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Overkill's Goth Roots Exposed on DVD 'Born in the Basement'

05/24/2007

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How many thrash fans know that before [Overkill](#) became a contending New York thrash band, the members donned face paint and goth eyeliner and lead singer Bobby “Blitz” Ellsworth wore a vampire cape onstage? Or that the group’s early dungeon stage set was composed largely of supermarket milk crates? And while everyone knows Metallica lead guitarist Kirk Hammett was originally in Exodus, not as many headbangers are aware that Anthrax ex-guitarist Dan Spitz started out in Overkill.

These are just a few of the factoids revealed in the hour-long film “[Born in the Basement](#),” which came out May 12. The movie tells the story of Overkill founder Rat Skates, who started as drummer in the punk band Lubric—s and gradually transformed the project into Overkill, one of the hardest working thrash bands of the early ’80s.

“Born in the Basement” isn’t really a documentary about Overkill. It’s a story about ambition, perseverance and creativity — a tale about fighting the odds and flipping the bird to the forces of adversity in order to pursue a dream. And it’s a reality check for anyone who thought being in a signed rock band was an invitation to lifelong rock stardom.

The film was written and narrated by Skates, and in the process of telling his personal story, he reveals how thrash metal emerged from the resentment of suburbia, the attitude of punk and a love for the new wave of British heavy metal. But the coolest parts of the film illustrate how Skates publicized the band through DIY marketing: silk screening all the band’s t-shirts by hand, stamping its logo on guitar picks, drumsticks and tollbooths and photocopying everything from flyers to cassette inserts to make Overkill seem as professional and put together as possible even though the band nearly always broke.

Interestingly, the story ends with Skates deciding to leave the group he loved in 1987 because, even though Overkill were touring the world and had been signed to a major label, the members were being given a mere \$15 per diem to eat and receiving no royalties or merch income.

Rather than relate the story with resentment or hostility, Skates simply tells it like it was, revealing all of the highs and lows of life in an active thrash band. And he does so with a sense of humor and a great fondness for the past.

In addition to the insightful commentary, “Born in the Basement” features previously unseen footage of the Lubric—s and early Overkill as well as music and photos from Skates’ archives.

A preview for the film can be found [here](#).

Now check out the band’s only video with Skates on drums, “In Union We Stand”:



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3 Responses to “Overkill’s Goth Roots Exposed on DVD ‘Born in the Basement’”

Christian Says:

[May 25th, 2007 at 11:21 am](#)

Dude you guys just suck. There is a huge metal community out there that do not buy to your crap music. Go kill yourself and take advantage of

dumb ignorant young people. Later

thomascash Says:

[May 25th, 2007 at 5:20 pm](#)

this dvd sounds pretty cool, but NY thrash has a special place in my heart having grown up in PA, in a small city about 2.5 hours west of NYC. i remember to myself and my metalhead friends metallica and megadeth were great bands but east coast NY thrash like overkill, anthrax and SOD, WELL THEY WERE OUR GODS!!!!

actually i remember being about 11 or 12 and at a church picnic they had some kind of a dart game and if you played you got a free cassette tape, you choice of traffic or overkill's "under the influence".

now i listened to a lot of hair metal back then, my favorite bands at the time were motley crue, poison and van halen. i remember i played the game at the stand and of course chose the overkill tape based on the cover, knowing it was metal, also one of my friends in JR high had an overkill "f@ck you" t-shirt with the giant middle finger on it (he used to get suspended for wearing it to school every week), so this tape was the obvious choice over traffic.

i went home and popped it in my tape player and was immediately in love from the first riff of shred. i was sold for life, from that moment on i was an overkill fan. for all intensive purposes overkill was the first thrash band i listened to and then i started to graduate from hair metal onto speed metal, thrash metal and then later death and grind.

usually people say the first thrash bands they ever really listened to was metallica or maybe megadeth, not me and maybe it was because i grew up on the east coast within a day's trip of NYC, but the first thrash metal album i ever owned and loved was by overkill, so i guess OVERKILL was the band that really changed the way i listened to metal from that day on.

thomascash Says:

[May 28th, 2007 at 11:45 am](#)

cmon, NO other OVERKILL fans out there, they practically invented thrash, they've been around since 1978 and were one of the first bands to combine the riffs of sabbath and priest with the speed and attitude of the ramones to help give birth to one of the greatest genres of metal THRASH!!!!!!!!!!!!

redractor Says:

[June 5th, 2007 at 11:56 am](#)

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