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Naked Aggression

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A documentary looks at the life and death of reviled "scum punk" GG Allin

By Adam Bulger

Hated: GG Allin and the Murder
Junkies

MVD Visual, \$19.95

I think it's important that the world remember GG Allin, but I'm not exactly sure why. As the 1994 documentary *Hated: GG Allin and the Murder Junkies* attests, the self-proclaimed "scum rocker" was vile, violent and, arguably, intellectually indefensible. Allin's shows were blood-soaked, shit-smeared messes that almost invariably ended with either a police raid, an assault or a riot. Sometimes all three.



For extreme tactics, no one compares with Allin, who died in 1993 of a heroin overdose. He considered his audience to be his enemy, and not metaphorically. He brutalized the people who came to his shows, men and women alike.

He played at small clubs, loaded up on cocaine and laxatives, and would regularly shit on stage, with the smell would overpowering the room, clearing people out. His performances would have been brutal endurance contests if the shows weren't habitually shut down three songs into the set or less. He was at the border of performance and violence, and he didn't let pesky concerns about art stand in the way of brutality.

The documentary *Hated*, which was re-released this month in a special edition, is one of the most shocking movies ever made. That's not hyperbole – I challenge anyone to not flinch while watch

ing a woman piss in GG Allin's mouth, causing him to vomit, but not stop. Or when he eats a hot dog freshly pulled out from someone's ass.

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But the violence against women is the most shocking part of the movie. He grabs a woman at a concert by her hair and drags her across the floor and flat-out assaults another at a spoken-word performance.

Allin was fascinated by serial killers (which, in a post-Marilyn Manson world, seems more like the sign of a hack than a deviant) and corresponded and met with infamous killer clown John Wayne Gacy, who provides the glowing quote that opens the movie. Allin was a no stranger to the institutional life himself – before the film was shot, he served two years in prison for assaulting an underage girl. When he's asked about his future plans in the movie he says he wants to stay a step ahead of the law, which he was ultimately unable to do; his 1992 tour was interrupted when he was arrested for violating parole.

His outlaw-ness wasn't sexy, though. It was dirty and repulsive, a brutal display of awful animal instincts. He performed naked, but his lumpy body and tiny drug- shriveled cock were displays of ugliness, not Red Hot Chili Peppers-style athletic sexiness.

In the period of Allin's life captured in the documentary, Allin wore aviator shades and hooded jackets. He probably would have been tickled to hear that the year after he died, the a widely distributed police sketch the Unabomber stole the look, minus the Genghis Khan moustache.

Allin's music was actually pretty good. He mostly played poppy hardcore songs that were simple, fast and catchy. He even put out a David Allan Coe-style country record that's eminently listenable.

There's a moment in the film where Allin sings Warren Zevon's "Carmelita" on a beat-up acoustic guitar. There's been a lot of versions of that song – Linda Ronstadt's is probably the most famous – but Allin's out-of-tune guitars and buzzsaw vocals sell the story of a man "strung out on heroin on the outskirts of town" better than anyone.

The film periodically cuts away to a GG Allin fan named Unk for comments. Looking like a nerdier and pudgier Lou Barlow, Unk attempts to provide insight into the appeal of GG Allin. He says he thinks Allin's onstage antics were hilarious. There's a moment where Unk talks about Allin's hatred for authority figures, and says that Allin hated authority figures for just having authority. Allin's wasn't a thought-out rebellion. It was a reaction, like kicking out your leg when a doctor hits your knee with a hammer.

But maybe it's good that he didn't think out his rebellion. The film contains a real eye-opening segment with former bandmate Chicken John, who left the Allin's backing band, the Murder Junkies, because he thought Allin lacked imagination. Promising to kill yourself onstage, a promise Allin made but failed to pull off, was nothing, John says. He should do something that would really register, like killing the president.

Todd Phillips directed the film while a student at New York University. Phillips went on to direct mainstream comedies, including the undisputed classic *Old School* and the unfairly maligned *Starsky and Hutch*.

As a rookie documentarian, he pulls off a job that's both amazing and disappointing. He's mostly not to blame; as he explains in his director's commentary, none of his documentary subjects wanted to cooperate. With limited access and modest resources, getting relevant footage was a

Local Motion: The Glass Ceiling

Seth Adam bumps his head on it; and with good planning, Nikita's Irish jam might avoid it altogether
By Dan Barry
08/02/2007

challenge. He expertly strung together what he had – concert footage, interviews, news stories and talk show appearances – and created a formal, composed documentary about a bent, wild subject.

The film is visceral and fascinating, but something feels missing. We get the feelings about Allin, but not all the facts. There are interviews with Allin's childhood friends (Phillips says in the director's commentary were told that they were being filmed for an MTV documentary) who recount Allin's lifelong misanthropy and early encounters with drugs, and superbly bleak footage of northern New England, where Allin grew up. But the rise of GG Allin and the Murder Junkies from obscurity to infamy, a story one would assume to be like a cross between *Eddie and the Cruisers* and *Taxi Driver*, isn't outlined in the movie.

Thankfully, the bonus features on the disc fill in a lot of blank spots. The interview with Allin's mother is particularly revealing, as she talks casually about Allin's hellaciously brutal childhood. Allin's birthname was Jesus Christ Allin – a purported fact that sounded like it could have been self-attributed mythology. He became GG when his younger brother Merle couldn't pronounce Jesus, and called him Jee-Jee instead. That was apparently the only cute thing about Allin's developmental years; the family lived in a cramped New Hampshire cabin that lacked electricity, and no one was allowed to speak after dark.

Merle, who later became his brother's bass player, is interviewed at length in another bonus feature, and provides one of the film's commentary tracks. It's refreshing to see that he's grown out the Hitler moustache he had in the original film. In an interview with Murder Junkies drummer Dino, who looks like a punk rock mannequin, Merle rattles through Allin's history with music, and his progression from Iggy Pop-style frontman into, well, GG Allin. Merle – who seems like an ultra-laid-back dude when he's not cheering on women getting beat up – maintains and lives off of his brother's legacy, selling Allin merchandise on GGallin.com and touring with a reconstituted version of the Murder Junkies.

Thanks to Merle, and the re-release of the film, Allin's legacy lives on. Is that a good thing? Well, if you accept the premise that punk rock is the attempt at expressing pure nihilism, GG Allin was the ultimate punk rocker. Johnny Rotten might have screamed that there was no future, but Allin didn't even seem to have a present. It's the closest to the nasty truth that punk rock implied.

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