

DVD Review

Death Metal: A Documentary

Rather than presume to explain the genre of death metal from some sort of linear historical perspective, *Death Metal: A Documentary* jumps right into the belly of the beast, examining the subculture in a shoot-from-the-hip, insightful and energetic format designed to keep the viewer enthralled from start to finish. The DVD is based primarily upon live interviews with well-known death metal musicians, intercut with live clips, music videos and photo montages to keep up visual interest. No monotonous voiceovers or spokesmodels here! As the package truthfully proclaims, "There are no outsiders in this documentary!" Therefore, the content is untainted, revealing the intelligence, humor and sincerity that have always been the common threads of this vastly misunderstood art form.

Featuring lengthy grouped-by-subject discussion clips with Peter Steele (of Type O Negative fame, included due to his seminal contributions in Carnivore), Dan Lilker (ex-Brutal Truth), James Murphy, Cronos, members of Immolation, Mortician, Amon Amarth, Malignancy, Séance and others, the documentary offers a crash course in the essence of death metal: what it is, what it sounds like, what it looks like, what it stands for. As an education for aspiring musicians who play in extreme bands, this DVD holds no rivals. Before you play another show or record another note, watch this and learn from the masters. Discussion topics include musicianship, vocal style, lyrics, getting signed, dealing with the media, violence at shows, the downloading issue and the current scene versus the formative years (not to mention that the Amon Amarth guy's beard is 22cm long). Hey, if you've gotta know it all, look no further!

While I enjoyed the interviews and live footage immensely, I could've done without a few of the video clips, as they are not for the squeamish (some nudity too...so you must be over 18 to purchase this). The Carcass video rules, though, as does all of the live footage, being from bands that don't get a ton of exposure.

Whether you're a longtime fan, musician, or even a casual listener who would like to go deeper into the caverns, *Death Metal: A Documentary* is an essential addition to your music DVD collection. [www.musicvideodistributors.com] - Sue Nolz

Stampin' Ground/ North Side Kings Allied Forces Split Thorp

This is a weird one.

Split releases oftentimes suffer from uncomplimentary genres, or one band being vastly more terrible than the other, inconsistent layouts or the different sides of the political spectrum each band resides on. Granted, the content here is all covers, but the choice of covers and the tone tacked onto them speaks to the possibility of a little inter-split CD conflict. Stampin' Ground has always struck me as a group of left-libs with a strong populist social conscious, especially if you read the lyrics of recently departed bassist/lyricist Ian Glasper. On the other hand, North Side Kings come across as prototypical xenophobic rightwingers spouting pro-American jingoism like the fountains at the Hearst Castle spout water.

A decided unity seems to be a theme despite political stripes of different shades. Maybe this shows that disparate views can be united by music? Maybe both bands are kicking themselves right now? Maybe Glasper is spinning in his chair? Anyway, for the purposes of this disc, each band selected six recordings to interpret as a homage to musical influence.

What's also weird is that of all the songs in the world, both bands ended up covering Cro-Mags' "Malfunction." North Side Kings' half has a distinct tone to it with the inclusion of "Fuck The Middle East" (S.O.D.), "Home Of The Brave" (a rewritten version of a song their singer wrote for his old band), the hokey militarism of *The A-Team* theme song and liner note quips such as "The Middle East countries are a bunch of troublemaking cocksuckers... Don't fuck around with America!" Truncated political rants aside, North Side Kings are pretty much thugcore at its thuggest with thick chugging guitars even managing to make DRI's "I'd Rather Be Sleeping" sound overwrought and overweight. Stampin' Ground show a musical versatility in their selections and performance that has yet to show up on any of their own albums with covers by Judge and Agnostic Front alongside a faithful tackling (solos and all) of Violence's "Calling In The Coroner." The vocals on this track highlight the downside of most metalcore acts these days: the lack of vocal versatility or personality to go along with the music. Songs are subjected to tuneless screaming instead of the individuality that the likes of a Sean Killian, Mark Osegueda, Araya, Hetfield and even Barney Greenway, Justin Broadrick and Jeff Walker brought to extreme music. But that's just the digression of an old fart talking. SG's Violence cover and NSK's runthrough of Suicidal Tendencies' "I Want More" are the highlights here. [www.thorprecords.com] - Kevin Stewart-Panko



PRESENTS



VEHEMENCE

"Helping The World To See"

"Now this is exactly what the death metal scene needs to kick its ass back into high gear. No groove-intense mosh parts, no excessive blasting, just extremely classy and streamlined death metal that makes you long for the old school to return." - Unrestrained!



DISILLUSION

"Back To Times Of Splendor"

"...this German three piece stuff a long thought dead genre with a sense of originality and glorious Teutonic songwriting to give a glimmer of hope to melodic death metal." DigitalMetal.com



VOMITORY

"Primal Massacre"

"Vicious, malevolent searing death grind that tears out and lacerates in the most potent of manners."
-Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles

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