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REVIEW

Music DVD Review: *The Church of Tiamat*

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Chris Beaumont

I don't remember what exactly led me to buy my first Tiamat disk; even more mysteriously, I am not sure why I haven't gotten more than I have. Whatever the case may be, they make some very good rock/metal/goth styled music. This is their first DVD release, and it is a keeper, but not without its flaws. It clocks in at over 2.5 hours of music from the Swedish band.

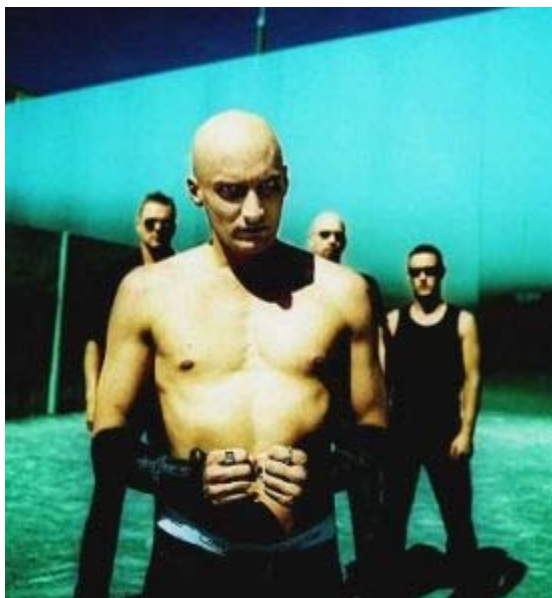
The centerpiece of the disk is a 75-minute concert, filmed at the Krzemionki TV Studio in Krakow, Poland, on January 13, 2005. The concert is a wonderful performance; my only problem with the music is that I am not familiar with enough of it. Fortunately, that did not prove to be too much of an obstacle as I was sucked into the incredible performance.

Watching them onstage is a sight to see. They have a lifetime of experience and possess a serene vibe, while still exuding energy. It is an interesting thing to see, and I hope to one-day experience that live for myself, until then I will have to settle for this disk.

Their stage setup is minimal, the band, their instruments, some lighting for mood, and that's about it. The band is centered by founder Johan Edlund, a commanding presence who draws your eye even before opening his mouth and drawing your ear to his powerful voice.

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I was struck by the thick sumptuous sound that they have. The music is beautifully orchestrated, emotionally resonant, and eschews the typical "rock star" pretensions that invade many of the shows I go to see. They are not flashy, they don't jump around like madmen, rather they let the strains of their music speak for themselves, and what beautiful music it is. Soaring solos, steady drums, keyboard flourishes, topped by Edlund's incredibly soulful and powerful voice.



I only recognized two songs from the set of 15, "Brighter Than the Sun" and "As Long As You Are Mine," both from *Skeleton Skeletron*. That is the first album I had heard from them (my only other is *Wildhoney*). For me, those two songs were the high point, but they played some other excellent songs as well, including "Children of the Underworld," "Whatever that Hurts," "Clovenhoof," and "The Sleeping Beauty" before closing with "Gaia."

The performance was first rate as was the production. There are some very nice angles and cut sequences used. The production is something to be admired, as some disks cut around so fast you can never focus on any one thing for too long, a good example of a great show marred by poor editing, for comparison, is the recent Iron Maiden *Death on the Road*. This may not have the stage production, but it has a very nice show production.

Bonus Features:

In addition to the concert, there is a great collection of live performances and promo videos. Better than that, many of them have introductions from Edlund as well. These extra videos date all the way back to when Edlund was guiding the band along the path of

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black and death metal with the live clip of "Where the Serpents Ever Dwell."

The songs guide you along the journey of their development. Edlund is an artist who does not want to be cornered, or pigeonholed to a genre. These videos show that artistic development, emotional growth, and the different ways that Edlund wishes to go in.

The videos are not always the most original pieces I have seen, but they feature some great music. As far as the video clips go, I think I liked "Brighter Than the Sun" and "Vote for Love" the best. The live clips are also good, much like amateur versions of the concert proper on the disk.

In addition to the bonus videos, there is also an interview with Johan Edlund that runs nearly half an hour. It is a very informative segment that takes you through the history and development of the band, from those early death metal days through the more goth sounds that they have now. It also delves into Johan's religious beliefs where he calls Satan his God. Very interesting.

Lastly, there is a discography, photo gallery, art gallery, and some desktop images rounding out the disk.

Video. This is the most disappointing aspect of the disk. Frankly, it is not very good, lots of compression issues. It is presented in a widescreen ratio of 1.78:1. I believe the video issues can be attributed to the next segment.

Audio. The concert has three tracks, Dolby Digital 2.0 and 5.1, plus DTS 5.1. I listened to the Dolby Digital 5.1 track, and it sounds very good. I think that having all three of these tracks on the disk is what is causing the video compression issues. They probably could have gone without the 2.0 and/or DTS tracks to free up some more room for the video, but it is what it is.

Bottomline. Aside from the video issues, this disk is fantastic. It has reignited my interest in Tiamat, and now I must get more of their CDs. The music is great, there are some fine performances, some good videos, plus the insightful interview segment. If you are not familiar with Tiamat and like original music, rock, metal, goth, then this is for you. If you are already a fan, then why are you still reading? Get out there and get it!

Recommended.



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Author: Chris Beaumont