

Unsteady Ground

Cherry

Achievement in Vidding: Shortlist 2009

The review below may contain spoilers for Merlin season 1.

Nicky: Unsteady Ground rather reminds me of an epic poem which, even while you're reading about the shining exploits of the larger-than-life heroes and heroines in their heyday, you cannot help the knowledge that one day all of it will end in tragedy.

This is an apt sentiment to apply to Merlin. For all its campy fun and its position as a family-friendly show, the narrative by its very nature alludes to a not-too-distant future where everything must rise and then inevitably fall. "We're all walking on unsteady ground" indeed.

Brad: It's a classic concept, very Shakespearean, and here it makes the source look epic and majestic, but also gives it a sense of foreboding. You can feel that whether you're into the show or not, partially because the vidder is relying on the wider canon of the Arthurian legend, which is more universal.

But it works so well because of the vidder's powerful style of presentation. It throbs and hums along in a way that feels timeless and unstoppable. You do get the sense that all of this is predestined, and we're just watching to see how it will wind its way to where it must go.

Nicky: The thing that I love most about this vid is how well it moves, effortlessly gliding from one character to the next through gorgeous external motion, encompassing the whole of this fictional world with such liquid grace. For every moment of blood-stirring wonder such as 1:23, there's "an earthquake" such as Lancelot rising to his feet at 1:26, subtly telling of the events to come. From Gwen lying falsely accused in jail at 1:41, to Morgana stirring fitfully in her sleep, to Arthur lying unconscious, the paralleled positions and motion only serve to emphasize that everybody is caught up in this tide of destiny. The falling swords from 2:25 - 2:27 again bring this notion forward with masterful ease.

Morgana is cast in the role of seer and narrator in this vid, being canonically one of the few characters who are able to comprehend the coming darkness, even if it does not appear to her with utter clarity. Likewise, the audience of Unsteady Ground is provided with snippets of images that add up to an encroaching darkness, even though nothing particularly bad has happened... yet.

Brad: It's interesting that as someone who doesn't watch the show, I find it so incredibly easy to identify with Morgana and her vision of the events. She's an anchor for me as a viewer and brings me into this world. That's a real credit to Cherry's narrative skill.

Nicky: I also find it intriguing how the narrative develops toward the latter half of the vid, as Morgana and Merlin, so alike at first, seem to go their separate ways. The former advises

caution while the latter goes on to aid Arthur. Again, this uncomfortably foreshadows these two characters' respective destinies, highlighted by Morgana's furrowed brow, thinking of Arthur's hand falling limply by his side even as Merlin raises Excalibur in hope and wonder.

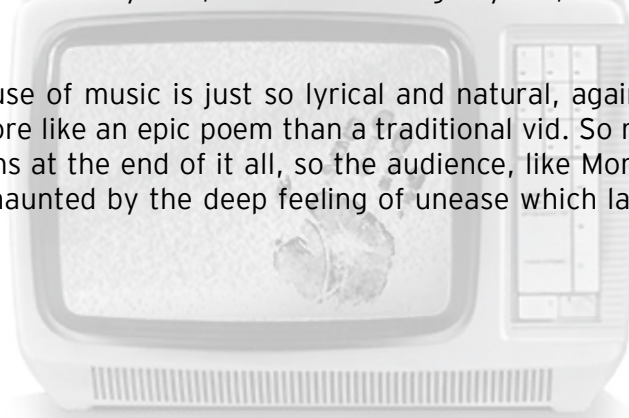
There are some fantastic visual links in this vid, not necessarily in the sense of strict parallels or continued motion, but rather in the feel of the visuals, such as the "ride that slick" segment at 2:14 - 2:18, or in the upward motion of air and fire at 2:45 - 2:48. The lyric use is also often gorgeous, and I'm particularly in love with the use of the "you love god yes, you love your president / you want them both but we must keep them separate" line.

Brad: There are brilliant moments of audio/visual sync all through that just make me go "wow!" as I'm watching. One of my favorite is the storm cloud at 2:10. WOW.

Nicky: I particularly enjoyed the way the music is used at the small segment from 1:53, with the sound of grains running through fingers, both Morgana and Merlin rising to their feet, their eyes trained toward... Arthur, who steps forward confidently, not knowing that he's "standing on unsteady ground".

Brad: The song is such an inspired match for the source, from the vid's broad "unsteady ground" concept to the folksy feel, to the marching rhythm, and the vidder really uses it masterfully.

Nicky: This kind of use of music is just so lyrical and natural, again emphasising my feeling that this vid feels more like an epic poem than a traditional vid. So much remains unsaid, and only a feeling remains at the end of it all, so the audience, like Morgana, is left gasping as if after a bad dream, haunted by the deep feeling of unease which lasts long after the vid has ended.



THE FOURTH WALL
