

Beautiful Struggle

NC

Achievement in Vidding: Winner 2008
Achievement in Use of Music: Shortlist 2008

The review below may contain spoilers for Harry Potter (films 1-5, books 1-7).

Brad: I believe that the best vids are the ones that are immensely fun to watch, that get better and better on rewatch, and that also make you think. Few that I've seen have fit that description as well as NC's Beautiful Struggle.

Nicky: I think that juxtaposition between watchability and message is really important. Personally, the thing that I love most about this vid is how tightly it connects to the Potterverse, using the characters as a gateway to the political and social implications of the wider background.

Brad: The song is the gateway to that, and it's one that I never would have connected to the fandom. What an audacious song choice! And yet NC so thoroughly owns it that now every time I see Harry Potter footage I think of American hip hop.

I think that's because the lyric ties are so well-done here. The vidder expresses every word - in rapid-fire fashion - in a way that's clever, visually interesting, and thought-provoking. It's visual hip hop!

Nicky: I am beyond impressed by how on-point the lyric matches are throughout, the way they never feel forced, and how every line builds toward the greater picture.

Brad: My favorite is one of the most obvious recurring devices: "Please excuse me while I laugh" (at your plan to change the world). I love how the speaker progresses from Draco & gang at 0:33, to Snape at 0:45, to Lucius at 1:45, to Bellatrix at 1:52, to that fade to black and white of Voldemort on the last image. Those connections really help to carry the viewer through the story.

All of the connections to politics and social struggle are brilliant as well - paralleling the frustration of Hogwarts/wizard society and disenfranchised voters, the Democrats/Republicans lyric, and the tie for "everybody act according to the season that they're born in" at 2:22. I love what that says about the human condition and how that reflects on the source material. It really helps you see the fandom in a different way, which I believe is one of the best qualities a vid can have.

Nicky: I started listing my favourite moments, and then quickly realised that I was listing every lyric, so that wasn't going to work.

Brad: I did the same thing and then stopped!

Nicky: Although, in the course of doing that I figured out the reason why I love the lyrics is because they are just so appropriately used for the themes, particularly the ones touched on in the Order of the Phoenix. The enemy is twofold: the straight-up enemy in the form of Voldemort and the Death Eaters, and the much more insidious enemy in the form of the bureaucracy and frightened self-denial of public opinion.

This message is expressed to its fullest potential in this vid. Aside from the "the season they're born in" line that you mentioned above, I had a strong personal reaction to the "And the muh'fuckin' Democrats is actin' like Republicans" line. The production aesthetic of the Wizengamot in the film indicates a clear-cut distinction between the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and this lyric match cleverly offsets those concepts against those in the American political system.

Brad: It's a moment that, when you see it in the vid, looks so clear-cut and obvious. It's one of those moments when I just laugh because it's so amazingly perfect the way it all fits together - the song, the fandom, the concept - and then am totally sold on all three.

Nicky: Another particularly telling part, for me, was the "They call me the political rapper/Even after I tell 'em I don't fuck with politics/I don't even follow it" lyrical segment. There is just something so incredibly ironic about the way the visuals were paired with the music here.

Though, like Brad said, the beauty of this vid is that it says more about the human condition than about any particular system. By using the Potterverse as a springboard, this vid comments equally on the microcosm of fandom through to the political power structures in the world today. This vid really serves to show that the issue isn't inherent in any particular system; it's inherent in *us*.

Brad: While also illustrating the importance of working to change things as opposed to sitting around and hoping someone else does it; illustrated by the fate of Snape and the past of the Sirius Black family ("Black history").

I feel like every time I watch it I discover a new, brilliant connection. For instance, the section at 1:21 which describes Harry being forced down his path. Yet it can also be playful, which is part of what makes it such a joy to rewatch. As it points out at 2:04, "laughter is the best medicine."

Nicky: Yes. For all my reading into the meta-commentary one could find in this vid, at the end of the day it's crucial to remember that it's a fantastically put-together vid which is extremely entertaining and watchable. I love how cheeky it is sometimes - the "revolution" lyric match at 0:08, for example, or the wink to the "uh uh" at 1:37. And, most importantly in relation to what you touched on, there is a heart-warming core in this vid which suggests strongly, despite everything that's wrong with this world, Harry, his friends and his family - whether biological or otherwise - are trying to change it, and at the end of the day they succeed. Hermione punching out Draco at 2:39 is the ultimate representation of that.

Brad: On a technical level, it's clean and crisp with flawless pacing. Source motion and effects are used extremely well, and the consistent jump cuts go a long way to attaching the footage to the song in a seamless way. There are some really nice moments of internal motion, as well, like Hermione at 0:20, and I love the little pause at 2:14.

Nicky: I really love those jump cuts. They really give the vid a distinctive personality. Ditto the transitional effects - as a device, transitions are so easy to use and so *hard* to be used well; NC manages it perfectly, for example at 0:46, 0:49 or 2:18. There is such a sense of meaningful whimsy to it.

Brad: This is a vid that's aptly named. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm off to go watch it again.

Nicky: Me too. We are extremely pleased to honour this vid as the winner of the Achievement in Vidding award for the 2008 round.



THE FOURTH WALL
