



How you hate me now?

Pushing buttons with G.G. Allin and Negativland

By Will York

Hated (Special Edition)

(Music Video Distributors)

Our Favorite Things

(Other Cinema)

DVDS I must have passed the G.G. Allin documentary *Hated* (1994) a dozen times in the video store over the years without ever mustering the nerve to rent it. Having finally watched it, I can only ask myself, "What took me so long?" Not because it's a pleasant viewing experience, but because it's such a massive train wreck: the (il)logical end point of years of self-destructive punk shock tactics and performance antics.

Hated was filmed by Todd Phillips — who went on to direct *Old School* and *Starsky and Hutch* — while he was a film student at New York University. It depicts what ended up being the final few years in the life of a genuinely disturbing and disturbed dude.

The film is built around — but not limited to — in-the-trenches footage of the tattooed, scarred, and frequently naked and/or bloody Allin onstage with his band, the Murder Junkies. This footage is not meant to showcase his vocal range — he had none — or the band's sterling musicianship. Instead, it finds Allin assaulting audience members, getting wrestled down by cops, and genuinely scaring the crap out of everyone in the room. We also see footage from a surreal appearance on *Geraldo* and an appalling "spoken word" performance at NYU that ends with Allin sticking a banana up his tailpipe, the cops coming — a recurring theme — and Phillips nearly being expelled for booking the whole atrocity.

The rest of the video shows that, for better or worse, Allin's live act really *wasn't* an act. He was a genuinely angry, sociopathic fellow who lived his life as recklessly as he performed, in constant squalor and literally on the run from the police. This DVD reissue adds a recent interview with his poor mother, whose reclusive, mentally ill husband insisted on naming the boy "Jesus Christ," whence the nickname "G.G." originated. There's also two full audio commentaries from Phillips as well as the Beavis and Butthead-like duo of Murder Junkies Merl Allin, G.G.'s brother, and Dino Sex, the band's sicko naked drummer. I absorbed every second of it.

Next to Allin, Bay Area cutups Negativland might look like Goody Two-shoes, but don't be fooled. Granted, you won't find them cutting themselves or shitting onstage. In fact, you won't find the group's members at all in most of the videos on their recent anthology *Our Favorite Things* (Other Cinema). Make no mistake, though: there's something to offend just about everyone on this DVD.

Pushing people's buttons is nothing new for Negativland, but what's striking about this release is how well the video format suits the group's meticulous cut-and-paste approach. The editing sleight of hand is simply amazing at points. These are some of the most involved, detail-oriented music videos I've ever seen, which may sound like faint praise given the laziness that's typical of the

medium, but stay with me here.

Drawing on music from throughout their career, Negativland go after such familiar targets as firearms (the found-footage extravaganza of "Guns"), advertising ("Truth in Advertising" and perhaps one too many videos from the *Dispepsi* CD), and religion ("Christianity Is Stupid," in which a series of Hollywood Pontius Pilates are seen driving nails into Jesus' hands in sync with the song's thumping industrial beat).

That said, some of the best moments are much less pointed, including the eerie "Time Zones" — an oddly entertaining bit about the number of time zones in the Soviet Union — and the short and surreal "Over the Hiccups," a bunnies-in-outer-space Claymation piece that is black comedy at its most brutal.

Yes, Negativland are as relentless — and self-referential — as ever on this DVD, and if you watch it for long enough, you're bound to get annoyed at something. But when has that *not* been the case with this group? Even so, *Our Favorite Things* is one of the best things they've done in any format, with moments that are as jaw-dropping in their way as anything on the grisly *Hated*.

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