

Brandon

Foomatic

Achievement in Vidding: Shortlist 2008

The review below may contain spoilers for the film *Boys Don't Cry*.

Brad: This is, without a doubt, the most stark, emotionally striking video I saw in 2008.

Foomatic's presentation is kinetic and in-your-face, and the tension builds throughout along with the pace. The vidder manages to make the world look nightmarish and beautiful at the same time, with beautiful visuals and a sense of breathlessly plunging forward, but always with an ominous undercurrent. That's partly because she does such a fantastic job of foreshadowing (on lyrics like "what's to come") and giving us fractured glimpses of the emotion beneath the surface via jump cuts, shifts to negative, or a sudden drop to a stark black and white.

Nicky: This vid is incredibly intense and darkly satisfying. From a technical angle, my favourite aspect is the use of colouring. The shifts to negative and B&W, as you mentioned, and also the fantastic freeze-frames and beautifully intuitive use of shifts in brightness and contrast. It adds so much emotional punch to the piece. I get shivers every time I see the moment at 0:37 frozen in time, or the chillingly garish rotating shot at 1:34 snapping in and out of view.

Brad: I love the offbeat pacing throughout. It feels so organic, and also serves the mood extremely well. You're never quite comfortable while watching, and that's as it should be.

When it falls into the flow of the drums, starting with that *gorgeous* time toggle at 0:45, you feel the same way the character feels at that moment - purely through the editing. That's a tremendous achievement and such an incredible asset to have as an editor when putting together an emotional journey like this.

Nicky: Following on from that, my personal favourite areas of editing are where the guitars are really picked up as the centrepiece to aid the visuals. The beautiful flow of the road segment from 0:05 to 0:10, for example, or the wonderful time-lapse shot of the clouds at 0:44 echoing the synth, right before the lovely time toggle that you mentioned. I also particularly love the clip used where the drums first kick in at 0:46 - there is just something so incredibly swaggering and *right* about that moment that leads beautifully into a sense of freefall.

Brad: And I don't think that freefall would have nearly as much impact without the momentum that it builds from this segment.

The jump cuts at 0:49 and the little moments of lipsync at 0:52 and 1:07 are a couple of great examples of the brilliant moments of musicality all through. The time toggle and jump cuts at 1:27 work extremely well with the flow of emotions.

Nicky: I really love these jump cuts. They make the events - even the positive ones - seem so sinister from early on, that you can't help but watch for everything to go wrong.

Brad: It also uses metaphors extremely well, like the opening, with the dark road stretching out ahead. Terrific use of facial expressions to lead you through the emotions, as well.

Another way the vidder uses editing skill to lead us through the emotion is by throwing the pace into overdrive starting at 1:08, and you very quickly feel the sense of no longer being in control. The emotional intensity and violence build again at 1:45, and you're pretty much breathless. I also really like the use of black space in the ending segment starting at 2:07 and how it helps hammer home the power of the moment.

Nicky: The thing that fascinated me the most is how Foomatic assigned the roles of "you" and "me" throughout the vid. The character's identity crisis is built directly into the notion of sexual identity crisis; this concept is presented in an incredibly succinct way through devices such as the mirroring at 0:27. The part that really brought it home for me was the "my whole life revolves around your absence" segment from 1:13 to 1:19. I get the strong feeling that Brandon is talking to Teena at this point, and for me the whole vid, more than anything else, becomes a complex exploration of what it means to be Brandon - not just what it means to be male, but what it means to be a young white male in small town USA, and all the issues of power, posturing and dominance that come with the territory.

Brad: And speaking as someone who was a young white male in small town USA, I'd say Foomatic is dead on the mark with how she portrays it.

Nicky: Foomatic makes incredible use of the source image of a violated Teena at 1:42 looking up to see Brandon coolly staring back at her. That image comes at just the right time - after the intervening storm of violent clips and editing - to really make the message hit home.

At the end of the day, I feel that this vid is not just about someone who tries to make society define him by who he *is* rather than by his biology, and it's not just a love story between Brandon and Lana, though it is both these things. It seems to touch on a very real and universal issue about how we try to define ourselves - the "superstar," that "real me" that we alone fully understand - through external means.

Brad: That's part of the reason why it's so easy to identify with, both as a retelling of the film and as a more complex statement.

Nicky: Like the film, this vid leaves you thinking long after the end credits roll.