

Headlights

Buffyann

Achievement in Vidding: Shortlist 2007
Achievement in Use of Music: Shortlist 2007

The review below may contain spoilers for new *Battlestar Galactica* up to the end of season 3.

Brad: Every time I watch this vid, one word comes to mind: Hypnotic. Watching it is like entering a trance state, and I think it's really interesting how well Buffyann uses the different elements of song and source to achieve that. There's this giant flow of inevitability that pulls you right into Starbuck's fevered mind, and then down toward her destiny.

Nicky: A lot of that can be attributed to how well the song and visuals meld together. This isn't the kind of song that one immediately associates with Starbuck, yet it somehow just *works*.

Brad: I actually find it tough to break out of the vid's spell and focus on the individual building blocks since it invites you to see the "big picture" flow instead of the elements. It's like trying to wake up from a really insistent dream.

Nicky: I agree. It's hard to categorise this vid in terms of narrative segments. Instead, one aspect simply flows on from the next, all serving to emphasise the loneliness and pain of Starbuck's existence.

Brad: She highlights a push-and-pull motion in the source throughout (like at 1:11-1:15), using it as a metaphor for the character's internal struggle. She weaves together contrasting elements of the source, bouncing back and forth between "shaky cam" action and smooth-motion reveals, to match the different layers of the music - and does it in a way that it feels like you're seeing everything at once.

Nicky: I love that the smooth camera motion is "assigned" to the ethereal synth sound, whereas the shakycam is "assigned" to emphasise the beats. As you said, it's a fantastic way of using visuals to reflect layers the music. I don't think I've seen many vids that do it so distinctively.

Brad: I think it's really ingenious the way she visualizes the percussion during the dreamy vocal sections with some beautiful, subtle motion on the music - like Starbuck's shifting eyes at 0:27 - and almost always with some sort of smooth, "floating" external motion on top of it to reflect the vocal layer.

Nicky: The ghosting was definitely one of the highlights for me as well. It's used sparingly - as you said it echoes elements in the music. For me, it also makes sense from a narrative point of view - the ghosting effects are used to highlight moments that feel particularly disconnected.

Brad: Buffyann's technique of quickly cutting away from an impactful visual and then coming back to it a bit later - like at 0:49-0:52 - also adds to the hypnotic feel. You can't have a mesmerizing, throbbing, pulsing pace AND smooth-moving, pensive reflection, can you?

Nicky: ... I think that's a rhetorical question.

Brad: Watching it in retrospect, the second image - the hand reaching out - seems ominous. But, like everything else in the vid, it's deceptively beautiful. The clip that I think is the most important in the opening is the one of Starbuck dreaming at 0:11. Not only does it help reinforce the vid's theme and visual identity, it helps you as the viewer identify with her and get swept along into her journey. The different reflections of the "Maelstrom" image fly at you as sort of a thesis statement and, again, you feel as though you're seeing them in Starbuck's mind, particularly in the sequence from 0:18 to 0:20. Her struggles feel increasingly more desperate as the vid goes along, but also increasingly small and meaningless set against the bigness of the universe's machinations and fate's plan for her.

Nicky: What I find striking is the way that this vid uses some incredibly violent images, and yet never fails to keep the dreamy, hypnotic mood. My personal favourite moment was 1:56, where the music changes and the world shatters, but it remains heartbreakingly smooth and lovely.

If anything, the violence in the clips define the flow of the second half, where they constantly offset Starbuck in an increasingly pensive, resigned state. The pacing in this segment is just superb.

Brad: By the time we get to Starbuck opening her eyes to "The headlights are burning / they don't know love" at 2:00, we're one with Starbuck, being pulled inexorably toward the ending, through the inescapable, mesmerizing flow of it all. It's sad, but in an impossibly beautiful way. And I can't... stop... watching!

Nicky: I've got the song on my MP3 player and each time I hear it, I can't shake the images from my head. It's definitely got a lot of replay value.



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