

&Nothing

SmokeyFizz

Honorary Award 2011: obsessive24's choice

The review below may contain spoilers for *Supernatural* to the end of season 5.

Nicky: As much as I love a "clean" vid with simple cutting and no effects, I am equally enthralled by vids that make use of the range of tools available at a vidder's disposal. In the case of the painfully beautiful &Nothing, it feels less like a *video* than it is a series of moving paintings, it's that meticulously put together, layered and visually stunning.

HWG: I got the feeling that I was viewing an experimental film. It was just so put together yet essentially a complete mystery to me, seeing as I don't watch *Supernatural*.

Nicky: For me, the thing that particularly jumps out from this vid is the flawless masking and composition work. From season 4 onward, *Supernatural* and *Constantine* just seem like a natural fit when it comes to external source, I've done it myself. But the thing that really sets &Nothing apart is how it takes that basic approach and creates something truly flawless out of the discrete sources.

HWG: Ok I must admit that it's been a good long while since I've seen *Constantine* and I epically failed to pick up on the fact that both sources were used. That's entirely a testament to the vidders since I believed the entire thing was footage from SPN.

Nicky: Haha, if *Supernatural* had that sort of CGI budget, then we wouldn't need to constantly turn to *Constantine* (oh dear, sorry, couldn't help it!) every time we needed external source.

HWG: I even thought the figure at 0:50, 1:00, and 1:04 was supposed to be Sammy in a suit!

Nicky: Actually, the first two are Sam, but the third is Keanu. It bodes well that you can't distinguish between them!

HWG: Well then color me surprised! But now that you've confirmed those shots as Sam, I adore them even more.

Nicky: From the backgrounds blipping in and out of Dean's consciousness at 0:18, 0:21 and 0:27, to the precise positioning of Alastair at 0:59 and Lucifer at 1:52, it's this kind of attention to detail that really brings the vid to life and makes the idea of hell feel so incredibly immediate.

HWG: That Alastair dissolve is a thing of beauty! There are just so many brilliant moments like that in this vid and every one of them is meticulously thought out and precise. I now see how clear the parallel between Dean and Sam and John Constantine really is. These men are navigating hell, as expressed by the shots of the road right side up and upside down.

Nicky: The masking is also a thing of beauty. I'm particularly taken by Castiel's unfurling wings at 0:25 and 0:34. Again, speaking from the perspective of someone who's tried that exact exercise - only far less successfully - this whole vid just feels so incredibly intricate yet effortless.

HWG: Castiel unfurling his wings at 0:25 is the moment that struck me immediately upon first watch. It's not only a gorgeous example of masking, but it's such an evocative shot that perfectly matches the long, dramatic beat in the music. And speaking of musicality, I feel like starting at 1:39 it's like the vidders stepped on the gas pedal! The smooth added motion seems to morph from one shot to the next and practically sucks the audience into hell with Sam and Dean.

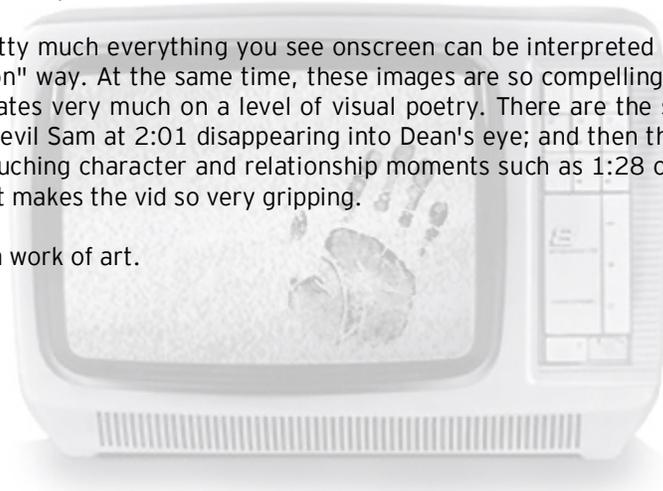
Nicky: As a mood-based narrative, the vid is very skilful in how it builds up the sense of growing desperation, how the perspective gradually shifts from Dean to Sam, and culminates in sacrifice and loss. The vidders use a range of methods to achieve this, from colour manipulation to textures and blurs, the intriguing interplay between light and shadow, speed changes, voiceovers, and gorgeous-but-unexpected visual moments such as the upside-down road 0:54.

HWG: The upside-down road reminds me of another one of these gorgeous-but-unexpected moments. The zoom out on the overhead shot at 1:55 sees a character turn to his left while pointing a shotgun. The footage is slowed down so much that it stutters. However, the effect works so well that suddenly I'm seeing the gun become the hand of a clock ticking backwards. It's a striking image considering how clocks and time feature so heavily in the context of the vid and in the story.

Nicky: Oh man, I totally didn't notice that. How cool!

On one level, pretty much everything you see onscreen can be interpreted in a literal "this is what happened in canon" way. At the same time, these images are so compelling and extraordinary that the vid also operates very much on a level of visual poetry. There are the surrealist moments like the two-headed devil Sam at 2:01 disappearing into Dean's eye; and then there are the tiny sparks of emotionally-touching character and relationship moments such as 1:28 or 1:30. It's the mixture of everything that makes the vid so very gripping.

HWG: It really is a work of art.



THE FOURTH WALL
