

# STUDENT LIFE

## VH1 follows one very strange relationship

By David Hiltbrand  
Knight Ridder Newspapers  
(KRT)

The title "Strange Love" doesn't even begin to describe it.

VH1's "reality" show, at 9:30 p.m. EST Sundays, chronicles the garish, almost inconceivable relationship between hip-hop pixie Flavor Flav and statuesque former action star Brigitte Nielsen.

He's 5-foot-8. She's 6-2. He's from New York. She's from Rødovre, Denmark. She speaks six languages. He has trouble making himself understood in English. She chain-smokes, even while dining. He won't touch any kind of food that isn't readily obtained from a drive-through window.

About all they have in common is that he often wears a Viking helmet with horns while she, as you may have noticed in such B movies as "Red Sonja," looks like a genuine Valkyrie.

But together they have chemistry. Bizarre and volatile, but chemistry nonetheless. Imagine a Bronx Pepe Le Pew relentlessly pursuing a Nordic giraffe.

The first question people always ask when they see "Strange Love" is: Are they putting us on? Or do they really care

for each other?

"It's real," insists Mark Cronin, the show's executive producer, "because even when we're not filming them, when they're alone, they are like that all the time. They really are. They're crazy for each other. And just plain crazy. It's like a harmonic convergence of insanity."

In an interview, Flav, 45, the onetime front man for the seminal rap act Public Enemy, says, "The relationship I got with Brigitte is unique and real. It is nothing phony. Everything is all real."

Making a series with this pair was a real adventure. It's apparent from how late both of them were for interviews that their schedules are at best guesstimates.

"They live by their own clock, so we had to be really flexible," Cronin says. "But when you sign up for the gig of following these crazy people around, you have to embrace that."

Having spent all that time with Nielsen and Flav, Cronin is convinced that their affection for each other is genuine.

"If they are really faking us all out, they are brilliant, brilliant actors," he says. "But the fact is, they're not good actors."

And "Strange Love" is proof that fame, even the tattered, faded variety, conquers all.



## Billboard charts give downloads a voice



By Jim Farber  
New York Daily News  
(KRT)

Pop used to be so simple. You had a No. 1 single and everyone in the country hummed your tune.

But over the years, trends began tearing away at the old notion of a hit.

People started buying fewer and fewer singles - to the point where someone could go No. 1 in sales with as little as 5,000 copies purchased.

Radio stations kept splitting into ever-narrower formats, based on genre, taste and demographics.

All of which made it increasingly hard to form a consensus on what was truly the biggest song in the land.

Then came downloads, adding even more confusion.

The legal version of this practice has been growing by leaps and bounds of late: listeners draw up to 6 million tunes into their computers or portable players every week. While the music industry's bible, Billboard, introduced a Digital chart in July 2003, the magazine still had no way to reflect those sales on its far more influential pop song chart.

Until now.

This week, Billboard began figuring in download sales in its main pop singles list, mixed with the two other factors it long leaned on radio play and retail sales.

At the same time, the magazine has introduced a new, download-enhanced chart that more accurately measures those songs that truly are the most popular.

Dubbed the Pop 100 list, the new chart, with Ciara's "1, 2 Step" at the top, takes the radio portion of its data solely from Mainstream Top 40 stations. (The old Hot 100 list draws from a far wider variety of formats).

Adding downloads has already had a striking effect.

The Killers' "Mr. Brightside" didn't even make the previous Hot 100

Song list. This week, it's in the Top 40. Last week, Lenny Kravitz's "Lady" was at No. 40. The download factor boosted it to the mid-20s. Green Day's "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" shot from No. 8 to 4.

On the other end, the rapper Lloyd Banks has felt the sting of stingy downloads. His "Karma" plunged from the teens to the 30s.

"The new system brings the consumer's voice back onto the charts," explains Silvio Pietrolungo, who manages the new chart for Billboard. "Radio play is really important, but nothing replaces the consumer who actively buys a single."

roughly 1 percent, where it remains.

That left room for downloads, which have been escalating at a breathtaking clip. Right after Christmas, Billboard's chart mavens noticed a spike, from an average of 4 million or 5 million to more than 6 million for the week.

"Everyone was getting iPods and (download services) gift cards for presents," Pietrolungo explains.

Adding downloads has the potential to broaden the types of songs that enter the single chart, because listeners can choose any song from an album - old or new.

While radio's influence on the chart is reduced, Mayfield says, download information could help programmers choose a more popular mix. "It shows them directly what people really want," he says.

The new, two-fisted singles lists give everyone more, and different, information about what's popular. With its broad list of stations, the Hot 100 shows us which songs are getting the widest airing. With its sharper mainstream focus, the Pop list tells us which songs have the most popular appeal.

This can result in some notable differences in a song's position on the two charts. Currently, T.I.'s "Bring 'Em Out" is Top 12 on the Hot 100, but it's only No. 51 on the Pop list, because its play is far stronger on niche hip-hop and R&B stations.

Teen pop's Jesse McCartney's "Beautiful Soul" stands at 6 on Pop but 16 on the Hot 100, because he gets more play on mass-market Top 40 stations.

Observers expect the downloading factor on both charts to grow significantly. Pietrolungo wouldn't be surprised if it one day reached a 50 percent parity with radio. (Right now, downloads account for 33 percent of the overall chart.)

Regardless of how you measure popularity, adding downloads, and creating the Pop list, helps the charts get closer to their ultimate goal: accuracy.

*"The new system brings the consumer's voice back onto the charts."*

*-Silvio Pietrolungo, Billboard manager*

Over the years, that voice has been quieting to a whisper. While single sales were huge in the '60s and '70s, by the mid-'90s they had faded - a trend greatly encouraged by the labels themselves.

"The companies felt they were cannibalizing album sales," explains Billboard's Geoff Mayfield.

Increasingly, radio singles weren't even released to stores. When a song like No Doubt's "Don't Speak" was one of the nation's biggest songs in the '90s, it wasn't anywhere on Billboard's chart because the magazine would list only singles fans could buy in stores.

By December 1998, the magazine ended the ban on nonretail songs. But it still allowed sales of singles to account for fully 25 percent of its Hot 100 Song chart. Only in the last 18 months has that ratio plunged to

## Ruminations on College Life

By Aaron Karo  
(KRT)

Don't you love trying to sneak out of a class early? You gather all your books so that they can be easily grabbed and you move to the edge of your seat. You scan the aisles to see if there are any backpacks or sleeping kids that might block your path to the exit. Then you wait for just the right moment when the professor turns his back and starts to write on the board. It's your chance. You grab your books and tiptoe to the door, making sure to close it very quietly so as not to get the professor's attention. You made it! Freedom! I love college.

Is it OK to take the book you are reading in class to the bathroom with you? Once, I walked out of poly-sci with the huge textbook under my arm. When I came back ten minutes later, everyone was giving me looks. I mean, if you have to read something while on the can, it might as well be relevant to the class you're missing, right?

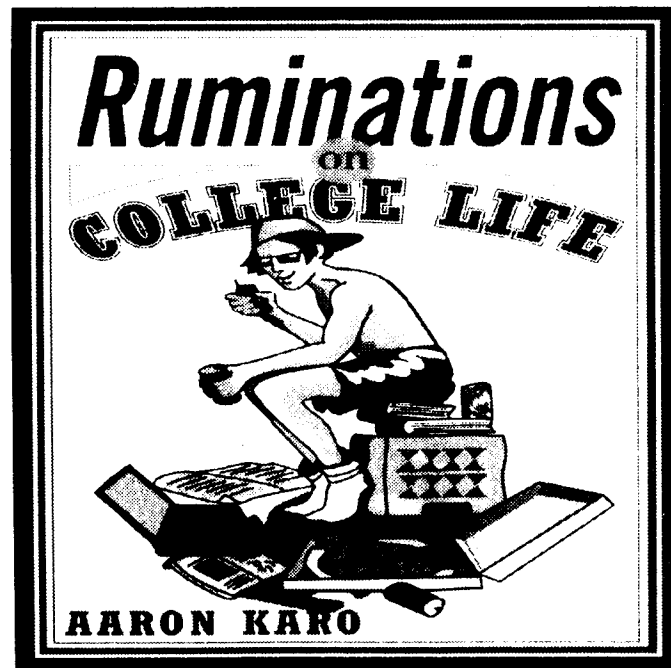
My friend Jeremy had an interesting experience with a professor once. He went to the professor's office hours to argue for more points on a paper he had just gotten back. The professor skimmed the paper, mulled it over for a minute and then said, "You know what? This paper is actually worse than I first thought. I'm going to lower your grade," and sent my friend on his way. What a sucker.

I love when the professor says, "OK, this next part is not going to be on the exam but I think you should know it anyway." She might as well say, "OK, for the next fifteen minutes don't pay attention at all, just do the crossword puzzle and play Snake on your cell phone while

I ramble on," because that's what we're going to do anyway.

I took this course once where the professor smoked a pipe during class. Kind of strange, but not really a big deal right? But listen to this: he even lets kids smoke cigarettes during class! I am not kidding. Everyone in the back was lighting up. How ridiculous is that? The only good thing is that with all the smoke in the room, no one even noticed when I left to go to the bathroom carrying the textbook!

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KRT CAMPUS

## Crossword

- ACROSS
- Festive affair
  - Links grp.
  - Ratify
  - Downfall
  - Melodramatic exclamation
  - Bar for lifting
  - Poetic tributes
  - Marshes
  - Bronte or Dickinson
  - "Higher Love" singer Steve
  - Ways up
  - Do it wrong
  - Deadlock
  - Experiment
  - Chicago stopover
  - Well-mannered
  - Harmless cysts
  - Beyond scientific explanation
  - Writer Hentoff
  - Small crown
  - Whitney or Wallach
  - Rousing agents
  - Jib or spinnaker
  - Wave tops
  - Spiteful
  - Items of info
  - Carnival city
  - Interdiction
  - Hillary's hill
  - Open footwear
  - Sweet treat
  - Sister/wife of Osiris
  - Pit-bull biter
  - Bridal path
  - Fill completely
  - Weaver's device
  - Runs away
  - Rolling stone's lack
  - Hankerings

- DOWN
- Get bigger
  - Autobahn auto
  - Claim on income
  - Responses
  - Piece of work
  - Trudge
  - Practical joke
  - Muggers
  - Actor Baldwin
  - Mother of Persephone
  - Of sheep
  - Bombards
  - Secret rendezvous
  - Galena or bauxite
  - Fishing nets
  - Ontario city
  - Has title to
  - Preliminary race
  - Debate side
  - Bloodsucker's way of life
  - Wee one
  - Punt propellers
  - Carnivore's choice
  - Came down to earth
  - Easter flower
  - Bad dog
  - Andrea of "Annie"
  - Bloodsucking pest

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### Solutions

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A	L	I	W	E	S	G	O	B	S	E	D	O
R	E	L	E	V	L	S	V	L	N	I	N	R
A	D	O	P	T	A	V	A	L	P	A	L	A

- Give the ax to
- Poses
- Low-boost coffee?
- Be of use to
- Nervous
- Foundations
- Checks out
- Medicinal plant
- Boxer Spinks
- Wanamaker and Waterston
- Portuguese saint

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