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## Black Metal Satanica

(MVD Visual 2008)

Black metal is a genre that sits on the fringe of the musical world, even within the metal community itself. Its violent origins and incendiary personalities are a subject worthy of exploring, and "Black Metal Satanica" attempts to shed some light on this controversial style of music.

The movie begins with an explanation of the Nordic way of life in the 10th century and the rise of Christianity in Scandinavia, which would play a large role in black metal's formative ideology over a thousand years later. It then gives an all-too-brief primer on the inception of the genre in the late '80s and early '90s, giving passing mentions of Venom and Bathory before focusing on keystone black metallers Mayhem, in particular the suicide of singer Dead.

The rest of the film is mainly dedicated to the musings and motivations of a handful of current black metal artists, including Shining, Mordichrist, and, most notably, Watain. The bulk of these interviews predictably focus on the anti-religious views of the artists. Interspersed throughout the ideological exploration are more of the sordid events in the history of black metal, such as the wild rash of church burnings in Scandinavia and the murder of Øystein "Euronymous" Aarseth by Varg "Count Grishnackh" Vikernes, two of the progenitors of the genre. Unfortunately, these events are glossed over, and the motivations for and ramifications of them are never discussed. None of the more prominent black metal musicians, like Fenriz or Ihsahn, are interviewed or even mentioned. Not only that, but some of the non-Satanic underpinnings of the genre are ignored. This is probably to be expected when the word "Satanica" is in the title, but an examination of the heathen, Odinic, and National Socialist elements of the scene would have been nice.

Overall, "Black Metal Satanica" is an incomplete documentary at best. This became abundantly clear when two of my non-metal friends with whom I was watching it kept asking me to clear up points and provide background material. For someone truly looking to get an understanding of black metal, Lords of Chaos by Michael Moynihan and Didrik Soderland is a far more comprehensive and informative resource. Understanding black metal is like putting together a puzzle, and "Black Metal Satanica" doesn't give you all of the pieces.

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