

EDITED BY RANDY HARWARD



Erykah Badu imparts her wisdom on selling out in *Before the Music Dies*

# Bye Bye, American Pie

*The reports of rock's demise have been greatly exaggerated...*

## Before the Music Dies

(BEFORETHEMUSICDIES.COM, 84 MINUTES)

Is it dead, or is it Memorex?



Rock 'n' roll is dead! It's fun to say, even if you don't mean it and you don't necessarily fear the demise of the single greatest art form besides midget donkeypunch porn. Now say music—rock, blues, jazz, hip-hop, country, and even vanilla-scented pre-fabricated teen pop—is dead. Doesn't have the same ring...but are you really scared?

Filmmaker Andrew Shapter's point, that music is dying at the hands of corporate interests, is valid. There is no shortage of unctuous motherfuckers out there trying to make money off music and keen to define and design the Product (S'music® anyone?). And it's pitifully true that there is also no dearth of mouthbreathing morons—like the vacuous Ashlee Simpson fans interviewed in B4TMD—who'll open wide and accept spoonful after soul-desiccating spoonful of the powdered poo for sale. But does that portend the death of music?

Envision a milieu where the only music we hear comes from one televised talent show on one clear channel: If anything is scary enough to make one wee in one's Old Navy loose fits, it's that. Sweet sanctimonious Simon Cowell deliver us! With cold-blooded, megamonolithic corporations like Clear Channel (which B4TMD explains was started by car salesmen) monopolizing music markets, and record labels taking tone-deaf teen models and Autotuning them into pop stars, the filmmakers imagine just such a world in order to make a point. But the idea that music can disappear like the dinosaurs is poppycock verging on fear-mongering, although the filmmakers' hearts are in the right place.

This movie...it's alarmist, even a little trite. A lot of preaching to the choir. But that's always entertaining, empowering, cathartic. So as some smart people—musicians, fans, industry people, critics—and a few bloated a-holes don burlap robes and get semi-apocalyptic on your ass, remember that they're venting. It's frustrating to see true creativity outpaced by rampant insincerity. Most of these people know music isn't going anywhere; they just want to ensure that the spirit of true creativity prevails. Thus, the consensus

parting shot amounts to 'keep playing music' and 'be original.'

Good advice. Doesn't have the same zip as Erykah Badu's pithy how-to on selling out ("Do some ho shit"), but, hey.

**Special features:** None.

RANDY HARWARD

## Cracker & Camper Van Beethoven

THE FIRST ANNUAL CAMP OUT LIVE (MVD, 129 MINUTES)

Mom, can I come home? Camp's just...eh



There were 20 acts at the first Cracker/CVB campout in September '05 at Pappy and Harriet's Pioneertown Palace in Pioneertown, Calif. Low's Alan Sparhawk, Roger Clyne, Mark Kozelek, and Victoria Williams...some good stuff. But in addition to cherrypicked sets from Cracker and Camper Van Beethoven, it's all side projects and you know how that shit goes—usually, a deflated 'eh.' While we're dealing with a couple of really

good source bands, the sum is almost always greater than the parts. Solo turns from Victor Krummenacher, Johnny Hickman, Greg Lisher and Jonathan Segel are sporadically decent; Monks of Doom (CVB minus Lowery and Segel) are damn good even at a scanty three songs. Would've been a much better program if it was all-inclusive—or even just full Cracker and CVB sets with side dishes. But as co-head Cracker David Lowery knows well, licensing is a bitch.

**Special features:** "Porchstock" footage, which is really just fifteen minutes of post-fest porch performance filmed in spectacular night vision. RH

## ISIS

CLEARING THE EYE (IPECAC, 130 MINUTES)

Isis? Shazam!



ISIS' uncommonly pretty metal is just begging for the visual treatment, a massage—with happy ending—from some director whose complex cutting-edge "vision" just so happens to