



Waking Up Dead

2007 Demolition Visual Entertainments

Ray Van Horn, Jr.

There have been hundreds of testimonials, warnings and *Behind the Scene* documentaries outlining the potential folly of living the rock 'n roll lifestyle to the extreme. Most musicians from the eighties have clammed up about their notorious debaucheries that included toking, drinking, pissing, fighting and fucking on the road, and with good reason. Many have spouses and families to take into consideration, and as Phil Varone, former drummer for Saigon Kick and Skid Row is witness to, living excessively to the point that an anonymous groupie you balled on the tour bus materializes out of nowhere and apologizes to your wife *will* inevitably lead to your downfall.

Waking Up Dead is a responsible examination of irresponsibility, though the footage of Varone snorting coke before your eyes and licking the nipples of ditzy girls on-camera, much less appearing totally blasé about getting a blowjob in front of audience on the tour bus, much less on video might seem like an ode to depravity. *Waking Up Dead* is, in actuality, a public service announcement. At the core, it is a recorded file for Varone himself, who nearly died from his cocaine abuse, but in the bigger picture, it is one of the first brutally honest narratives serving caution to young up-and-comers who are seduced by the promise of the rock 'n roll dream, which most musicians have crashed and burned trying to attain, Varone being one of them.

Like Andrew Keidis' (Red Hot Chili Peppers) revelatory *Scar Tissue* autobiography, Varone painfully puts himself in front of the world, risking arrest for possession, because the cost of chasing fame is one he wants people to take to heart. Sometimes it isn't enough to just talk about it to a reporter or in a basement at a private party; Varone himself mentions in a hazed stupor that the entire ordeal of getting high and getting pussy is something you can't truly understand unless you're living the life. So rather than let you find out the harsh reality of addiction on your own, Varone turns in footage of himself at his absolute worst to show you what can happen. Since so much reality t.v. out there is utter bullshit, it's shocking but refreshing that *Waking Up Dead* is literal gospel. Bret Michaels, take note, you slaving fool...

Bands will tell you not to get into rock 'n roll if you know what's good for you. If you want to look like Phil Varone burning his coked-out eyes even further in front of a cathode tube in a zombie-like stupor, that's your problem, because you've had all the warnings in the world why cigarettes will kill you and *still* you smoke. Drugs are simply the fast lane to an early out, and as Varone's ex-wife Cathy bats away tears knowing she still cares for a man intent on destroying himself, it is all the evidence you need as to why a life of excess will rob you blind (if not Varone showing you his bank account bearing only \$1.57 in it). You've heard the warnings; now you can see the warnings. Varone stands to make as many enemies as he does friends by releasing *Waking Up Dead*, but sometimes you wake up and realize that just being alive prompts you do the right thing...

Posted by Ray Van Horn, Jr.