

MARK ROMANEK

Mark Romanek (born [September 18, 1959](#)) is an award-winning [American music video director](#) who has also moved into directing theatrical [films](#).

Romanek was born in [Chicago, Illinois](#). He credits seeing [Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey](#) in 1968 at the age of nine and again during its rerelease in 1973, with inspiring him to become a film director. ^{[1][2]} Romanek experimented with [Super 8](#) and [16mm film](#) as a teenager while attending [New Trier East](#), a progressive public high school north of Chicago that offered a four-year film production and theory program. At New Trier, Romanek studied under Kevin Dole, a local filmmaker who was already creating a form of music video on his own in the mid 1970's. Romanek subsequently attended [Ithaca College](#) in [Ithaca, New York](#), and graduated from its [Roy H. Park School of Communications](#) with a degree in cinema and photography.

Romanek served as 2nd [assistant director](#) for [Brian De Palma](#) on *Home Movies*, an autobiographical film De Palma conceived as an exercise for his students at [Sarah Lawrence College](#) (having returned to his alma mater after the shooting of *The Fury* as an instructor of film production). On set, Romanek met [Keith Gordon](#), playing De Palma's alter ego.

Gordon remembers Romanek's entrance into film production:

“ Yeah, I actually met a lot of people who became important in my life, but Mark being one of the people who was really huge. Mark wasn't even officially one of the students in the class. Mark was kind of like me – he was a film geek. He was from Chicago. And he had followed Brian around on the set of *The Fury* (1978) and gotten a job as like a production assistant on that movie. And when he heard that Brian was doing this project, he basically contacted him and said, 'Listen, can I come to New York and basically be like one of the students, even though I'm not technically in the class?' And Brian said, “Fine.” So Mark became the second-assistant director on the film.

"And he and I just hit it off pretty quickly. We had a similar passion for Stanley Kubrick. He showed me his short films, which I thought were really good and showed a lot of visual flair. We just laughed a lot and kind of became good friends really quickly."

He released his first film, *Static*, in 1985. It was co-written with and starred [Keith Gordon](#) as a man who claimed he had invented a [television](#) set capable of showing a live picture of [Heaven](#); [Amanda Plummer](#) also starred. The film achieved something of a cult following in [London](#) and led to his first job at the helm of a music video for the British [New Wave](#) group, [The The](#) (who featured on the soundtrack for *Static*), in 1986.

Music video career

After a few years writing screenplays, Romanek decided to focus on music videos and signed on with Satellite Films, a boutique division of [David Fincher's](#) Propaganda Films. His subsequent work has come to be regarded as among the best of the medium. He has worked with many top-selling recording artists from different genres of popular music, and his videos have been given credit for making stars out of some.

One of his earliest notable videos was for the [Nine Inch Nails](#) song "[Closer](#)". Its critical acclaim was only matched by its critical controversy, many accusing the video as being disturbing, demonic and demented (a big reason why the video was so popular among fans). Romanek would again work with [Nine Inch Nails](#) for the song 'The Perfect Drug'.

Romanek was given his first [Grammy Award](#) for [Best Short Form Video](#) in 1996 for "[Scream](#)," a collaboration between the pop superstar siblings [Michael Jackson](#) and [Janet Jackson](#). The video, which cost \$7 million to make, is cited as the most expensive ever made. Romanek won his second Grammy two years later, again with Janet Jackson, for her video "[Got 'Til It's Gone](#)."

In 2002, Romanek shot a video for [Audioslave's](#) "Cochise" in which the band performed in the midst of a prolonged pyrotechnic display of the intensity usually seen only during [fireworks](#) finales. The explosions were so loud during the night shoot in the [San Fernando Valley](#) that local police and fire departments received hundreds of calls from residents who feared that a terrorist attack was underway.

Romanek's 2002 music video for country music icon [Johnny Cash's](#) [cover](#) of [Nine Inch Nails'](#) "[Hurt](#)" has been hailed by many critics and fans alike as the most personal and moving music video ever made. The song expresses self-loathing and the futility of worldly accomplishments; this content took on a new poignancy when sung by Cash near the end of his life, quietly performing in his memorabilia-filled home, with shots of the flood-ravaged "House of Cash" museum and archival shots of a younger, cockier Cash edited in. The video was nominated for seven VMAs, winning one for cinematography, and also won Romanek his third Grammy.

Other Romanek videos that have received accolades and awards include the VMA winners "[Are You Gonna Go My Way](#)" ([Lenny Kravitz](#)), "[Rain](#)" ([Madonna](#)), "[Devil's Haircut](#)" ([Beck](#)), "[99 Problems](#)" ([Jay-Z](#)), "Free Your Mind" ([En Vogue](#)), and "[Criminal](#)" ([Fiona Apple](#)). Many others have also received nominations. In 1997, Romanek became the first filmmaker to receive the VMA Video Vanguard Award for his contribution to the medium. Two of Romanek's music videos, "[Closer](#)" by Nine Inch Nails, and "[Bedtime Story](#)" by Madonna, have been made part of the permanent collection of the [Museum of Modern Art](#) in [New York City](#).

Feature films

In 2002, Romanek wrote and directed his second full-length feature movie, [One Hour Photo](#), with [Robin Williams](#) in the lead role about a department store photo processor who becomes obsessed with a family through their snapshots. *One Hour Photo* proved to be only a moderate hit, but still established Romanek as a respected movie director. Rumors spread that the studio, [Fox Searchlight](#), had forced changes on Romanek that seriously altered the film from how he had intended it. He has disclaimed this story, however, stating that there never was a "director's cut" of *One Hour Photo* and that

studio did not exercise any editorial control. As of [2005](#), Romanek was scheduled to direct [Tom Hanks](#) in a film adaptation of the book, [A Cold Case](#) but the project seems to be languishing in [development hell](#). In December 2005, it was announced that he would direct [A Million Little Pieces](#), the film adaptation of the book of the same name but due to recent events regarding the authenticity of the book's content, it has also become a subject of speculation as to whether the film will indeed be made or not.

Romanek has also directed television commercials for [Apple Computer](#), [Acura](#), [Nike](#), [Calvin Klein](#), [American Express](#), [ESPN](#), [Saturn](#), [Honda](#), and [Cirque du Soleil](#). He is currently represented for music videos and commercials by a company called Anonymous Content.

Currently, he is rumored to be directing the upcoming [biopic](#) chronicling the early life of the late actor [Marlon Brando](#) entitled "Brando," written by Ercan Bas.

On February 8th, 2007 he signed on to direct the [remake](#) of [The Wolf Man](#), set to be released in spring 2009.

Feature Films

- *Static* (1985)
- [One Hour Photo](#) (2002)
- [The Wolfman](#) (*in development*) (2009)

Music video filmography

- "Buzz" [Pop's Cool Love](#)
- "Sweet Bird of Truth," [The The](#) (1986)
- "Madonna Of The Wasps" [Robyn Hitchcock & The Egyptians](#) (1989)
- "One Long Pair Of Eyes" [Robyn Hitchcock & The Egyptians](#) (1989)
- "[You Don't Have to Worry](#)," [En Vogue](#) (1990)
- "Ring Ring Ring (Ha Ha Hey)" [De La Soul](#) (1991)
- "Love Conquers All" [ABC](#) (1991)
- "Wicked As It Seems," [Keith Richards](#) (1992)
- "Moira Jane's Cafe" [Definition Of Sound](#) (1992)
- "Constant Craving," [k.d. lang](#) (1992)
- "[Free Your Mind](#)," [En Vogue](#) (1992)
- "[Are You Gonna Go My Way](#)," [Lenny Kravitz](#) (1993)
- "[Jump They Say](#)," [David Bowie](#) (1993)
- "[Black Tie White Noise](#)," [David Bowie](#) (1993)
- "[Rain](#)," [Madonna](#) (1993)
- "Is There Any Love In Your Heart," [Lenny Kravitz](#) (1993)
- "Beside You" [Iggy Pop](#) (1994)
- "[Closer](#)," [Nine Inch Nails](#) (1994)
- "Cold Beverage," [G. Love & Special Sauce](#) (1994)
- "[Bedtime Story](#)," [Madonna](#) (1995)
- "[Strange Currencies](#)," [R.E.M.](#) (1995)
- "[Scream](#)," [Michael Jackson](#) & [Janet Jackson](#) (1995)
- "[Little Trouble Girl](#)," [Sonic Youth](#) (1996)

- "[Novocaine for the Soul](#)," [Eels](#) (1996)
 - "[El Scorcho](#)," [Weezer](#) (1996)
 - "[Devils Haircut](#)" [Beck](#) (1996)
 - "[The Perfect Drug](#)," [Nine Inch Nails](#) (1997)
 - "[Criminal](#)," [Fiona Apple](#) (1997)
 - "[Got 'Til It's Gone](#)," [Janet Jackson](#) (1997)
 - "[If You Can't Say No](#)," [Lenny Kravitz](#) (1998)
 - "[Do Something](#)," [Macy Gray](#) (1999)
 - "[I Try](#)" (second version), [Macy Gray](#) (1999)
 - "Sleepwalker," [The Wallflowers](#) (2000)
 - "God Gave Me Everything," [Mick Jagger](#) (2001)
 - "[Hella Good](#)," [No Doubt](#) (2002)
 - "[Cochise](#)," [Audioslave](#) (2002)
 - "[Hurt](#)," [Johnny Cash](#) (2002)
 - "[Can't Stop](#)," [Red Hot Chili Peppers](#) (2003)
 - "[Faint](#)," [Linkin Park](#) (2003)
 - "[99 Problems](#)," [Jay-Z](#) (2004)
 - "[Speed of Sound](#)", [Coldplay](#) (2005)
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