

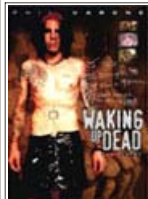


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## waking up dead dvd



### WAKING UP DEAD

*The pitfalls of drugs and drumming for scumbags.*  
(MVD)



The most fascinating aspect of this documentary is not the fall into drug addiction of former Saigon Kick drummer Phil Varone, but the fact that while opening for Kiss during his stint as skinsman for Skid Row he was making \$20 a day. Yes, you read right. \$20 bucks! Opening up for Kiss might have been a dream come true for Varone but I am sure his children's stomachs weren't as amused. Then again, that miserable sum may just have something to do with his status as a hired hand in the band; a status that apparently doesn't even give him the right to show the other member's faces or even the band's logo, which throughout the documentary are blurred to avoid recognition.

Varone's claim to C-list fame goes back to the early 90's, when as drummer for Florida's half alternative/half cock rockers Saigon Kick he experienced mid level success. Four albums into a fading career, largely due to the rise of grunge, the band split and Varone got fucked out of any royalties. A fact that, he'd be eager to tell you, he is still quite bitter about. I mean, how could you not be? Those monthly royalty checks from Saigon Kick must be huge!!! But that's not the point, the problem comes from Varone's erroneous and immature decision making. Post Saigon Kick Varone finds himself at a crossroads, with no education nor plans for the future and with a family to support he signs on to playing for Skid Row, a band that's been spiraling down into oblivion for the better part of the last decade and a half. Such position might have been a good move if what he was looking for is to score with strippers, but for a man with two kids and a wife to feed and support, the move was just plain irresponsible. What happens next is the textbook example of the clichéd rocker; he hangs with big boobed girls, fucks a lot, has a ton of fun, and inhales cocaine with the speed of an anteater. On the way of course, he cheats on his wife, his child support checks bounce higher than a basketball, scores with more chicks and (and sometimes their mothers too), forgets about his kids, moves in with his porn star girlfriend (who doubles as his sugar mama), divorces his wife, starts seeing a therapist, sells his drums to his drug dealer in order to avoid eviction and subsequently moves from the therapist onto a real doctor who slowly explains to him that if he continues on that path death is inevitable. Then he heads back home, and snorts all the coke he can find. About four years into his addiction and in the middle of a show Varone gets heart spasms. With death finally facing him, he makes the only wise decision we've seen him take, he quits the music business for good.

If there is something I did not like about Waking Up Dead was the lack appearances from more important people in Varone's life. What about his relatives and more colleagues? I can imagine that during his years on the road he would have amassed more friends than the two that show up (Saigon Kick vocalist Matt Kramer and Skid Row's Dave Sabo). The addition of whom may have given us more background on the musician and a higher contrast between the person and the irresponsible drug addict. What's most striking about the documentary is that Varone is by the end reduced to a caricature. His story is that of the clichéd rocker, who starts off clean and enthusiastic and ends up with a broke ass, a cocaine addiction, and who has isolated himself from apparently the only people that truly cared about him, his family.

### Waking Up Dead Site

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