

Massive Metal Mayhem:

A documentary, live shows, new stuff and expanded reissues, oh my!

by Cathy Bernardy

Three DVDs: *Headbanger's Journey* documentary plus Europe and Whitesnake shows in London

Metal is a very varied thing, as the fascinating DVD documentary *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* (Warner Home Video 80575, region one, 96 minutes) shows. (Your parents won't be scared of it anymore if they watch this!) A documentary by 30-year-old anthropologist Sam Dunn, the film covers the history of the genre and seeks to find out why it's been stereotyped, explores its roots (even delving into classical music), its relation to gender and sexuality, and religion and Satanism. Censorship and the Parents Music Resource Council (PMRC) are explored (See Twisted Sister's Dee Snider testifying in front of Congress!), as is black metal, especially the Norwegian music scene, which is an extremist anti-Christianity microcosm of the greater society.

The subjects of extensive interviews were well-chosen, with some of the most eloquent metal masters in Alice Cooper ("There's more blood in [William Shakespeare's] *Macbeth* than my show"), Black Sabbath's Tony Iommi, Rob Zombie, Iron Maiden's Bruce Dickinson, Snider, and Ronnie James Dio. I was also surprised at how well-spoken the gents in Slipknot could be, as any of their songs I've ever heard have been completely unintelligible — but then, with those masks, the band could have presented stand-ins. Who knows? Shorter-interview subjects included Mötley Crüe's Vince Neil, Slayer's Tom Araya, Rush's Geddy Lee, and Rage Against The Machine/Audioslave's Tom Morello.

The running theme explores what it is about this music that appeals to people and brings them together into a community — the common bond that metalheads around the world share. Fans report deriving catharsis and self-empowerment from the music. They find a connection with others like them, such as school kids who feel like outcasts. Oftentimes, the music inspires people to learn to play an instrument, which also helps them through their tough times.

A Headbanger's Journey also gives a family tree of metal, with examples of bands in different subgenres, illustrating their similarities and differences. Dunn exposes a bit of the marketing scam that is the heaviest of metal — the album covers and lyrics are just meant to be as shocking as possible, an ante that keeps getting upped, year after year. Araya said of the inherent calculation, "Bands who want to be the biggest badasses take the badass subjects."

Bonus materials (87 minutes, on disc two of the DVD but not on the advance screener) include: more interviews, a 20-minute mini-



Courtesy of Europe/by Michael Johansson

Europe today, from left: John Leven, Mic Michaeli, Joey Tempest, John Norum, and Ian Haugland.

documentary on Norwegian black metal, Motörhead's Lemmy at the Rainbow, director's commentary, travel outtakes and the metal history family tree, interactive.

Europe fans will be thrilled with the new *Live From The Dark* (Music Video Distributors DR-4489) DVD sets. The basic package is a four-hour two-DVD set, the last concert of the band's 2004 tour, at the Hammersmith, London, and one of two hours of backstage and tour footage plus music videos. The *Deluxe Edition* also includes a bonus 12-track live CD (with not that many repeats from the DVD show, so it's truly a bonus), *Start From The Dark*, recorded in Stockholm, and the higher-end package retails for only five bucks more. I was just a casual fan in the late '80s but loved the depth of the basic set, especially the bonus material.

The concert: Lead singer Joey Tempest still has the pipes. Not being a Europe die-hard, I was familiar only with the hits, but the newer material fits in very well melody- and tempo-wise, probably because the lineup hasn't wavered that much. The pacing of the concert was good, with hits sprinkled in among the new stuff so no one attending would go very long without being able to sing along.

The bonuses: No matter how many times you hang out with a band backstage, it's always fun. That's where *Behind The Tour* (25 minutes) puts you, hanging out with the band as they wind down from a show and ready themselves to go to London. The pop-up factoids are fantastic, funny and fascinating. For instance, the band has covered 22 countries on 43 tours since 1983. On this European tour, they traveled 13,000 miles. On stage the temperature under the 168 lights can get to 104 degrees. Tempest's first trip ever to the Hammersmith was to see Thin Lizzy when

who rode his bike from Spain to Sweden to see a show, which ended up selling out, so he had to ride to Norway to get a ticket. Wow. Tempest echoes that dedication when he tells about riding a ferry for 24 hours to see Thin Lizzy play. Tempest also reminisces about meeting his bandmates as teenagers and in college: He wrote the "Final Countdown" riff on Michaeli's borrowed keyboard, for instance.

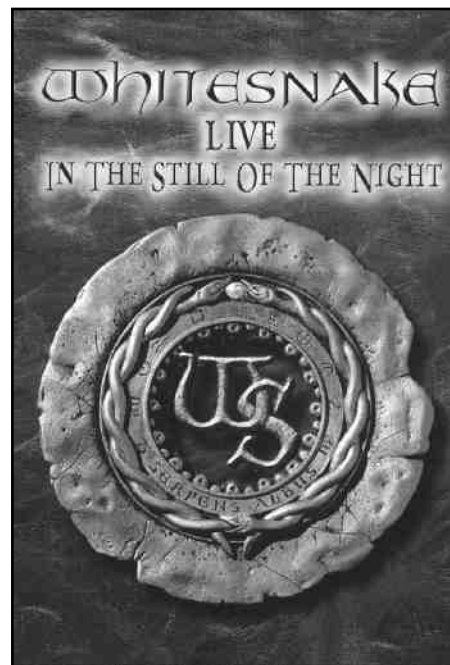
Shorter bonuses include the band members showing and explaining their gear setups. Music videos include "Spirit Of The Underdog" and "Heart Of Stone" done in soundcheck/rehearsal (the quick edits get somewhat annoying) and the professional promo clips for "Got To Have Faith" and the fantastic "Hero."

Also included are a biography, discography and videography (their last DVD being 2004's *Rock The Night* [*Rock The World* in the States]) with tiny white print. Bleah. It might read easier on a screen bigger than my 20-incher, which, 15 years ago was a pretty good-sized TV. But words are not why people buy DVDs.

Overall: thorough, fun, fantastic. Oh, yeah, and the music was good too.

The Whitesnake 2004 concert DVD at the Hammersmith in London, *Live In The Still Of The Night* (Coming Home Studios/Hip-O B0006179-50), isn't quite as thorough ("only" one DVD). It contains a solid concert (David Coverdale still has the voice!) and 15-minute documentary (interviews with band and crew, including makeup/costume tech and Coverdale's assistant and masseuse) and about a five-minute slide-show photo gallery. Coverdale's rotating lineup now contains Doug Aldrich, Reb Beach (Winger, Alice Cooper), Marco Mendoza, and Timothy Drury. Tommy Aldridge has been his mainstay on drums for the last decade and a half or so. (Can you imagine playing Six Degrees From David Coverdale [also known as the Kevin Bacon game]? You'd have all of Britain and a good portion of the U.S., guitarists especially, if you're going to allow everyone on Steve Vai's Favored Nations label!)

The collector's edition of the DVD also contains a 10-song CD from the concert, so folks can jam out without the visuals. That and the new *Definitive Collection* (Geffen B0003945) would be good road-trip material — if you're traveling with someone who shares the same musical taste, that is. The kinda chronologically arranged 18-song set, while not high on complex lyrical content, is still chock-full of steering-wheel-pounding, sing-along anthems about those universal topics of chasing and recovering from love. Fun stuff. It appears that Geffen (or someone)



he was a teen-ager.

The Taxi Diaries are interviews the band members did in various London taxis. Because they were filmed from the front seat, it feels as if you're in the car listening to them talk. If you enjoy that "fly on the wall" type of feeling, this is definitely for you. John Norum and John Leven talk about what it's like to be back together after so long, how great of a community-builder the Internet is, and how things are different now that they're older and have the perspective of a long music career.

On the lighter side, Ian Haugland explains why he plays drums barefoot and, on the serious side, is brutally honest about the ups and downs he has put his wife through over the last 20 years and how grateful he is that they got back together.

Mic Michaeli explains why they don't sing in Swedish and tells a story of a fan