

Aaron Rose's documentary.

Stephen Powers took the term "graffiti artist" out of the pejorative with his bright, winning landscapes. He makes a good point that his kind of art can make the urban more human; painted signs add warmth and vitality, because you're always reminded of the person who created the art.

Geoff McFetridge turned out to be one of the most commercially successful of the whole group, bringing his winning graphic design to music and business. In fact, the future success of the "beautiful losers" became clear when a group of them was hired to go to Tokyo and provide their design ideas for a variety of products and firms. From this point, each of them realized that their days in the art underground were numbered.

Beautiful Losers emerges as a loving document of a scene that most would otherwise not know about. The story isn't always exactly gripping, but it has genuine quality that helps make up for it.



BEHIND THE NONSENSE

I recently rejoined Netflix. I was a member in 2003 and 2004, but then gave it up and restored my relationship with my neighborhood video store. Netflix is convenient, but I always get the urge to see something right now and I don't usually want to wait a few days for it to arrive. I prefer to go to the video store.

A few years ago some jerk brought about a class action lawsuit against Netflix due to wording in their ads. He didn't get his movies in one day so he was mad. These idiotic lawsuits annoy the shit out of me. I can't actually believe that they get as far as they do. Netflix settles it and I end up with a free month because I was a customer at the time in question. Since I now live in a neighborhood with no video store, I am happy to be a customer again. Although when I was talking to Ken and Denise Sanderson about their Netflix queue we found it weird that we weren't watching movies, we were watching TV shows. I just finished *The Wire* and they were watching *Battlestar Galactica*. I guess it's better than watching any of this summer's big movies.

So instead I indulge in music documentaries. **Kraftwerk and The Electronic Revolution** is part of the recent wave of unauthorized band documentaries. Watching it makes you wonder why there hasn't been an official documentary made on Kraftwerk. The story is fascinating. It starts before Kraftwerk forms and ends after they go into seclusion in the '80s. The film carefully examines German experimental music and the subsequent scene of what would eventually be termed Krautrock. Following with the beginning of Kraftwerk as an experimental sort of hippie band, their interest in making electronic sounding music with traditional instruments and the development of the band's interest in making music with electronics. The band flourishes having their first hit with "Autobahn" in 1974. The end makes the case for the influence of Kraftwerk on ensuing musical movements punk, disco and hip-hop.

Clocking in at three hours with a bunch of extras, **Kraftwerk and The Electronic Revolution** could be considered a definitive look at the band if the main members of the band, Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider, were interviewed. Many periphery characters of the scene are interviewed including percussionist Karl Bartos who played on many of Kraftwerk's more famous records including *Radio-Activity* and *Trans-Europe Express*. Also interviewed is Klaus Röder, momentary Kraftwerk guitarist, Kluster members Dieter Moebius and Hans Joachim Rodelius, Klaus Schulze of Tangerine Dream plus other German electronic musicians. The weak part is the English music writers. While everyone else exudes a real sense of having been there and an understanding what was going on at the time. The English writers seem inauthentic, simply stating facts and dates without giving a feel for what the music is all about.

When punks start co-opting electronic music and synthesizers, the Germans seem flattered by it. In fact, Bartos is quick to point out that Kraftwerk didn't create the synthesizer sound, others were doing it before them. It is only Gary Numan who seems to annoy Bartos. He feels that Numan took the whole image and style of Kraftwerk and turned it into a parody. Even though Kraftwerk was

celebrated for their satirical take on patriotic German pop music by singing in German. (www.chromedreams.co.uk)

There is a lot of talk during this election season of deciding which presidential candidate with whom you would want to have a beer. That doesn't usually cross my mind when picking my next president, but if that were what it came down to, I'd have to pick Tesco Vee for president. During our beer drinking I probably wouldn't be able to get in a word edgewise so I know I'd get really drunk.

The Meatmen – The Devil's In The Details Volume 1 is the kind of DVD I'd expect from Tesco Vee. It is three hours long and is a mish-mash of everything that is on the mind of Tesco Vee. There is so much. It is the ultimate short-attention-span video for all the youngsters who can't focus. I particularly like that aside from the title page of the DVD, which features a cartoon man jerking off, the only option available is to start the DVD. There are no extras, no list of scenes and no subtitles. There are chapters so you can skip ahead a few minutes, but if you want to find a certain part, you probably need to watch the whole thing. At least until you memorize the whole thing.

The Meatmen – The Devil's In The Details Volume 1 is really packed with everything for the fan of the Meatmen and Tesco Vee. But even if you aren't interested in him or the band, you will be entertained. Tesco is funny and weird. He is a comedic singer who is obsessed with his penis, but he is equally obsessed with ABBA and his toy collection. He enjoys pissing people off and isn't afraid to say anything, but then his son (yes, he has kids!) mentions that his dad volunteered to be his cub scout leader when he was ten years old. His son kind of says it like he is joking, but you can't help but hope it is true. How twisted that would be.

Of course, there is lots of live footage of the Meatmen. There is an early performance from Lansing Civic Players Hall where it looks like the band is playing to an empty room. Vee says, "This footage stinks. It's so old." Chris Doherty of Gang Green performs with the Meatmen in Florida doing a version of "Alcohol". The band even performs at Bunnatty's, one of my favorite defunct Boston clubs. There is an excellent performance from a cable TV show.

The band's live footage is interspersed with various other artifacts of the life of Tesco Vee. We get to see pictures of Tesco as a church-going kid, pictures of his parents, the house where the Meatmen recorded their early stuff, Tesco on a collectors TV show showing off his board games and it goes on and on. Do you remember that Tesco had a MTV show called *Way USA*? It is included here too. As well as a VHI-style profile entitled "Behind The Nonsense". My favorite moment of **The Meatmen – The Devil's In The Details Volume 1** is when Tesco points out that he is often compared to GG Allin and El Duce and then explains that the difference between him and them is that he has a grasp of the English language. Good one, Tesco. (www.mvdvisual.com)

On the other side of the music video spectrum is **Negative Approach – Can't Tell No One**. The DVD collects performances from the reformed Negative Approach starting with Touch and Go's 25th Anniversary in 2006. The band is comprised of two original members, singer John Brannon and drummer Chris Moore. The performances are intense and exciting, particularly Brannon's vocals. He has not changed his style at all and he still looks as intimidating as he did when he had a shaved head. There are six performances as well as some rehearsal footage and some silly backstage stuff. Tesco Vee even makes an appearance.

The only complaint with **Negative Approach – Can't Tell No One** is that the venues seem a bit wrong from a home-viewing standpoint. The band is performing for large audiences on high stages in big theaters, which is appropriate considering their legendary status. The audience is older and more sedate which again is appropriate. The All Tomorrow's Parties show in England has Thurston Moore watching from the side of the stage. I am sure it was probably great to all those who got to see the shows, but for the TV viewer it is a bit tame. I still want to see kids staging diving, going crazy and singing along. I have another Negative Approach DVD, **Fair Warning Vol. 1** (Vol. 2 is available too) released by the same company that has shows from '81 to '84 in Detroit and Hamtramck, Michigan. Those are the shows I enjoy watching from my couch. It's all kids having a fun time and it's really fun to watch. (www.motorcityrocknroll.com)

I am always looking for films to review. If you made one, send a copy to Carolyn Keddy, PO Box 460402, San Francisco, CA 94146-0402. If your film is playing in the San Francisco Bay Area, let me know at carolyn@maximumrocknroll.com. I will go see it. www.carolynkeddy.com