

Sound Blanket

Written By

Greg Gould

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

SFX: Loud rock music.

FADE IN on a close up of SAM's face. SAM is ten years old. He's lying on his back on his bed, eyes closed, a pair of old Walkman earphones wrapped around his head. The earphones are an extension of his ears - practically stitched in place. SAM is cocooned in music.

We pull back to see SAM's room. It's a mess. Clothes litter the floor. The carpet is torn. Paint peels off the wall. SAM is a grot. His mismatched St Vinnies clothes are frayed and torn.

SFX: The music starts to slow and warp, winding to a stop mid-song. As the music fades we can now hear the sound of SCREAMING from somewhere else in the house.

MUM (O.S.)

You liar! I can't believe you did that!

DAD (O.S.)

I didn't lie!

MUM (O.S.)

You did! You stood there and you you said you didn't take it-

The SCREAMING continues in the background, a dull, destructive soundtrack.

SAM's eyes open. He sits up and gives the Walkman a shake, tries to get it going again - no luck. He flips it over, opens the back and takes out the BATTERIES. He looks at them for a second then throws them on the floor. He goes to a cluttered desk, searches through the draws for some more - nothing.

He looks at his bedroom door, reluctant to leave his sanctuary.

INT. HALL/LOUNG/DINING/KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

SAM pokes his head out the bedroom door, looks down the hall.

MUM (O.S.)

I'm so sick of your bullshit!

DAD (O.S.)

My bullshit! I'm not the one who

(MORE)

DAD (O.S) (CONT'D)

goes on and on and on about every little thing. You just can't let shit go-

MUM (O.S.)

Yeah. With the amount of shit I put up with it's no fucking wonder.

DAD (O.S.)

Oh, give me a break!

SAM tiptoes to a hall cabinet and searches through the drawer - nothing. He makes his way into the living room, and rummages through the shabby couch for the remote control. He flips open the remote's back panel, but there are no batteries there either. He goes to the kitchen door, peeks in at:

MUM and DAD. We see them from SAM's POV, never panning high enough to see MUM or DAD's faces.

MUM

We needed that money, Dan! We got bills. I can't even afford smokes!

DAD

Yeah? Well, why don't you bugger off. Get some other poor bastard to buy 'em.

MUM

This is my house!

DAD

Your house!? I pay the bills. You just sit around on your arse all day talking shit on the phone ...

SAM's eyes are fixed on the kitchen drawers. He slips forward and discreetly rummages through them. Without success, he retreats. MUM and DAD never miss a beat.

SAM slumps on the couch, dejected. The YELLING in the kitchen gets louder.

SAM suddenly spies MUM'S HANDBAG slung over a chair. Nervously, he edges towards it, checking the kitchen door to make sure all is clear. He slips a hand inside and pulls out a ten-dollar note.

Money in hand, he quickly shuffles for the front door and leaves the SCREAMS behind.

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Smiling, SAM emerges into the front yard of an ex-govie house. SAM scurries across the dead lawn but quickly hits the brakes when he sees two uniformed COPS striding towards the house.

SAM halts, jams the ten dollars note behind his back. He stares at the ground.

The COPS approach him. COP 1 gives SAM a once over, taking in his shabby clothes, grotty face, the Walkman wrapped around his ears.

COP 1  
G'day mate.

SAM keeps his eyes on the grass.

COP 1 (CONT'D)  
Watch'ya listening to?

SAM peeks up, sees the cop is smiling at him, quickly looks down again.

SAM  
Song.

COP 1  
Yeah? Any good?  
(beat)  
Mum and Dad home?

SFX: A loud smash from inside the house, followed by YELLING.

The COPS share a worried look. COP 2 quickly moves towards the house - all business.

COP 1 gives SAM another once over, empathy in his eyes.

COP 1  
I'm gonna talk with your folks.  
You right to hang here?

SAM nods. COP 1 joins COP 2 and they enter the house. The YELLING inside escalates.

SAM looks at the tenna in his hand, gives the house a glance, then quickly heads off down the road.

EXT. STREET/CORNER STORE - DAY

SAM, money in hand, strides down the street. His headphones

are still wrapped around his ears - silent.

He approaches the local CORNER STORE. Like the rest of the neighbourhood, the local shops are tired and rundown.

SAM strides inside.

INT. CORNER STORE - MOMENTS LATER

SFX: the store DOOR CHIME RINGS as SAM enters.

From behind the counter the grumpy-faced CLERK watches SAM suspiciously.

SAM heads for the back of the store where packets of BATTERIES hang on a small display.

EXT. CORNER STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Two HOON KIDS roll up to the store on BMXs. They're a bit older than SAM, and thuggishly rough - black boots, torn jeans, no helmets. They dump their bikes on the footpath and stride inside, chuckling crudely about some shared joke.

INT. CORNER STORE - MOMENTS LATER

SFX: the store DOOR CHIME RINGS as the HOONS enter.

The CLERK watches them, hawk-eyed.

SAM is scanning the battery display down the back.

The HOONS head for the snack shelves. They push and shove one another, talking crap, laughing.

SAM looks up nervously, not wanting to be seen. He watches as the HOONS grab handfuls junk food off the shelf. He's holding his breath, waiting for them to leave.

HOON 1 spots him. SAM tries to look away, but it's too late. HOON 1 gets HOON 2's attention. They drop their snacks on the floor and march towards SAM, thuggish gins on their faces.

SAM backs up, once again hiding the tenna behind his back.

HOON 1

Check it out. It's Sam-Sam. What's doing Sam-Sam? Mommy send you to fetch the milk?

HOON 2

Nah. His mommy don't need milk. She's a big fat cow.

HOON 1  
That right, Sam-Sam? Is your your  
mummy a big fat cow?

The HOONS laugh. SAM stares at the ground. HOON 2 grabs for SAM's headphones.

HOON 2  
What ya listening to? Nursery  
rhymes?

SAM puts his hands up to stop him - no one touches his headphones. As he does the tenna in his hand flashes in the HOONS eyes.

HOON 2 (CONT'D)  
Check it out. Kid's cashed up.

HOON 1  
Maybe he wants to share.

HOON 1 makes a grab for the note, but SAM backs away. The HOONS stalk him with every step.

HOON 1 (CONT'D)  
C'mon Sam-Sam. We're mates. Don't  
you wanna share with your mates?

HOON 1 makes another grab, but SAM again dodges. HOON 1 pushes SAM in frustration.

HOON 1 (CONT'D)  
Give it here.

SAM cowers away.

HOON 1 (CONT'D)  
I said. Give it here.

He pushes SAM again - hard. SAM sprawls to the floor. The HOONS move in for the kill when the CLERK suddenly appears, towering over them.

CLERK  
Hey! What are you little shits up  
to?

The HOONS turn in shock. SAM sees his chance. He scrambles to his feet and runs. The HOONS spring after him.

CLERK (CONT'D)  
Hey! No running in the store!

The CLERK watches the kids disappear out the door. He notices the junk food all over the floor.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Little punks!

EXT. CORNER STORE - MORNING

SAM sprints out of the store and bolts around the corner. The HOONS are hot on his heels.

EXT. PARK - MOMENTS LATER

SAM sprints through a nearby park, but the HOONS are too fast. They tackle him to the ground and start rumbling on him.

HOON 1

You shouldn't have run, wuss.

SAM cowers, trying to protect himself from the punches and kicks. The HOONS enjoy their sport.

When it's over HOON 2 bends down and picks up the tenna that's come loose in the fight.

HOON 2

See you later, loser.

The HOONS walk off, slapping each other's backs and laughing. SAM is left sprawled in the dirt, his headphones and Walkman splayed around him.

A beat.

SAM sits up. He grabs his Walkman, checks that it's not broken, picks up his headphones and slips them back over his head.

He gingerly stands up and staggers away.

EXT. CORNER STORE - DAY

Hidden behind a dumpster across the street, SAM watches the front of the store. The BMXs are gone. So is his money. But he still wants those batteries.

INT. CORNER STORE - DAY

The CLERK is stacking the cigarette display behind the counter, his back to the door.

SAM sneaks in, keeping low to avoid the door chime sensor. He skirts around a shelf and slips towards the battery

display. Cautiously he grabs a packet of AAs and shoves them up his jumper. He pokes his head around the corner of the aisle and sees that the counter is unattended. The CLERK is nowhere to be seen.

SAM makes a dash for the door ... but doesn't get far.

Out of nowhere the CLERK snags SAM by the back of the collar. SAM struggles, but the CLERK's grip is too strong.

The CLERK lifts up SAM's jumper, exposing the BATTERIES he has stolen.

CLERK  
Got you, you little shit!

SAM'S face drops. He goes limp.

INT. BACK ROOM / CONER STORE - DAY

SAM sits on a chair in the store's back room. He stares at the floor in shame. The CLERK stands like a sentinel above him.

SFX: the store DOOR CHIME RINGS.

The CLERK gives SAM a stern "don't move" look, goes out front.

Through the door, SAM watches two COPS enter the store - the same COPS from his house earlier. He watches the CLERK talk animatedly to them, holding up the batteries and pointing at SAM.

COP 1 sees SAM and leaves COP 2 to placate the CLERK. He comes into the back room and once again looks over the boy: his grubbiness, his new bruises, the fresh cut on his lip, the dead Walkman in his hands.

COP 1  
Rough day?

SAM looks up at him - a look that says every day is a bad day - but can't maintain the eye contact. He quickly looks away.

COP 1 looks back to the CLERK who is still going off at COP 2.

COP 1 (CONT'D)  
C'mon. Let's get you home.

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE - DAY

A cop car pulls up outside Sam's house. COP 1 is in the driver's seat, COP 2 in the passenger seat. The back door opens and SAM climbs out. Head down, he heads straight for the front door.

COP 1

Hey kid.

SAM stops, turns around.

COP 1 holds a packet of BATTERIES out the car window.

COP 1 (CONT'D)

Think you might need these.

SAM hesitates. He looks at the cop suspiciously, but can't resist. He edges forward and snatches the batteries up.

SAM

Thanks.

He quickly turns and runs for the door. COP 1 watches him disappear inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MUM, still only seen from the chin down, sits zombie-like on the couch, staring at a game show on the TV. She's SNIFFLING as if she's been crying. A cigarette burns forgotten in her hand.

SAM scurries past, disappears down the hall, completely unnoticed.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

SAM jams the new BATTERIES into the back of his Walkman then lies back on his bed. He presses play.

SFX: a flood of hard rock bursts into being.

SAM smiles. He closes his eyes. He loses himself to the music.

FADE TO BLACK.

ENDS.