

BORN IN THE BASEMENT

RATING 3.5

(Director: Lori DeAngelis-Kundrat, Not Rated, 66 min)

In the late 1970's, heavy metal was combined with the sound of British new wave and re-interpreted by American bands to form thrash metal. It was part musical style and part attitude – but for skateboarder/drummer Rat Skates, it was a good enough reason to start up a basement band.

This documentary chronicles Rat's career as he made a name for himself in the underground music industry. His band eventually became OverKill. They toyed with punk, power metal, blood metal – anything loud that appealed to headbangers. Rat designed their logos, their stage show, and they made their own costumes, borrowing ideas freely from all the rock bands of the era. The band played mostly cover songs, but made up for the lack of originality with lots of theatrics in their stage show. They didn't always know what they were doing, but they always had fun doing it.

Occasionally, Rat reinvented the band's style, which usually meant getting a few new musicians, different make-up and more stuff for the stage. Rat wanted to look like a big-name rock group, even if he had to build everything out of milk crates, but somehow he managed to give the band an impressive look – "where there's a will, there's the way that I figured out". He and his girlfriend Lori did the merchandising, designing and printing up T-shirts – the guy deserves major points for creativity and ambition. Plus, they had a nice mail-order business going.

When you're driven by a dream, the journey is often the most satisfying. The problems come once the dream starts becoming a reality – the better known OverKill became the less control Rat had over all the operations. For a perfectionist, having no more problems to solve can be depressing. A bad record deal can cripple a band – even a good record deal isn't as lucrative as Rat thought it would be. Suddenly life is an endless stream of releasing a record, tours to promote a record, followed by time to make the next record.

It's a little sad to see when a dream outgrows the person dreaming it, but it's interesting the way Rat reflects back on the time with such clarity of vision. There is a lot of footage of Rat just talking to the camera or being "interviewed" by his buddy Ralph, but there are a few home movies, photos, and plenty of OverKill songs on the soundtrack.



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Movie Chick Cherryl:

"I wasn't expecting to get into the story of a basement thrash metal band, but Rat Skates has a way of telling a story that keeps it from bogging down – 3.5"

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