

AURAL ASSAULTS

DVD REVIEWS

Apocalyptica The Life Burns Tour 20/20

Entertainment/
Jive/Zomba



Why hasn't Apocalyptica ended this debate? Can true metal be created without electric guitars? It's true, Billy Joel tried creating metal during the early '70s using just keyboards and drums, but his band Attila had limited success. And, sure, there have been others who have failed. That was before Apocalyptica. These three classically trained Finnish cellists have, for the better part of a decade, created metal. Throughout the trio's career, they've consistently done justice to classics by Metallica, Sepultura and Faith No More as well as created original compositions, all without the benefit of an electric guitarist, a keyboardist and, more often than not, without a singer or a drummer. And their recent inclusion of a drummer has not tarnished their original metal approach.

Apocalyptica has also brought a new debate to a quick, decisive end. Can a true metal concert take place without a frontman or electric guitarist? And can it take place if all of the band's members are seated?

As Apocalyptica's first DVD proves, the answers are yes and yes. Especially because the trio has fully embraced the fact that they are a metal act, right down to the big, teased hair, bare, sweaty chests and the leather pants. Throw in their trademark skull logo, entertaining stage banter, audience participation and pyrotechnics and you have the makings of a very special metal show.

Captured on the last date of Apocalyptica's *The Life Burns* tour on December 5th 2005 in Düsseldorf, Germany, the show is an overview of their entire musical output. And though this show could have easily dissolved into novelty or self-parody, the strength of the trio's music and their performance help keep their integrity intact and their tongues from being planted firmly in cheek. And as if there was any further incentive needed to pick up this DVD, it also includes all of Apocalyptica's music videos (be on the lookout for cameos by Ville Valo, Max Cavalera and Nina Hagen), a US tour film and an entertaining electronic press kit. [www.apocalyptica.com] — Vinny Cecolini

Sinister Prophecies Denied MVD



Although not exactly a band that's on the tip of most death metallists' tongues, the Dutch outfit Sinister has been grinding and growling since the late '80s. And despite seeing quite a few members come and go over the years — as well as experiencing a brief break-up in 2004 — Sinister remains a force with which to be reckoned with founding member/vocalist Aad Kloosterwaard still at the helm. While on tour in support of their 2006 album — and eighth release overall — *Afterburner* (guess the lads never heard of ZZ Top?), a complete performance was taped at the Stodola Club in Warsaw. And the results are quite impressive — multi-camera shot, good audio, and most importantly, a solid performance from the band themselves. Sinister more than hold their own against the competition currently out there, as evidenced by such songs as the set-opener, "Bleeding Towards The Wendigo" and "Epoch Of Denial." *Prophecies Denied* offers an array of impressive extras including a lengthy interview with Kloosterwaard and drummer Paul [Beltman] that recounts the band's entire history, countless additional live "bootleg" performances and a documentary. Running a total of 160 minutes in length, Sinister has come up with a product that fans will not regret picking up. [http://sinister.wingsofdeath.nu] — Greg Prato

Obituary Frozen Alive Metal Mind



I'll admit I got to the death metal party a bit late in the game, comparatively. After my initial exposure in 1986 to music other than what happened to be on the radio, my soul was quickly sold to doom. Sure, I was there right on time for such landmarks as *Psalm 9* and *Epicus Doomicus Metallicus*, and I was the only kid I knew with a Celtic Frost backpatch, but somehow death metal eluded me. Luckily, that all changed as a result of a 1992 episode of *Headbanger's Ball*.

Amid the Soundgarden, Janes Addictions and occasional Iron Maidens (to keep the actual 'bangers appeased), a triple-shot of more "extreme" bands snuck on, turning my doomed world upside down. After the neck-snapping, Lovecraftian Swede-death of Entombed's "Stranger Aeons" and a not-that-extreme-but-still-headbang-worthy "War Ensemble," the drunken, lurching stomp of Obituary's "The End Complete" knocked me on my doom-lovin' ass. By two minutes in, the video had become background to a musical violation, this band of Floridians clearly as influenced by the crossover sounds of DRI by way of Celtic Frost... and somehow it worked.

Fast-forward three studio albums, one live set, one best of and one mother of a hiatus, and Obituary makes their first contribution to the realm of DVD. *Frozen Alive*, recorded at an August 2006 Poland gig in the midst of touring for monolithic comeback *Frozen In Time*, is a career-spanning live document of all that is Obituary. From the opening groove of "Redneck Stomp" to a furious "Chopped In Half" from 1990 breakthrough *Cause Of Death*, it's clear that the quintet hasn't missed a beat, or ceased to be able to deliver. That the same passion which causes the grunts-not-words of "Internal Bleeding" to be as relevant as new slammer "Stand Alone" despite the fourteen years between their release is key in understanding how important Obituary is in laying the groundwork for modern death metal. Live, they're a machine, yet one that pumps NASCAR-grade motor oil for blood and spews lyrical gore the likes of which Gwar cannot compete with. You can have your Oderus Urungus, give me John Tardy gurgle/growling, "Die. Killing. Rotting in the wastes below," anytime. Gone is the gaunt Trevor Peres of yore, replaced by a burled up Sasquatch/Viking hybrid as likely to lay waste to a Nordic fjord as a case of Bud Lite. His spiked armband and constant headbanging and stage-stalking are the antithesis of Allen West's reserved demeanor, both of them all the while churning out riff after memorable, sluggish riff. The Frank Watkins/Donald Tardy rhythm section is solid as ever, with stop-on-a-headstone breaks bouncing off of hardcore freneticism, often within the same song. My only complaint in the live portion is the absence of "The End Complete," but I'm just being pissy.

The bonus features on *Frozen Alive* are all worthy of viewing, and include the video for and making of "Insane," backstage antics in Poland and the world premiere of the clip for "On The Floor." Also, it's here that we encounter the bane of all that is a live metal show...the drum solo. Maybe not so surprisingly, Donald carries it off without a hitch, keeping things abbreviated yet interesting, engaging the crowd at every opportunity. Topping off the extras are two interviews, splitting up Peres/Watkins and the Tardy boys. On the whole, there's little information revealed that couldn't be found with a cursory web search, and the questions are duplicated over the two sessions, resulting in a very formulaic approach by the interviewer. Questions specific to each member would have worked better and we could probably do without the seconds-long cut-aways to footage of the live show we've just seen. In the end, though, it's not about what any member, fan or critic says. What Obituary is and has always been about is the music, and the hulking brutality of the live experience. And on that front, Obituary does what they have done since the beginning: Destroy. [www.obituary.cc] — Lord Randall

Porcupine Tree Arriving Somewhere... Snapper



Taking its title from the centerpiece track on 2005's stunning opus *Deadwing* (Lava), *Arriving Somewhere...* (clipped down from the full song title "Arriving Somewhere But Not Here") is mostly a live document of Porcupine Tree's two shows at the Park West in Chicago, IL, October 11-12, 2005. Touring in support of their then-recent release, the band, led by frontman/guitarist/songwriter/producer/you-get-the-idea Steven Wilson, roll through a barrage of tracks mostly off of *Deadwing* and its immediate predecessor, 2002's *In Absentia*, but with some older, relevant cuts as well culled from the depths of the expansive P-Tree catalog.

The newer material, decidedly more focused, calculated and "rocking," is definitely the crux of the presentation though, with no less than a third of the setlist from *Deadwing*. The older songs, tracks like "Hatesong," "Don't Hate Me," "Buying New Soul" and "So Called Friend," come in a cluster in the middle, which can be a lull for anyone unfamiliar with their original albums, but as the title track follows, it's a quick redemption.

As *Deadwing* centered lyrically around a screenplay penned by Wilson, so too is *Arriving Somewhere...* blatantly cinematic. Shot in a grainy, saturated style with plenty of quick cuts among band members, switches between color and black and white and a copious amount of angled camera positions, it avoids the "Concert DVD" trap easily by providing constant stimulation, far more akin to a well-made music video than the bootleg clip on YouTube.

With up to three video feeds behind them playing on a large curtain wrapped around the circular stage, Porcupine Tree's live show seems as elaborate and sophisticated as the music itself. Accordingly, the DVD that captures it follows suit more than capably, adding bonus footage in the form of a second disc with music videos and a performance on German TV. [www.porcupinetree.com] — JJ Koczan

Legalize Murder D.C. Films UK



Supposedly the first black metal comedy ever made, *Legalize Murder* is hilarious. A brilliant BM satire, when I originally downloaded the flick months ago, I wasn't sure if I should be offended or laughing my ass off. *Legalize Murder* is basically the story of a journalist who wants to investigate the greatest threat to civilization as we know it — black metal — and takes a week to visit the infamous, dark/occult and a very Satanic Welsh duo made of Vic and Jack Norseman. Although they wear corpse paint, "proper leather" and Bathory shirts all the time, one of them owns and lives on a potato farm, collects coffee cups and plays video games all day long. While everything is a joke in this movie, the soundtrack is gravely serious, featuring bands like Bethlehem, Watchmaker, Tsjuder, Nargaroth etc. It's obvious the directors know what's up. This is a truly exceptional parody, and from what I hear, it's huge in Europe, earning rave reviews in major publications. The first pressing has already sold out. But black metal aficionados without a solid sense of humor should beware. [www.myspace.com/legalizemurderthemovie] — Stefan Raduta