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DVD Review: Bill Zebub - Metal Retardation

Bill Zebub - Metal Retardation

2009 Bill Zebub Productions

Ray Van Horn, Jr.



Under the definition of "politically incorrect," you're quite possibly going to find Bill Zebub's name listed under the antonym bracket. The nation isn't quite the same as it was during the late sixties and early seventies when the Dean Martin roasts were, by today's definitions, as unpolitically correct as a Klan gathering. However, there was always a line of respect drawn between the panel of roasters and of course, the roastees. America was a bruised country in the midst of civil rights violence, and the healing motif as mainstream culture worked itself into a mode celebrating all walks of life, race and creed culminated

in hilarious back-and-forth banter at Sammy Davis, Jr. on Martin's roast. Eventually this gave sway to the era of Archie Bunker and George Jefferson, which forever changed the social tide.

History lessons aside, Bill Zebub, mastermind of the east coast underground metal rag *The Grimoire of Exalted Deeds*, has also released a slew of independent films and documentaries. If you're familiar with some of his homegrown horror videos such as *The Crucifer*, *Kill the Scream Queen*, *Dolla Morte*, *Bad Acid*, *Jesus Christ: Serial Rapist*, *Dirtbags* and *The Worst Horror Movie Ever Made*, you'll attest there's no experience in underground film like a Bill Zebub experience. Even his death and pagan metal documentaries are unlike most you've ever seen.

Zebub's projects ooze with intentionally nutty gore, flopping yabbas, dimebags, Christian jabs and button-pushing dialogue intended to caricaturize racist America. You either get this guy or you get his videos out of your peripheral view without haste.

Thus it should be no surprise at all Friar Grimoire ushers out *Metal Retardation*, a DVD choked full of interview footage with a decided slant. Whereas most video interviews would be tweaked and edited for a clean impact, or maybe left with an intentional gag or two to project hipness, *Metal Retardation* is what it claims to be. This is unapologetic ass-clowning on Zebub's behalf with everyone from Peter Steele to Gwar to George "Corpsegrinder" Fisher of Cannibal Corpse to Calvin Robertshaw, former guitarist of My Dying Bride.

Steele, who has appeared in numerous Zebub projects, gets a hefty round of time on *Metal Retardation*, in particular older footage which finds him more playful than later video where he's stony and sarcastic, even with a vixen sitting in lap. One of the *Metal Retardation's* most chuckle-filled recurring gags is Zebub trying to force the younger Steele into singing "Mary Had a Little Lamb," an exercise in futility for most of the ride as Steele jokingly f-bombs his efforts. What does Zebub do in this matter? Knowing the married Steele has girls on both sides of him on the tour bus, he provokes Steele by asking him about his cock size and some very personal information about his wife.

Who in the hell calling him or herself a journalist would go so far? Who else would commit the unspeakable atrocity by tormenting Sanctuary/Nevermore vocalist Warrel Dane by asking if he'd had intimate relations with the late Chuck Schuldiner. I assure you I'm glossing over this exchange; you'll have to watch the video to see how forwardly rude Zebub goes in this matter. Even Dane, who takes most of Zebub's poking with a grain of salt, throws a bit of a flag in this instance. Then again, consider Dane and Nevermore's bassist mercilessly try to coax one of Zebub's on-camera hostesses (who is obviously very green at this point) into pulling off her shorts.

Thus becomes the flavor of *Metal Retardation*, where taboo is mostly null and void. Zebub literally tortures George Fisher about Cannibal Corpse's gruesome lyrics and tries to get Fisher (who is Jewish) to admit the band has anti-Semitic and racist content. He keeps Fisher on edge with ridiculously dumb questions about breakfast cereal and

flatulence before going in for the kill. Are Fisher and Cannibal Corpse what Zebub accuses them on-camera of? Absolutely not, and Zebub knows it, but it doesn't mean he's not going to pull the hot seat lever beneath his guests with asinine questions. This is, after all, called *Metal Retardation*.

Other guests appearing on this collection are King Diamond, Messiah Marcolis of Candlemass, Tyr, Finntroll, Turisas, Liv Kristine and Alexander Krull of Leaves' Eyes, Ensiferum, Enslaved and Arch Enemy/Witchery/Mercyful Fate bassist Sharlee D'Angelo. D'Angelo, who has been around this scene through numerous bands, gets prime face time on *Metal Retardation*, as well as continuous smooching and snuggling from Zebub's hostesses.

The always-classy Liv Kristine Espenaes Krull is above reproach and to his credit, Zebub doesn't push her too hard, except to get some thoughts about the remnants of Theatre of Tragedy, which she'd of course founded. Then again, her hulking husband occupies much of frame left, so one would probably be advised not to put Liv into a precarious position.

Towards the end, Zebub captures a zany exchange between his hostess and an inebriated Finntroll which leads to armpit sniffing and a teasing spread across their laps with equally drunken queries about Finntroll's artwork. Earlier in the video, Zebub torments all of his Scandinavian guests by making them speak in native tongue with effeminate tones--or *gay*, if you're going to let Zebub have his way.

Naturally, he does on *Metal Retardation*. The project is what it is and as always, Bill Zebub makes no pretensions about who he is and what he seeks to achieve. In this case, it's goofing on the bands he loves in ways no serious journalist *ever* would. Then again, Zebub taps into the less-serious aspect of metal and rock 'n roll, a less-reverential dimension where questions about song interpretations and musician inspirations simply don't apply here. You have to envy him just a little because he brings a party for crazies and the dumbfounded looks on many of his guests are priceless. They're certainly not accustomed to such tomfoolery, yet something in their eyes speaks loudly, which is to say, they're having ridiculous fun while trying not to be shocked at their host.

One of *Metal Retardation's* finest moments is a radio interview with Cronos of Venom. Of course, it's hard to fully concentrate on the interview while Zebub spins countless images of nudity from the *Grimoire* mag, so you might want to go back and replay it, since Cronos is a complete gas unto himself, while Zebub pulls the trigger on himself and plays the interview straight.

While his title is these days as offensive as calling the project *Hitler's Teutonic Muff Dive*, Zebub comes from an age where the word "retarded" was passed around as casually as the word "idiot" or "moron" or "jackass." Back in the day nobody really took offense at the word "retard" (or "sped," if you're a *real* Gen X'er) but the times have changed and "retard" is no longer socially acceptable.

Obviously not so in Bill Zebub's world...

Rating: ***

Posted by Ray Van Horn, Jr. at [6:27 AM](#) 

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every now and then i love talking *metal* with people who know nothing about it. one of the things i like to talk about is the "grimoire of exalted deeds" site just for laughs. it's the smart people who don't necessarily know much about *metal* that give the best reactions to that tag line.

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