

Hawthorne Heights

"Niki FM".

Record Label: Victory Records

Director: Major Lightner

Production: MotivFilms

Treatment: Dana Fabbro

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The Atmosphere

Hawthorne Heights stars in a decidedly off-center clip that invokes the unexpected, improbable reality of Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums*. Filtered through this perpetually warped world, the video is framed around "Say Anything", the genre-busting teen romance movie where a noble underachiever falls in love with the beautiful valedictorian--just before their world is torn apart. But all comparisons end there.

Instead of a predictable, linear reality the story is revealed in a time-warped, fictionalized world of ever-changing backdrops and digitally created settings that quickly morph from one scene to the next. Composited locations shift and change as Hawthorne Heights is woven in to the ever-changing digital fabric of this unexpected, somber tale. Here, graphics are turned inside-out and recreated in to a meta-reality of fascinating, unsettling images.

The Video

The video opens on graduation day. As the song starts, we find J.T. at a podium—he's the valedictorian "singing" the graduation-day speech. As his vocals reach out to the assembled cap and gowned audience of fresh-faced, soon-to-be graduates, there's one face we can't ignore--Diane. She's radiant, beautiful, smart. The reason GPA's go up to 4.0. Her face is bathed in pure, golden sunlight. But just a few rows and a world of possibilities away is another face—Lloyd's. His eyes dart back and forth to Diane, trying desperately not to stare. But one look tells us all we need to know about him—he's helplessly, totally, irreversibly in love. His eyes never leave Diane as everyone bursts in to applause, as the "speech" ends.

On a smooth transition, students toss a thousand black mortarboard caps in to the air cued to JT's first scream. The caps morph in to countless black ravens flying overhead which leads us to a nighttime, post-graduation "kegger. One of the ravens flies past a "Class Of 1989" banner and lands outside a window, balances with scratchy claws on the sill. Through the window, we glimpse Lloyd and Diane on an awkwardly out of synch first date. She's coy, he's nervous. She reaches for a beer, he beats her to it, but instead of handing it to her, knocks it down the front of her dress. Then we pull back out, through the window and to the lawn where we're with Hawthorn Heights as they perform the track.

The settings are digitally created, so the oddball assortment of characters--jocks, preps, skids and outcasts look and feel like one-dimensional cut-outs. As an option, the band can literally "crash" the party, that is rip through reality's fabric and in to the setting.

A seamless edit later and we're face to face with another false reality Diane's blue ribbon, two story home. But in this heightened reality, things change in the blink of a thought. JT's next guttural scream proves that as it causes the seconds-ago bright geraniums to quickly overgrow the home's walkway, wilt to brown and die. The residence's façade peels back like a tin can, and we move in to the dining room. The

shifting-as-we-go reality is driven to disturbing re-creation by the energy of the track.

Seated at the table, Lloyd faces the dreaded “forced family dinner” where he meets Diane's dad, an upper middle-class jackal complete with smoking jacket. An over-protective father, dad does what he can to ward-off this new threat to his one and only. While he dotes loving attention on his daughter he “accidentally” soaks Lloyd's lap with a pot of scalding coffee. With wet-pants and wounded pride, Lloyd confronts dad, as an unknowing Diane comes to her father's aid. When Lloyd storms out of the house, a heartbroken, confused Diane locks herself in her bathroom.

There, she chain-smokes and repeatedly toggles the phone receiver with her toes, cat and mousing a love struck Lloyd who's on the losing end of a now dead pay phone receiver. Back through her window, we find Hawthorne Heights outside the house on the lawn, jamming. With Lloyd dispatched, dad refreshes his highball in the kitchen. A truly one-dimensional man, dad drinks and stares vacantly at the wallpaper, until he dissolves in to the repetitive pattern. His glass falls, shatters on the floor and all that's left of him is his face, barely discernible in the wallpaper's dull, lifeless motif.

We're conveyed through time, space and architecture to Lloyd's ramshackle room. Still smarting, he stares at Diane's photo--then rips it in half. But in his mind, her image smiles back at him something like love and slowly, the tear mends itself. Repaired, Lloyd guns his classic Chevy out of the driveway. In Diane's room, they fumble for each other, then finally, their bodies meet. But as they blend in to one another Lloyd opens his eyes to discover he's actually trapped inside a giant circuit board.

It's a technological Dante's inferno. Lloyd kicks and punches at the oversize fuses standing wordless sentry. He sees light at the end of a tunnel, which turns out to be the backside/inside of the giant radio's speaker grate. Lloyd has one shot and takes it, as he flies at and through the speaker grate, emerging on the other side of reality. He holds the smashed radio overhead as the smoking speakers deliver the song.

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Compositing allows seamless transitions from the story to the band's performance since we're free to weave Hawthorne Heights in and out of the visual narrative. In any given scene, we can “Ebb and flow” the band's interaction within the constructed reality--they can appear as little or as much as needed—there's a real feeling that Hawthorne Heights is always present without being obvious. Without having to “literalize” the lyrics, the track and the graphics mirror each other just enough--the feeling's ever-present that Hawthorne Heights is synched emotionally with each scene.

Hawthorne Heights' performance elements will be framed by the different vignettes created. For instance, at the 'kegger, the band could be featured as “the band” which plays the party. At the awkward family dinner, Lloyd and Diane in bed each vignette can feature just the right mix of actual performance so lyrics, graphics and emotion work together and drive each scene. The effect is a kind of anonymous agency as Hawthorne Heights' presence in the clip never feels forced or secondary to the graphics.

The Edit

Every graphically manipulated scene takes its cue from the track's tireless energy. Every second brings a fresh sequence of arresting visuals as the narrative unfolds before us with darkly crafted images. As this fictional, heightened reality is literally shaped and created before us, the song's driving force gives it an edgy momentum.

Where appropriate, Hawthorne Heights becomes part of the living, digital fabric of the story. Entire settings can be composited around them, piece by piece, film speed ramped up as graphic images blend, merge and construct themselves to suit the band.

The final edit takes everything warped-reality graphics driven by lyrics fueled by power-chords and fuses it in to a seamless, non-stop journey. The result is an ever-changing, fictionalized world in which Hawthorne Heights delivers with maximum impact.