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DISABILITY ISSUES

ABC7's Karen Meyer

Music videos for deaf

November 7, 2002 — Most of the music videos that we see on TV are now captioned for people who are deaf. This has enabled them to learn the words to songs but not hear the music.

However, things could change with a new creative visual music for people who are deaf.

A motion graphic designer from Chicago has found a way to bring words to life that enables people who are deaf to hear the rhythm of the music.

"I picked Peter Gabriel's song, 'I Have The Touch' because it has a solid track. You can really play with the contrasts of the beat," said Gregg Brokaw, a motion graphic designer.

Gregg Brokaw created visual music for people who are deaf. Gregg is a motion graphic designer who specializes in typographic, animation and video designing.

While in college Gregg got the idea of helping deaf people visually hear music.

"I was reading a book by Oliver Sacks, it was called 'Seeing Voices.' He talks about how the deaf talk with their hands and it's a new way of thinking, it's a visual way of thinking," said Brokaw.

"I put the TV on mute and I saw that the closed captioning came up with the lyrics, but you couldn't really see what word was emphasized in the song or de-emphasized," said Brokaw.

Once he figured out how to combine music and words, he used his design expertise to make it work.

"I try to pick a typeface that sort of lends itself to the way that the word is being sung. If the words are being screamed out, it may appear really large with a heavy, thick typeface. If it's just whispered, maybe it'll appear really small on the screen," said Brokaw.

Visual music can be viewed on computer and TV.

To see if a visual music video will benefit the deaf community, Gregg send it to deaf students and educators in three different cities.

"I sent one to Boston, Hamilton, Ohio and Memphis, Tennessee and they all welcomed it with open arms," said Brokaw.

The next step for Gregg is to sell the product.

"I'm just a one-man shop trying to market my goods out there on the streets. It's tough, but slowly it's starting to gain some exposure, which is great," said Brokaw.

This summer Gregg's visual music video got an award from the Corporation on Disabilities and Telecommunication.

For more information visit www.brokawmotion.com or call 773-398-4745.

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