging cultural divides and evoking shared emotional responses. In today's digital landscape, music videos have evolved beyond mere promotional tools to become essential expressions of an artist's vision. Platforms like YouTube and TikTok have amplified their importance, demanding more engaging and emotionally resonant content to capture viewers' attention (Gigmit, 2021). While traditional music videos have relied heavily on live-action footage, animation is increasingly being recognized for its ability to visualize abstract ideas, exaggerate emotions, and construct imaginative worlds. Wells (2006) describes animation as the "art of the impossible," a medium that offers storytelling freedom beyond physical and narrative constraints, qualities particularly well-suited for music videos. However, despite its potential, the Malaysian music industry has been slow to adopt animation, continuing to favour conventional formats and repetitive themes that often lead to audience fatigue and declining engagement (Westrup, 2023). Between 2020 and 2024, only six animated music videos were officially produced in Malaysia, compared to 22 from Western artists, even after filtering by the top 50 on IMDb. This nearly threefold disparity highlights a creative gap that limits innovation in local productions. As international acts increasingly use animation to push artistic boundaries, Malaysian music videos remain largely confined to traditional visuals. The oversaturation of content on digital platforms intensifies this issue, as uninspired visuals struggle to stand out (Wincci et al., 2022). Without greater creative risk-taking, the local industry risks stagnatio, reducing opportunities for emerging artists and undermining the long-term diversity and sustainability of Malaysia's music video landscape.

One example of a Malaysian music video that uses animation is *Tak Sangka* (2021) by Yonnyboii, Zynakal, and Asyraf Nasir. Described by the artists as a "new generation" hip-hop track, it reflects current musical trends and was inspired by the two-faced nature of society (Najiy J., 2021). The music video features animated versions of the trio and was directed by Thaqif Saadon, assisted by Hakeem Roshdi, and produced by Atypical

Visual and Studio Firepulse during the COVID-19 pandemic. With art direction by Imran Mansur and graphic design by Sabrina Sofiadin, the project took around three months to complete. The song topped Malaysia's Carta RIM for six consecutive weeks within two months of release (Qarami H., 2021).

This study aims to achieve specific objectives, as follows:

1. To identify the key visual elements in music videos.
2. To analyse approaches for crafting engaging visuals in music videos.
3. To assess the impact of animation in enhancing the visual appeal of music videos.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Animated music videos (AMVs) have evolved significantly, though their mainstream adoption did not happen overnight. Before the mid-1980s, AMVs were often viewed more as artistic experiments than commercial music content (Strøm, 2007). Many artists, like The Beatles, preferred live-action formats, considering animation less aligned with their public image. Additionally, the time-intensive nature of animation clashed with the fast-paced demands of the music industry. A major turning point came with A-ha's *Take on Me* (1985), which creatively blended live-action and animation to bridge reality and fantasy. This innovation opened the door for more conceptual storytelling in AMVs.

Elements in Music Videos (MVs)

To understand how music videos function as visual storytelling tools, it is essential to examine their core elements: lyrics and song, narrative style, and visuals. While the lyrics form the foundation of meaning, they are not always the primary focus. As Vernallis (2004) and Putu Dian (2020) note, music videos often prioritize emotional tone, mood, and imagery to enhance the viewer's experience, using visuals to reinforce or reinterpret the song's message. Narrative structure plays a critical role in shaping engagement. Videos may follow traditional storytelling, as seen in Imagine Dragons' *Sharks* (2022), which uses a cinematic heist plot to reflect themes of betrayal and self-interest. Alternatively, conceptual or anti-narrative videos prioritize abstract visuals and symbolism over linear storytelling. Billie Eilish's *Bad Guy* (2019), for instance, visually exaggerates the idea of perceived identity without following a traditional plot (Krol, 2019). Performance-based videos, commonly used in K-pop (e.g., TWICE's *Likey*), emphasize energy and choreography, focusing on the artist's presence rather than explicit storytelling. The third key element is visual communication. Through mise-en-scène, colour, movement, and rhythm, visuals strengthen the emotional and cognitive connection between the music and the viewer (David, 2021). Whether narrative, conceptual, or performance-based, music videos rely on the interplay between sound and image to create an immersive and emotionally resonant experience.

Key Elements of Visual in Music Videos

A key component is mise-en-scène, which includes all elements arranged before the camera, such as set design, lighting, costume, and spatial composition. When aligned with the music, these elements establish mood, atmosphere, and thematic clarity. Vernallis (2004) emphasizes how editing techniques like "cutting to the beat" further enhance visual-musical synergy, deepening the audience's emotional response. Cinematography also plays a crucial role. Brown (2016) highlights how shot composition, angles, and motion guide viewer focus and evoke emotion. A close-up can invite intimacy, while a wide shot might evoke isolation or vulnerability, allowing the camera to become an emotional narrator. Colour theory is another powerful storytelling tool. Warm hues often suggest nostalgia, joy, or comfort, while cooler or desaturated tones can signal sadness, emotional distance, or tension. Fenny Wahyuni & Naldo Yanuar Heryanto (2022) note that intentional colour grading and lighting shifts visually mirror a song's emotional arc. Finally, character movement and expression contribute significantly to narrative development and emotional delivery. Facial expressions, posture, and gestures can express meaning beyond lyrics. In performance-based videos, the artist's energy and presence create a direct emotional link with the audience. In narrative-driven formats, body language and interaction with the environment push the story forward (Dian, 2020; Vernallis, 2004). Together, these visual elements do more than complement the music but also extend it. When thoughtfully combined,

they transform music videos into immersive experiences that convey complex emotional and symbolic content beyond what audio or visuals could achieve alone.

What Makes Animated Music Videos Unique

Animated music videos stand apart due to their ability to visualize what cannot be shown in live-action. Their flexibility allows artists to depict metaphors, dreams, psychological states, and alternate worlds. According to Wardani et al. (2023), stylized characters often evoke deeper empathy, functioning as emotional vessels. At the heart of AMV effectiveness are the 12 principles of animation (Becker, 2017; Williams, 2012). Principles like exaggeration, staging, timing, and solid drawing are all essential in crafting motion, emotion, and rhythm. These tools allow for seamless integration between sound and image, making the video not just an accompaniment, but an interpretive and immersive visual experience.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, primarily utilizing secondary data collection methods. Information was gathered from printed materials and credible online sources, including academic journals, articles, books, and websites. This approach is both cost-effective and allows broad access to relevant literature, though it requires careful evaluation of data credibility. The research involves content analysis of existing literature as well as a focused case study of the animated music video *Tak Sangka* (2021) by Yonnyboii. Through this dual approach, the study examines how animation influences the visual composition, emotional tone, and narrative style of music videos, and how it contributes to broader creative expression within the medium.
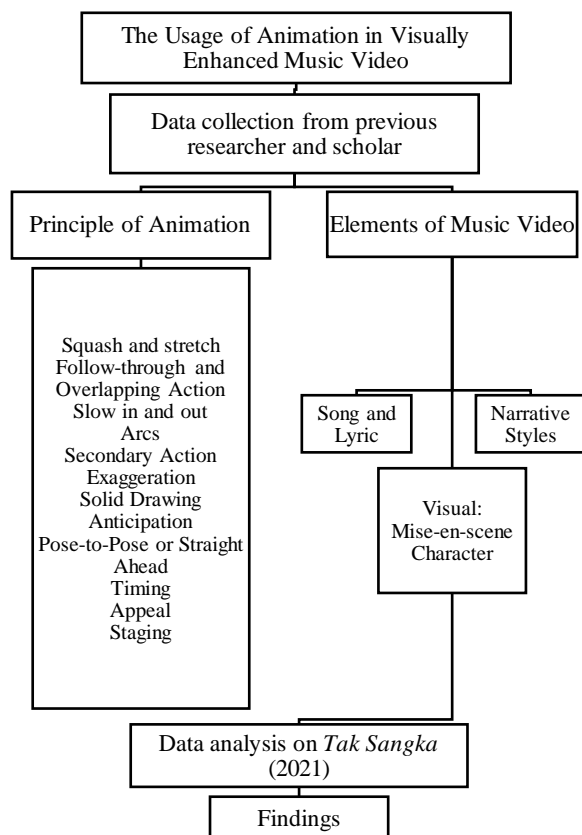
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

This study adopts a qualitative approach, combining both primary and secondary data to explore how animation enhances the visual and narrative aspects of music videos. A case study method was employed, focusing on the animated music video *Tak Sangka* (2021) by Malaysian artist Yonnyboii. This approach enables a focused, in-depth analysis of visual elements and the application of animation principles within an

actual creative production. By synthesizing these sources, the study establishes a clear link between animation theory and its practical application in music video storytelling. This integrated qualitative approach offers a comprehensive understanding of how animation contributes to the symbolic, emotional, and aesthetic impact of music videos.

Data Collections

The examination of key principle of animation in enhancing music videos involved collecting insights from a range of experts and scholars, which were subsequently synthesized and categorized into key thematic keywords to facilitate a clearer and more structured understanding. All the 12 principles of animation will be taken account to this tally.

Table 1: Key Principles of Animation

Title	Author	Elaboration	Key Principles
Experimental Animation and The Neosurrealist Remediation of Popular Music Video	Lisa Perrott (2019)	Techniques such as distorted scale, unnatural pacing, and symbolic staging align with how surrealism disrupts realism to provoke psychological or emotional responses. Such animations evoke the uncanny by manipulating motion, form, and narrative structure to challenge logic and immerse viewers in dreamlike or fragmented experiences.	• Exaggeration • Anticipation • Staging • Timing • Squash and Stretch • Secondary Action • Appeal • Solid Drawing • Follow-Through and Overlapping Action
Animating the Real: Illusions, Musicality and the Live Dancing Body	Jo Read (2020)	The author demonstrates how these animation principles, particularly anticipation, secondary action, and exaggeration, are embodied to create illusions, enrich musicality, and enhance the storytelling aspect in dance, allowing for "the consideration of tiny movements that happen in the spaces between bigger movements, and how they are performed musically".	• Anticipation • Secondary Action • Exaggeration • Appeal • Follow-Through and Overlapping Action
The Use of Color and Music in Audio Visual Language of Animated Film—Take Coco as An Example	Zheyi Qiu (2020)	It emphasizes the application of intense colour, emotional expression, and visual impact. At the same time, the emphasis is on strong character design and detail. The timing of visuals in coordination with music, especially in emotionally relevant moments like Miguel singing, is relevant to synchronization between animation and the musical beat. Rhythm-centred expressive character action, such as the application of	• Squash and Stretch • Anticipation • Staging • Timing • Exaggeration • Solid Drawing • Appeal

		squash and stretch, suggests the use of timing.	
Designing a 2D Animated Music Video: (Case Study: The Song "Pengingat" by Kunto Aji).	Yuventia Kalonica, Alfiansyah Zulkarnain (2021)	The real world is represented by black and white, while the fun is depicted through colourful animations and backgrounds. For the character design, the writer created a more cartoon-ish main character named Judha. The angle that is used the most is close-up and it's to show Judha's expressions more.	• Staging • Exaggeration • Solid Drawing • Appeal
Investigation of Artistic Styles for Effective Storytelling in Animation	Ananda Karmakar (2021)	The author emphasizes that exaggeration is the most important animation principle as it allows animators to amplify emotions, distort reality creatively, and convey deeper meanings through stylized movement and imagery. While other principles like staging, timing, and appeal are also reflected in the use of composition, pacing, and visual charm, it is exaggeration through fantasy, abstraction, and deformation that most powerfully enriches the narrative.	• Exaggeration • Stging • Timing • Appeal
Design and Optimization of Lighting Techniques for Enhancing Animation Visuals	Akankasha Kathuria (2021)	The 3-point lighting is important in animation whether it is 2D-drawn, or 3D-computer generated. It is important to manipulate audiences and enhanced storytelling.	• Staging • Exaggeration • Solid Drawing • Appeal
Music, Memory and Narrative: The Art of Telling in Tale of Tales	Ian Cross (2022)	In Tale of Tales, transitions occur with considered rhythm and emotional resonance, enabling the film to move smoothly through fantasy and recollection. The recurring presence of the little grey wolf links fractured episodes, his consistent design and soft, wordless sounds providing continuity to otherwise fragmented worlds. Through expressive gestures, evocative details, and stylised tonal shadings, the film conveys deep feelings without recourse to dialogue. Visual themes, a child feeding crows, the cradle, or the apple, appear transformed, their movement and rhythm suggesting a	• Timing • Staging • Solid Drawing • Secondary Action • Exaggeration • Appeal • Follow-Through and Overlapping Action

		cadence of memory.	
Visual Perception as Environmental Social Perception in the Animated Music Video "Sabda Alam"	Winny Gunarti Widya Wardani, Syahid Syahid, Taufiq Akbar (2023)	Bird characters are drawn with curved lines, often used to show characters that are soft, vulnerable, and adaptable. Messages are easy to understand, animated visualization builds imagination, narration builds appeal.	• Solid Drawing • Appeal • Exaggeration • Staging
Implementasi Prinsip Appeal, Exaggeration, dan Squash & Strecth dalam Video Animasi Edukasi Gizi : "MIGI : Makan Minum Bergizi"	Yanuar Aldi, Rahmat Maulana Sihotang (2025)	The authors focus on the principles of appeal, exaggeration and squash and stretch to make educational video more interesting for Generation Alpha children.	• Appeal • Exaggeration • Squash &Stretch
The Application of Exaggeration Convey Believability: Case Study of Ping Pong The Animation (2014)	Muhammad Najmi Mohd Yusof, Nurul Amin Ahmad (2025)	Mostly focus on the importance of exaggeration in other animation aspect such as movement, appeal, expression and emotion.	• Exaggeration • Appeal • Secondary Action • Follow-Through and Overlapping Action • Solid Drawing

Author	Keywords*											
	SS	FnO	SiSo	Ar	2nd	Ex	SD	An	PtPSA	T	Ap	St
Lisa Perrott (2019)	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Jo Read (2020)		✓			✓	✓		✓			✓	
Zheyi Qiu (2020)	✓					✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Yuventia Kalonica, Alfiansyah Zulkarnain (2021)						✓	✓				✓	✓
Ananda Karmakar (2021)						✓				✓	✓	✓

	SS	FnO	SiSo	At	2nd	Ex	SD	An	PtP SA	T	Ap	At
Akankasha Kathuria (2021)						✓	✓				✓	✓
Ian Cross (2022)		✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Winny Gunarti Widya Wardani et al. (2023)						✓	✓				✓	✓
Yanuar Aldi et al. (2025)	✓					✓					✓	
Muhammad Najmi Mohd Yusof, Nurul Amin Ahmad (2025)		✓			✓	✓	✓				✓	
Total	3	4	0	0	4	10	7	3	0	4	10	7

Keywords:

SS (Squash and stretch), FnO (Follow-through and Overlapping Action), SiSo (Slow in and out), At (Arcs), 2nd (Secondary Action), Ex (Exaggeration), SD (Solid Drawing), An (Anticipation), PtP SA (Pose-to-Pose or Straight Ahead), T (Timing), Ap (Appeal), At (Staging)

After conducting a review, a few principles such as Pose-to-Pose and Straight Ahead will be excluded, as they primarily concern animation techniques rather than overall quality. Principles like Appeal, Timing, and Staging will be excluded, as they are essential in both traditional live-action and animated music videos to ensure a compelling result. Therefore, the final selected principles to creating a successful animated music video are:

Table 2: Final Principles of Animation

Principles	Description
Exaggeration	Exaggeration is a fundamental principle in animation that is frequently emphasized, mainly because it is one of the expressive tools that live-action filmmaking struggles to replicate without relying heavily on CGI. In animation, exaggeration goes beyond just the classic *Squash and Stretch* technique. It also plays a vital role in enhancing colour, emotion, and overall storytelling impact. For instance, emotions can be pushed to their extremes to better convey a character's inner world, while colours can be intensified to set a stronger mood or tone. Additionally, exaggeration can be applied to other principles, such as *Anticipation* and *Staging*, to amplify a scene's clarity and emotional weight. In the context of a music video, these techniques help deliver a more powerful, stylized, and engaging narrative

	that might not be achievable through live-action alone.
Solid Drawing	Solid Drawing, or simply the act of drawing the characters and the world they inhabit, is one of the key principles in animation. It refers to technical drawing skills and the ability to design forms with volume, weight, and balance, giving them a sense of realism even in stylized settings. In animation, especially in music videos, this allows creators to tailor the style of characters, environments, and objects in any way that best communicates their ideas, emotions, and artistic vision. Whether it is a realistic portrayal or a highly abstract concept, this principle gives animators the flexibility to build a unique visual identity that enhances the storytelling and emotional resonance of the music.

While all twelve principles of animation are essential in producing high-quality animated content, Exaggeration and Solid Drawing are two of the most powerful tools in creating visually compelling music videos that go beyond the limitations of live-action filmmaking. By leveraging these two key principles, animators can craft music videos that are visually engaging and artistically superior to many conventional live-action counterparts. These principles empower creators to explore imaginative storytelling methods, creating a more immersive and emotionally resonant viewer experience.

RESULT AND FINDING

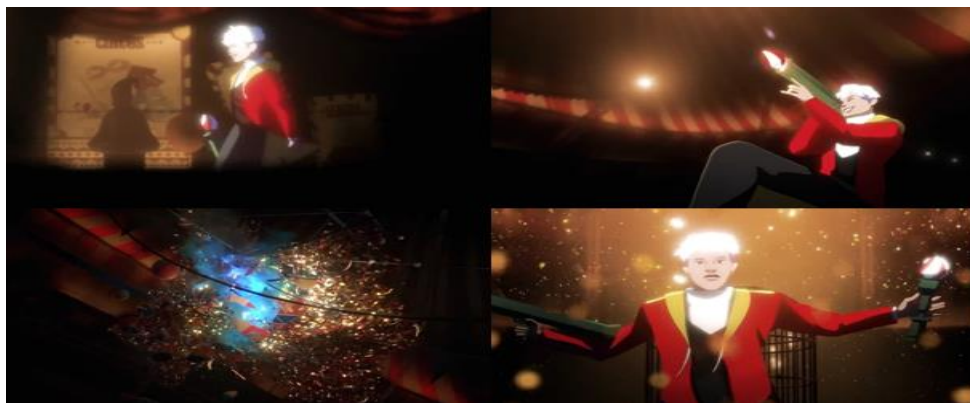**Figure 2:** Screenshoot of *Tak Sangka* (2021) Zynakal in a cage

No.	Elements of Visual	Principle of Animation	Application
1.	Setting: Circus, in a cage	Solid Drawing *(staging, appeal)*	Zynakal confined in a cage at the center of a circus. The circus setting symbolizes societal judgment and the spectacle made of personal struggles.
2.	Lighting: Very vibrant	Exaggeration *(staging, appeal)*	Using very high key light as well as vibrant light to show the intensity of the scene.
3.	Character Appearance: Zynakal in straitjacket	Solid Drawing *(appeal)*	Zynakal is depicted wearing a straitjacket, emphasizing a sense of entrapment and lack of control. His messy appearance reflects internal turmoil and societal pressure.
4.	Gesture: Struggling, body thrashing around	Exaggeration *(Squash and stretch, follow-through and overlapping*	The exaggeration in body thrashing symbolizing the fight against societal expectations and personal demons. His expressions convey frustration and a desire for liberation.

			action)
5.	Performance: Knives behind his back, ready to stab	Exaggeration *(anticipation, staging)*	Adds depth to the narrative by showing how appearances can be deceiving, with many people that happy to see them falls.

The scene featuring Zynakal confined in a circus cage powerfully illustrates how animation can externalize internal conflict through symbolic and exaggerated visuals. The solid drawing of the cage and straitjacket encapsulates themes of societal judgment and emotional entrapment, while the vibrant lighting and exaggerated gestures amplify the tension and psychological turmoil. The hidden knives behind Zynakal's back, rendered with anticipation and staging, visually hint at suppressed aggression and deceptive appearances, making the scene emotionally charged and narratively complex, something that would be difficult to achieve through live-action alone. This sequence exemplifies how animation principles can deepen metaphorical meaning and viewer impact in animated music videos.

Figure 3: Screenshoot of *Tak Sangka* (2021) Yonnyboii entrance with rocket launcher

No.	Elements of Visual	Principle of Animation	Application
1.	Setting: Circus, full confetti in air	Solid Drawing, Exaggeration *(staging, appeal)*	Yonnyboii entered the scene with a rocket launcher, shooting to a 'piñata' leaving confetti all over the place. This symbolizes that even with all the negativity, just to your work and plow through it.
2.	Lighting: Very vibrant, bright bloom	Exaggeration *(staging, appeal)*	Using very high key light as well as vibrant light to show the intensity of the scene. The uses of bloom to liven up the mood.
3.	Character Appearance: Yonnyboii in his signature jacket, equips with a rocket launcher	Solid Drawing *(appeal)*	The background transitions to a more chaotic environment, reflecting the disruptive nature of his character. His confident stance contrasts with Zynakal's earlier vulnerability.
4.	Gesture: assertive, indicating readiness to challenge norms.	Solid Drawing *(Squash and stretch, follow-through and overlapping action, staging)*	His direct gaze and commanding presence underscore his role as a catalyst for change.
5.	Performance: Shooting 'pinata' with rocket	Exaggeration *(anticipation, staging)*	This represents the idea that despite facing negativity, one should stay focused and keep pushing forward, do not give a damn with others' opinion.

Yonnyboii's explosive entrance with a rocket launcher and confetti visually signals a powerful thematic shift in the narrative of *Tak Sangka*. The use of solid drawing and exaggeration particularly in staging and anticipation enhances the scene's impact, portraying him as a disruptive force challenging negativity. The vibrant bloom and chaotic backdrop emphasize his role as a bold catalyst for change. His assertive posture and weapon symbolize defiance and emotional release, while the confetti metaphorically encourages perseverance despite criticism. This scene exemplifies how animation can turn abstract emotions like resistance, confidence, and rebellion into striking visual metaphors that elevate the music video's emotional and narrative depth.

Figure 4: Screenshoot of *Tak Sangka* (2021) Asyraf Nasir in a coffin

No.	Elements of Visual	Principle of Animation	Application
1.	Setting: In a coffin	Solid Drawing *(staging, appeal)*	Initially a play on the lyric *"kubur kan masing-masing"* meaning mind your own business.
2.	Lighting: Spotlight effect	Exaggeration *(staging, appeal)*	Using very high key light as well as vibrant light to show the intensity of the scene.
3.	Character Appearance: Asyraf in a white and orange suit	Solid Drawing *(appeal)*	Bringing a sense of balance and harmony.
4.	Performance: Suddenly wake up from the coffin	Solid Drawing (anticipation)	The suspense scene suddenly erupts with him waking up and continues singing.
5.	Gesture: Heavily plays with body language	Exaggeration (secondary action, follow-through and overlapping action)	The hands and body language as well as hair movement and facial expression are really exaggerated to make the simple scene looks more dynamic.

The use of animation principles effectively enhances the narrative and emotional tone. The staging of Asyraf Nasir lying in a coffin, highlighted by a focused spotlight, utilizes solid drawing and exaggeration to emphasize isolation and introspection, aligning with the lyric "*kubur kan masing-masing*" (mind your own business). His character design, clothed in a white and orange suit, embodies appeal, creating visual balance amidst the dark, cluttered surroundings. The sudden gesture of waking from the coffin employs anticipation, marking a dramatic shift that reintroduces vitality as he resumes singing. Collectively, these animated elements not only heighten the symbolic weight of the scene but also underscore the song's themes of self-reflection and rebirth.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the powerful role of animation in enhancing the visual, emotional, and narrative depth of music videos. Through the case study of *Tak Sangka* (2021) and analysis of animation principles such as exaggeration, staging, timing, and solid drawing, it becomes clear that animation enables symbolic storytelling and creative expression beyond the constraints of live-action. Despite global advancements in animated music videos, Malaysia has yet to fully explore this medium, presenting an opportunity for local artists to innovate and reach wider audiences. By embracing animation not just as an aesthetic choice but as a storytelling tool, Malaysian music video production can achieve greater artistic impact and global relevance.

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