

Meet the Horseback-Riding Swordsman Behind '80s-Style Fantasy Video "Shine On Me"

12/23/08

Not many of us had ever heard of singer Chris Dane Owens before this month, when an epic, self-financed video for his song "Shine On Me" went viral, delivering four minutes of swords and sorcery, winged dragons and slick '80s-style pop to online music fans. It's being celebrated and reviled as retro escapism or monumental cheese, as the pouty, platinum-haired Owens sings of "the light of love," drawing a tidal wave of online hits to YouTube and his own site since December 5th.



That came immediately after "Shine On Me" was excerpted on G4 television's "Attack of the Show," where the video's retro sound and vision were gently mocked and praised, showing Owens on horseback, battling swords, fireballs and a masked villain when not riffing on a leprechaun-green electric guitar. Owens says the video (directed by

Oscar-winning makeup and special effects artist Robert Short) attracted just 247 hits in the two months before that, and 1.7 million hits since.

"Wow, there's really something here that people either really like or don't like," says Owens, who is also an independent TV producer ("Instant Beauty Pageant," "Who Gets the Dog?") and is the son of Gary Owens from *Laugh In*. "I'm reading the fan mail and it makes me want to cry. People are watching this 30 and 40 times in a row and they can't wait for the song to come out on iTunes."

Owens says the song is part of an album he hopes to release in February, and he plans at least two more videos to continue the saga begun in "Shine On Me," which takes place in his imagined Arra of the Third Kingdom. That story was inspired by the likes of *Braveheart*, *Last of the Mohicans* and *Lord of the Rings*, with maidens and witches, wolves, wind-blown hair, special effects and wardrobe borrowed from the Warner Bros. costume department. "I realize this is not everyone's cup of tea, and I respect that greatly," he says of those who see "Shine" as laughable camp. "Fantasy is camp, in a way. Let's jump into Chris' world and make-believe with him that witches really have mighty wands, just like in *Harry Potter*. We've got to make believe that all these things are really happening."

Owens is now fielding calls about movie and book rights, but especially hopes to see the story translated into a Manga comic book. He's already signed a deal to have the video shown in thousands of retail locations, spreading "Shine" into malls, fitness centers and restaurants across the U.S. and Canada beginning in January. "I have no label backing so far at all. I'm doing this all on my own," says Owens. "Something deep inside of me said, I need to do this. This is very important to me. I've got a lot riding on this, you could say. But just doing it was so joyful and so exciting."

Steve Appleford