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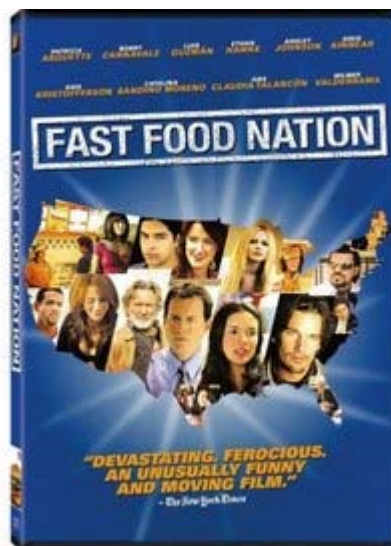
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Fast Food Nation (Widescreen DVD-Video) + Wake Up Screaming – A Vans Warped Tour Documentary

Picture: B-/C Sound: B-
/C+ Extras: B Film: B-
/C+

How does one communicate the issues around vegetarianism, why meat as food may not always be safe and make it clear without

hitting the audience over the head? The book version of **Fast Food Nation** was a remarkably thorough study on a documentary level and especially in book form of the situations minuses, but leave it to Richard Linklater to try to make it into an offbeat comedy. Then there is the political concert documentary tour disc **Wake Up Screaming – A Vans Warped Tour Documentary** showing the more radical approach to saying how bad the meat situation is in more radical terms.



You should be warned that both offer graphic footage of animals being “graphically processed” (or brutally killed) for consumption, but **Wake Up** saves that for a supplement far more brutal than the already disturbing images in **Nation**. In both, we see the myth deconstructed that the animals roam freely before their final destination, treated very badly in ways that make you wonder about the health of the animals, the food they become and your health after eating them. **Nation** focuses on cheap food and minimum wage labor, while PETA provides a broader attack on the meat packing industry in general for **Wake Up**.

In both cases, there is some shock value involved, some of which is exaggeration, while other parts can be overkill. The parts that speak for themselves without trying so hard work best, but **Wake Up** sells itself as a disc about turning with Post-Punk bands when it is more preoccupied with vegetarianism and confrontations with animal abuse (from touring animals to a strange incident where the doc's focus Jason Bayless confronts an egg-throwing booth in ways that even if he is correct in his views, his approach is unquestioned and undebated in a way that hurts his very cause). There is music, but not enough and that is not the focus.

Nation beings as another narrative in the world of slackers, though it is obvious that some of that slacking is caused by lack of good jobs, opportunity and a culture that used to encourage the best and has purposely abandoned it. Bruce Willis has a great moment as a deadly cynical meat industry titan using sick rationale for the increasingly awful

conditions in which meat is being processed.

Even from this limited, unmanipulated footage, you wonder why there has not been some outbreak or other unmanageable catastrophe. It is stronger on **Wake Up**, showing the inhuman treatment of all the animals, but more than enough to make you rethink some of what you are eating.

Other notable actors turning up include Greg Kinnear, Patricia Arquette, Luis Guzman, Ethan Hawke, Kris Kristofferson, singer Avril Lavigne, Esai Morales, Wilmer Valderrama and some other very talented actors hopefully to be seen again despite participating in this film. The idea that a fast food chain is an extension of a gilded cage trapping those who eat there is all too real and has been haunting us in one way or another since the 1980s in particular.

The anamorphically enhanced 1.85 X 1 image on **Nation** is shot in 35mm by Lee Daniel, Linklater's longtime cinematographer. It looks good and has a slight overcast to go with the narrative. The Dolby Digital 5.1 mix is good if not overpowering with good music and sound effects used to enhance the narrative, but it is dialogue-based.

The 1.33 X 1 image on **Wake Up** is rough location video throughout with softness and issues with color consistency, detail and depth. The Dolby Digital 2.0 is location sound that can be described as rough stereo at best.

Extras on **Nation** include a making of featurette, the hilarious animated **Meatrix** trilogy that deconstructs the meat packing industry (visit www.themeatrix.com for more information), stills, an audio commentary track by Linklater & writer Eric Schlosser and The Backwards Hamburger, another animated gem about how consumers are being lied to about fast food and how everyone from workers to consumers and especially animals are being exploited.

Extras on **Wake Up** include the aforementioned PETA film footage of slaughterhouses entitled **Meet Your Meat**, trailer, Al Sharpton attacking the bad conditions, outtakes, more interviews, more music performances, Wake Up **Screaming At SXSW** featurette and somewhat less graphic **Chew On This** featurette from PETA.

These two works take different approaches in dealing with the issues, but hit the nail on the head about what has become a brewing scandal about to open wide. Dealing with all these issues is long overdue.

- Nicholas Sheffo