

REVIEW**DVD Review: Tiamat - *Church Of Tiamat***

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I must admit that, prior to receiving this DVD for review, I had never heard the music of, or ever seen the band Tiamat. They sure as hell were one interesting band to research. It turns out that Tiamat have been around since the late 80s and released their debut album *Sumerian Cry* in 1990. The band's early sound was pretty much straight-forward death metal and front man Johan Edlund stuck mostly to the growling vocal style that is common for the genre.

With each subsequent album the band's style progressed significantly, adding more atmospheric keyboards, clean guitars, and Edlund showcasing a Peter Steele-like breathy baritone to replace most of the satanic growling. The 1994 epic *Wildhoney* was a major turning point for the band, displaying a new sound that might best be described as symphonic black metal. Think death metal meets Pink Floyd. Tiamat's sound continued to progress over the next few albums and you could start to hear more elements of goth and alternative rock, which made their later music remind me more of the Mission UK, or *Love-era Cult*.

Church Of Tiamat was recorded at Krzemionki TV Studio in Krakow, Poland, on January 13th, 2005 and showcases the band performing a 15-song set that sticks mostly to their three most recent albums, *Skeleton Skeletron*, *Judas Christ*, and *Prey*. The show opens

with a darkened stage and the crowd chanting "Tiamat, Tiamat, Tiamat" in a thick Polish accent. A soft, reddish hue barely illuminates the shirtless, hairless, frontman Johan Edlund as he greets the fans with "Good evening ladies and gentleman, we are Tiamat from Sweden" in a monstrously deep baritone that is an indication of things to come.

The first song, "Vote For Love", from 2002's *Judas Christ*, sounds more like classic 80s alternative rock than what should be coming from these one-time death metal heroes. This version sounds much heavier than the album version, which you can hear on the video clip bonus feature, thanks to a stronger guitar sound and the female backing vocals being absent. "Children Of The Underworld" was a b-side from the *Skeleton Skeletron* album and has a much darker, more sinister edge to it. The song's name might tip that off. "Cain" is the first song from their latest album, 2004's *Prey*, and continues where "Children" left off.

Two *Skeleton Skeletron* numbers "Brighter Than The Sun" and "To Have And Have Not" take you on a keyboard drenched atmospheric journey before coming firmly back down to earth with the *Wildhoney* epic "Whatever That Hurts", which incorporates all of the best parts of the band's sound. For the rest of the show the band samples some of the best stuff from their catalog, going as far back as 1992's *Clouds*, before closing with *Wildhoney*'s "Gaia" for the final encore.

The production quality of this DVD is first rate - another excellent job by the Poland-based Metal Mind Productions. Audio is provided in both DTS and Dolby Digital 5.1 surround formats, as well as DD stereo. The DTS and DD surround mixes were comparable and both sounded excellent. Tiamat throws out a thick, atmospheric wall of sound but every instrument stood out well in the mix. The widescreen video presentation looked phenomenal and the excellent camera work captured the dark and ominous stage show perfectly to make you feel as if you were there.

The multitude of extras thrown in are worth the price of the DVD alone. Included are an in-

depth interview with frontman Johan Edlund and bassist Anders Iwers, several videos clips, some older live performance footage, a discography, photo gallery and more.

Although I am not the biggest fan of this style of music, this video has made me a Tiamat fan. I won't be running out to buy all of their albums any time soon but this excellent concert DVD will certainly see a few more spins on my player. You should give it a spin too.

Set List

01. Vote For Love
02. Children Of The Underworld
03. Cain
04. Brighter Than The Sun
05. To Have And Have Not
06. Whatever That Hurts
07. I Am In Love With Myself
08. In A Dream
09. Wings Of Heaven
10. Cold Seed
11. Clovenhoof
12. As Long As You Are Mine
13. Love Is As Good As Soma
14. The Sleeping Beauty
15. Gaia

Performance 7/10

Production 9/10

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