



The frenetically edited “**Welcome to the Machine**” opens with an oft-repeated quote from Hunter S. Thompson, “The music business is a cruel and shallow money trench, a long plastic hallway where thieves and pimps run free, and good men die like dogs. There’s also a negative side.” In fact, Thompson was commenting on the television industry at the time, but his toxic observation applies just as well to the recording industry. In compiling a “12 Commandments” of the music business, director Andreas Steinkogler has provided aspiring rockers and pop artists with a primer on what to expect on the road to stardom, failure or compromise. He accomplishes it by collecting quotes from dozens of artists he’s interviewed as they toured Europe and made themselves available to him for purposes other than to plug their new albums. They literally represent a United Nations of rock, pop, dance and R&B. Among them are Kim Wilde, Fatboy Slim, Cypress Hill, Bloodhound Gang, Kool and the Gang, Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, Lydia Lunch, Megadeth, Melissa auf der Maur, Poppa Roach, Uriah Heep and Nada Surf. Also represented are video directors, journalists, educators and label executives. Even if “WTTM” doesn’t pull any punches, I can’t imagine that any wannabe stars would be dissuaded by anything they see and hear in the music- and video-filled documentary, and that’s a good thing.

I don’t know how much attention was paid the British pop/funk/jazz ensemble, Level 42, at the height of its popularity in 1980-90s, but I’m told that it didn’t have any trouble selling albums and attracting fans to concerts. By the time “**Level 42: Live**” was committed to videotape in 1992, only Mark King and Mike Lindup were left from the original 1980 lineup. This didn’t prevent the group from performing a dozen of their Top 40 hits and some new material. The film was shot at London’s sold-out Town and Country Club at the end of their “Guaranteed” tour. – Gary Dretzka

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