

"THE COLISEUM"

Written by
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THE COLISEUM

FADE IN:

INT. ELECTRIC APPLIANCE STORE (2005) - DAY

A SALESMAN and a burly STOCKROOM WORKER in gray overalls stride determinedly down a gleaming row of mid-2000's model refrigerators. We hear the voice of SIMON WATTS, 20, student of the University of Technology Sydney.

SIMON (O.S.)
Kelvinator Diplomat 824 Frostfree:
The Pavorotti of refrigerator hum.

DOWN TO

Simon, clad in mid-2000's dance culture streetwear, on the floor holding a microphone to the bottom of a refrigerator recording its sound. The reels on his compact NAGRA professional reel-to-reel tape recorder spin while he listens on industrial-sized headphones.

EXT. ELECTRIC APPLIANCE STORE - DAY

The STOCKROOM WORKER shoves SIMON out the door, sprawling onto the street.

A moment later, Simon's recording gear follows, tossed out by the SALESMAN.

EXT. WINDING INNER CITY STREET - LATER

A garbage can sits in the middle of a narrow street, not far from a sharp curve.

SIMON (O.S.)
Luxury car braking. Take 1.

A sports car comes flying around the curve, the driver sees the garbage can at the last second. BREAKS SCREECH. The driver screams an obscenity.

ON SIMON UP A TREE

SIMON holds a directional microphone aimed at the car, his tape recorder strapped to his side.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Approximately 60km/h to zero.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY (UTS)/LECTURE HALL - DAY

PROFESSOR VALERIE LONGUE, late 30's, in nerd chic, accentuated in red designer frames, wraps up the afternoon session, the blackboard behind her filled with the hieroglyphics of sound waves and electrical engineering symbols.

PROF. LONGUE

Context.

(beat)

If I say,

(saccharine voice)

"Welcome everyone to UTS sound class."

(normal voice again)

It has one meaning.

She lets this sink in.

PROF. LONGUE (CONT'D)

But if I say the same thing, doing this...

Her expression changes to a mean stare down. She pulls her sleeve back then slowly gives the audience the middle finger, holding it aloft.

(saccharine voice)

"Welcome everyone to UTS sound class."

Sporadic CHUCKLES from the student audience.

She lowers her hand.

PROF. LONGUE (CONT'D)

A bit extreme, right? But that's how we can layer meaning in film with sound. Context. Juxtaposition.

Prof. Longue unclips her lapel mic, exits the podium.

PROF. LONGUE (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Hopefully, I'll hear that in your work.

ON THE SECOND ROW OF SEATS

SIMON takes his industrial headphones out of his satchel made from a recycled truck tarpaulin, a logo fragment abstracted into blocks of color.

As the other students drift off, Prof. Longue approaches him.

PROF. LONGUE (CONT'D)
Your extension is approved, Simon.

SIMON
Thanks.

PROF. LONGUE
I went through the same thing at
your age. It sucks.

Simon is embarrassed.

PROF. LONGUE (CONT'D)
But you still have to complete the
assignment.

Simon starts to move off.

PROF. LONGUE (CONT'D)
(calls after him)
By the end of the month!

INT. UTS CORRIDOR - LATER

The corridor is filled with STUDENTS. SIMON weaves his way to the elevator, nods of acknowledgment and the occasional "hi".

The elevator opens, out pops his friend Nigel, aka GEL, aka DJ Gel-E, perpetually dressed for 3am.

The two step to the side, letting the crowd bustle out and in. Gel pulls a small disc from a pocket way down his trouser leg and hands it to Simon. Simon reaches into an obscure pocket somewhere in his jacket sleeve and hands an equally small disc to Gel.

GEL
Cool. This will rearrange their
DNA. Thanks.

Simon steps inside the elevator.

ON ELEVATOR

As the elevator door closes, Gel stops it, waving his hand in the way.

The passengers shoot dirty looks. Gel doesn't give a shit.

GEL (CONT'D)
(to Simon)
You still bothering with all that
recording for your assignment?

SIMON
Well, yeah. Has to be authentic.

GEL
(shakes head)
Dude. Libraries.

SIMON
If I hear the sound of, say, a
window shattering when a rock goes
through it.

The door attempts to close again, and Gel waves his hand,
again. Then holds it in place.

Simon senses the discomfort of the others in the elevator
around him grow. Gel is oblivious.

SIMON (CONT'D)
(speaking quickly)
But I recognize the sound effect
from another movie when someone
broke it with their fist, then I
immediately visualize that other
movie. And, man, that just messes
me up.

GEL
That's freaky.

Simon shrugs. Everyone in the elevator stares at him.

Gel drops his hand. The door closes.

INT. CENTRAL STATION RAILWAY PEDESTRIAN TUNNEL - NIGHT

ON SIMON'S SNEAKERS

SIMON hurries through the tunnel.

SOUND MONTAGE

A. The sound of Simon's FOOTSTEPS merge with the sound of
other footsteps, gradually building to the sound of HUNDREDS
OF FEET walking in the tunnel.

B. This becomes the sound of WATER rushing through a pipe.

C. Rushing water becomes the SKITTISH CYMBALS of a DRUM AND
BASS rhythm.

SOUND MONTAGE ENDS

EXT. COLISEUM THEATRE - NIGHT

SIMON hurries past the doors of the last remaining classic single-screen cinema in the city and into its elaborate ancient Roman-themed lobby.

ON DOOR

A poster for a standard mid-2000's Hollywood Romance, "Stardust Nights". Boldly splashed diagonally across the poster in is a large sticker PREVIEW! - in fat black print.

INT. COLISEUM THEATRE - NIGHT

At the rear of the cinema, GWEN, a fierce, life-time head usherette (a life that looks like it started when the original Coliseum in Rome was built) stands guard in her prim uniform under a hairstyle that's also a relic from another a bye-gone era.

Gwen is transfixed. The light reflected from the screen strikes her face, flickering red, blue, green and white.

Violins swell on the SOUNDTRACK, we stay on Gwen as the movie arrives at its romantic crest. Gwen is living it. It's everything she's missed out on being married to her job.

FEMALE MOVIE STAR (O.S.)
You came back!

MALE MOVIE STAR (O.S.)
I never said goodbye.

FEMALE MOVIE STAR (O.S.)
Because you didn't want to?

Gwen starts to tear up.

MALE MOVIE STAR (O.S.)
I wanted to. But I couldn't.
(beat)
I've seen our future.

FEMALE MOVIE STAR (O.S.)
Freedom-without you-is just a
bigger loneliness.

Gwen unfolds a tissue.

MALE MOVIE STAR (O.S.)
You make me whole.

FEMALE MOVIE STAR (O.S.)
We're together at last.

MALE MOVIE STAR (O.S.)
That's all that matters.

The SOUNDTRACK crescendos as Gwen watches the movie stars embrace, dabbing at tears running down her cheek.

INT. COLISEUM THEATRE. MALE LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

SIMON's satchel is in his locker, where his usher's uniform hangs. He quickly finishes getting into the black pants, white shirt and burnished gold polyester blazer.

Clipping on his awkward black bow tie, Simon scans the roster pinned to the notice board alongside information about union meetings and a birthday party.

Simon sees he has several Sunday evening shifts, and does the "trucker horn" gesture - Yes!

INT. COLISEUM LOBBY - NIGHT

At the concessions bar, GWEN finishes chatting with SUSAN, the concessions bar manager, mid-twenties, toned down for the job, multiple earrings and nose studs removed, tattoos almost concealed by an oversized T-shirt poking out of her uniform's striped tunic.

At the theatre door, SIMON takes tickets from the few early-arriving audience members. His stance straightens as Gwen marches toward him across the lobby.

GWEN
Big stars. Wonderful romance. We're
lucky! This will be a long run.

Simon smiles, but it's more wince.

INT. WATTS' HOUSE. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The screen door OPENS (O.S.), a key goes into the side door lock and SIMON lets himself in.

Simon goes to the fridge and peruses its contents.

In the background, a TV is channel surfed. FRAGMENTS of ads, shows, newscasts and sports commentary can be heard.

Simon's parents, TOM, early 50's, gruff, blue collar and BETTY late 40's, former smoker, now hospital volunteer, bicker.

BETTY (O.S.)
Can't you ever make a bloody
decision?

TOM (O.S.)
Christ almighty! Now it's my fault
there's so much crap on the box?

INT. WATTS' HOUSE. SIMON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Simon has done his best to disguise his typical suburban bedroom. Mismatched furniture chosen by his parents when he was in primary school is lit by red and blue bulbs.

Dance party posters fill the walls, and the back of his door is a collage of stickers: club promotions, music labels, and favored equipment logos.

Much of the room is taken up by gear, two turntables against one wall, assorted mixing equipment and recording gadgetry.

SIMON pulls the disc that Gel gave him from his bag and tosses it on his desk, near his computer.

His desk is organized, but not pristine. CDs are stacked in towers, digital tapes in containers, everything has its place, but space has run out, there's overflow.

Simon takes his shoes and socks off then puts Gel's disc in a player and lies on his bed.

AMBIENT music plays at high volume. Simon relaxes.

A few beats.

TOM bursts into the room.

TOM
That all you ever bloody think
about? Fucking music?

SIMON
I'm into sound Dad, not just music.

DAD
Pseudo-intellectual crap. You'll
be twenty-one in two weeks. And
you're going to need a job.

SIMON
I've got a job.

DAD
A real job.

SIMON

Everything you watch on TV, someone has to record the sound. There're jobs there, y'know?

DAD

Well I don't bloody see it. Turn that crap down.

Tom exits.

Simon gets up, jacks his headphones, and lies back down again.

From SIMON's POV we see the curtains blow in and move against the ceiling catching the colors of the lights in the room as the ambient music plays.

A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Simon's reverie is interrupted by shouting outside his door.

TOM (O.S.)

It's your fault, you encourage him.

BETTY (O.S.)

Nothing's ever your fault is it? No wonder I can't take it anymore.

Simon gets up, unplugs his headphones from the stereo, but keeps them on his ears.

He quietly pulls out a tape recorder from a shelf and plugs his phones into that.

He then locates a suction microphone on his desk, plugs it into the recorder and kneels by the door.

He sticks the mic to the inside of the door and begins recording his parents' argument, carefully monitoring the EQ levels and adjusting the tone knobs.

BETTY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

One time too many. It's beyond the last straw!

TOM (O.S.)

Once he's out of the house. It's over. I've had it.

BETTY (O.S.)

For Chrissakes Tom, let's keep yer voice down. What's the boy to think?

TOM (O.S.)
Think? He's probably got his bloody
headphones on again. All he thinks
about is that noise.

EXT. LISA'S HOUSE - DAY

SIMON and his girlfriend LISA, 20, dressed suburban, not in
streetwear, sit on the veranda steps.

LISA
You're getting weird. You're not
handling this well.

SIMON
Jeez. Thanks for the support.

LISA
That is support, Simon. It takes a
friend to say you're fucking up.

SIMON
Great. First I'm not handling it,
now I'm fucking up. This is a major
event I'm documenting.

LISA
Documenting! You oughta hear
yourself. You just can't handle
telling your Dad and Mum to stuff
it. So you're recording their
bullshit to deal with it at a
distance.

SIMON
What difference does it make, Lisa?
They're going to split up anyhow.

Sounds of the suburbs rise against the awkward silence.

A dog BARKS. Car wheels roll OVER GRAVEL driveways; insects
BUZZ.

A few beats.

Simon puts his arm around Lisa. She doesn't respond.

A few more beats.

Lisa reluctantly puts her arm around his waist.

INT. WATTS' HOUSE. SIMON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SIMON, headphones on, sits at his desk, his computer screen lights the room. The screen is packed with rows of sound waves.

Simon moves his mouse, editing, carefully cutting and pasting strips of sound waves into a new order.

When he finishes we hear over his headphones BETTY's voice, obviously pieced together from fragments.

BETTY-DIGITIZED VOICE
Let's do it one more time, Tom.

INT. WATT'S HOUSE. KITCHEN - MORNING

BETTY moves about in her dressing gown while, SIMON, and TOM semi-dressed, eat breakfast.

TOM
Any more thoughts about your birthday, son?

SIMON
I want Gel to spin.

BETTY
Can he play music for everyone there?

SIMON
It's my party. I want my music.

TOM
(smiles)
I'm payin' for it. He who pays the piper calls the shots.

BETTY
We don't want the Ted Mulry Gang!

TOM
So why don't you play the music then, love? Miss Kajagoogoo and Kate Bush.

SIMON
Kate Bush is cool.

BETTY
(to Tom)
It's too early for sarcasm.