



Phil Varone

"I was a responsible addict. That's what my therapist says. I was able to function better doing it. My tech used to laugh when I would walk up to the stage looking all fresh and ready to kick ass."

by Robert Tuozzo

I met Phil Varone on Friday, August 26 2005 at the Tribeca Cinemas in New York City. It was an unusually cool August evening for "The city that never sleeps." I set forth on my journey that night to see the world premiere of his documentary entitled "Waking up Dead." Of course I had known of Phil from his former bands Saigon Kick and Skid Row but I had never gained the information that I was about to receive.

I never thought to in my thirteen years of past cocaine abuse to video tape myself while under the influence and I'm about to find out why Mr. Varone thought to do so. It's an amazing insider's look into addiction and the length it reaches, knowing no borders or boundaries. Once you're hooked it's nearly impossible to stop by mere self will (as to my own experience proves).

It's a brave move to release this movie, albeit a very scary and harsh reality. There are no holds barred in this film and if you think you're different or if you're of the same breed then may I suggest you pick up a copy of "Waking Up Dead."

I don't think Phil wants only to be remembered for his drug abuse as much as I think it was just a mirror that he had decided to face, and how could one ignore or deny what is videotaped? As I learned that night from his friends and family members in attendance it was just what Phil needed.

I also spoke to Emmy award winning journalist & filmmaker Fabio Jafet, who had followed Phil around for four years documenting the seedy underworld of the music business from one of its own. I asked Fabio

"How were you able to continue this, did it not bother you." he replied "of course it bothered me but there was a job to do." After the film Phil took questions from the packed theater. To our joy Phil reported he was clean and sober. Most of all his invited guests mingled afterwards in the lobby. This is where I got to meet the man and the film maker. We've kept in touch over these past two years and to coincide with the films' release I sent an email to both Phil and Fabio letting them know my interest was very high and that I wished to speak once again to Phil.

So, here we go from bands to drugs to movies, tattoos and more...

22CR: Thank you Phil for taking the time with us here @ 22CR...

PV: My pleasure Robert , thank you.

22CR: We'll start to talk about your previous projects and we'd also like to know about your current ones. Can you give us a run down of your years with Saigon Kick and Skid Row and up to the present?

PV: Well Saigon Kick was my first band that got signed. We formed back in 1989 in Ft Lauderdale, Florida. At one point we were all in rival bands but decided to form and try a new sound. It worked out and we were signed two years after forming. After putting out two records, our singer left. From that point forward the band was doomed. We tried to save what little was left, but ego's and hatred toward one another just ripped it all apart. I left the band in 96. After a few years of doing records and owning a restaurant, I got a call from Rachel Bolan of Skid Row.

They have been friends of mine for many years, so it was like going home when they asked me to join. I had a great time with those guys, but I was partying like a Rock Star, pushing the envelope way too much. In 2004, I decided to leave the band and get healthy. After I went to rehab, Fabio and I started working on the movie. When the movie was finished, I moved to Los Angeles to pursue my other love comedy. I have been writing and performing stand up comedy for about a year now, and loving it.

22CR: When did you learn to play the drums and were you schooled?

PV: I learned to play drums in grade school. I think I was in 4th grade at the time. Funny enough, drums weren't my first choice. I wanted to play trumpet but because I had a problem with my ears at the time, I couldn't. People will say, the drums are worse. Not really, I could wear ear plugs and play. The constant pressure from blowing into a trumpet would have hurt my ears permanently. So I took percussion and played everything except full drum set. All the percussionists would play single pieces for each song. I didn't get my first drum set till a couple of years later. I actually still have it. It's over 30 years old.

22CR: Including myself, I find it's either pier pressure or just curiosity, which was it for you when you began using drugs?

PV: Self medication. I tried cocaine once and fell in love. I needed something to forget about life for a while and that was my escape. Of course I knew that the coming down was the worst part of it. That's what fueled the desire to get more and more.

22CR: Including myself, I find it's either pier pressure or just curiosity, which was it for you when you began using drugs?

PV: Self medication. I tried cocaine once and fell in love. I needed something to forget about life for a while and that was my escape. Of course I knew that the coming down was the worst part of it. That's what fueled the desire to get more and more.

22CR: When were the four years Fabio videotaped you?

PV: 2000 till 2004.

22CR: I have to ask Why and who thought to make this videotape?

PV: Fabio being a news man started following me around an taping everything. As he would say, "I'm following the train wreck". He had won many Emmys for his camera work with the news, so he just rolled on everything. One day he called me and asked if I wanted to make a movie out of the footage. I guess he was going through stuff, and it was out of control. So Fabio was the first to say lets make a movie.

22CR: How do you think you survived such an ordeal?

PV: I have no idea. I guess I have a purpose on this planet. I have two amazing children, a great family that supports me and close friends that have been threw a lot.

22CR: Was there a point (and if so when) when you could not function in a band / tour setting while using?

PV: Not at all. I had it down. I was a responsible addict. That's what my therapist says. I was able to function better doing it. My tech used to laugh when I would walk up to the stage looking all fresh and ready to kick ass. He would shake his head and say "how the f**k do you did it?" I would smile and start playing.

PV: I do drink on occasion. I never was a big fan of booze. While I was touring I would drink just because everyone else was, but when I did cocaine, I never drank. It was a couple of 8 balls of cocaine and few bottles of Gatorade.

22CR: Not too long ago I caught you on Miami Ink, I though that was great with what you did with your son, I'm sure your children mean the world to you...

PV: My children are my life. It's why I get up everyday. If I didn't have kids, I would have checked out a long time ago.

22CR: Back to your drumming, what kit do you use and do you have endorsers?

PV: In all honesty, I haven't played drums in a while. I did a record for a friend of mine named Cody Marks, but that's it in the last 3 years. I still have Drum Workshop, Sabian Cymbals, Evans Drum heads.

22CR: Will we see you on tour anytime soon?

PV: Not with music. I've been doing stand up comedy for almost a year now and I hope to be touring my comedy act soon. I have a great show here in L.A called "The Sex Stand Up and Rock and Roll Show". It's a lot of fun and I have music, comedy, and sex all in one.

22CR: Do you have any words of wisdom or is there anything you'd like to say to your family, friends and fans?

PV: Just thanks for the support always. They know how special they are to me, so I don't have to ay much.

22CR: Thank you for your time and honesty, you've touched many people you'll never even get the chance to meet...

PV: I thank you, and remember the movie is coming out June 26th and you can see clips of it at www.myspace.com/wakingupdeadmovie **And find me at www.myspace.com/philvarone**

Well, one could only imagine how hard it is to relive your past again and again. For some of those who are as fortunate as Phil to come through this ordeal alive and well, it's a testament to those who think they cannot. Yes you can but you have to try. I can sit all day and dream of the what ifs, and what should have been, which will get me what I always got, nothing. So, if you want what we have Freedom from active addiction, then you'll have to do what we did to overcome the biggest obstacle yourself. For its me and my voice who I believe when I hear it and usually my first thought is not the correct. So, I must think again. Think a healthier thought. All will be well for one more day.

We'd like to thank Phil Varone and Fabio Jafet for bringing this wonderful film to the for front and to let everyone know this drug does not separate genders, location, age or race, it can kill us all...

22NDCR

