

I Promise

Loki

Achievement in Mood - Shortlist 2011
Achievement in Vidding - Shortlist 2011

The review below may contain spoilers for **Supernatural**.

HWG: I don't know about you but personally I've found there's a much greater chance I'll immediately connect to a vid if I know either the source or the music. So when a vid comes along to a source that I don't know, using music I don't know but still manages to grab ahold of me... hell, then I listen. Maybe I benefit from the fact that I only know vague things about the context of the source (Dean = Team Angels, Sam = Team Demons) but I found I Promise to be an exceptional character study delivered to us by a very surefooted (surehanded?) vidder.

Nicky: I've always been quite intrigued by just how much emotional engagement can come from watching vids without much (or any) knowledge of source context, and your reaction to this vid certainly falls into that category.

HWG: The first thing that caught my attention is the sound design. In my experience I've always found picture overshadows sound, which I suppose makes some sort of anthropological sense as basically we've been telling stories visually since the very first cave paintings. Here I can really feel the art in the *design*, not only through the use of song and audio clips but also through added sound effects like the "snikt" of the blade at 0:13, the heart beat at 1:00 - 1:07, the exhale at 1:19 and of course the final ominous wall punching at 3:07.

Nicky: Apart from the visuals and the music, it's like the audio "effects" - for lack of a better word - very much became its own track in this vid, taking on its own distinct role in creating the overall experience.

HWG: Visually the vid is stunning. From the coloring of individual clips to the use of gradients and filters it all feels organic to the concept and never detracts from the story. In fact the color palette reminded me of the stained glass window we saw at 0:56 - 0:57, I could even say that about the effect that begins at 1:44. This is a rarity nowadays since we live in a world where so many YouTube vids tend to drown in their own effects.

Nicky: It's one thing to use effects, but quite another to use them *well* and in a cohesive way that really adds to the viewing experience. The thing I really like about I Promise is how much the colouring and effects work add to the overall mood of the piece, be it the gradient overlays in dramatic reds and yellows, or the more subtle alterations to all the clips in terms of brightness and contrast. It all seems designed to draw the viewer's eye and mind to what's really emotionally significant.

HWG: Picture and sound are so congruous within the framework that I can't imagine this vid having this much impact if, let's say, Sam's narration was removed. The voice over set up the narrative clearly, making Sam's plight easy to follow. I always find that any abstract concept can be sold if boiled down to something we can all understand, even empathize with. Here there are no specific

details to the canon that would have been lost on me, instead we witness something that's more of a universal struggle and I really connected with that.

I use the word "struggle" because that's entirely the theme of this story. Sam slowly loses control, just as he feared he might. Around 1:43 his demonic nature begins to take hold and this is my favorite part of the vid. The song shifts and suddenly we hear these electronic pulses in the music which almost mirror the heart beat from earlier. With every pulse it's as if the demon's bad blood pumps further and further into Sam until we get 2:57 - 2:58 which reminds me of a passage from American Psycho: "Is evil something you are? Or is it something you do? My pain is constant and sharp and I do not hope for a better world for anyone. In fact, I want my pain to be inflicted on others. I want no one to escape."

Nicky: I love that observation about the electronic pulse being "the bad heartbeat", so to speak. And the vid clearly shows that evil is very much inside Sam, infecting all that he's doing, and he's fighting it with all that he has and yet it's not enough.

HWG: Sam wants salvation. His fight to rein in the demon is such an honest effort that as a viewer I almost felt guilt for sitting by idly and watching his torture. And it is torture. The vidder really succeeds in translating the claustrophobia and helplessness of a trapped animal. There are numerous shots of Sam physically bound, in some cases strangling. I loved how these shots are repeated over and over but intercut with cropped images of mouths. In moments like 3:01 it's so clear that he's suffocating and gasping for air. At 3:03 when he breaches the water it's a great callback to what he said at 1:30... "There's so much evil in the world I feel like I could drown in it."

Nicky: It's certainly very hard to watch, especially in the moments where we call back to visuals of kid!Sam and the Sam of earlier seasons, and you can really see the toll that these years and events have had on him. The loss of innocence and hope is palpable, especially in the endgame as the vid slowly burns toward the inevitable conclusion.

HWG: I found it really interesting that there seems to be a conscious choice to keep Dean out of this vid. Like at 1:15 where he walks away and there's the sound of the motorcycle leaving. Or at 2:21 and 2:35 where it just looks like Dean doesn't fully grasp the scope of Sam's troubles. Sam himself said he's all alone in this and that makes perfect sense. It's an internal struggle, something only *he* can overcome. However, the ending hints at a much bleaker outcome.

"How can you run from what's inside?" Asks young Sam. As the metaphoric pounding breaks the final notes of the song I recall the exit sign at 3:04 and something else from American Psycho pops into my head: "This is not an exit."

THE FOURTH WALL
