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Waking Up Dead

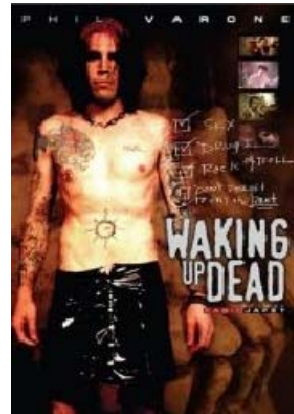
Posted by [Mark Fisher](#)03:16 PM Monday, 30 July 2007 | [Permalink](#)

Phil Varone was once the man behind the drum kit for mid-level rockers Saigon Kick. The band released a few critically acclaimed albums and even got their fifteen minutes with the ballad "Love Is On The Way," which became a top ten hit. Eventually Varone joined the reunited Skid Row lineup and toured with them through the last couple of albums, during which filmmaker Fabio Jafet made this documentary.

Waking Up Dead chronicles Varone's life as a rock star, predictably encompassing drug addiction and sexual exploits and winding up a plea for help from the ailing Varone. The DVD is broken into sections that basically are your stereotypical sex, drugs, and rock and roll segments. The sex segment is an odd mix of "look at how cool I am and how many different woman I have slept with" and "these people don't love me" style sympathy and is my least favorite part of this story. In a way I understand its place but it comes off more as a brag fest than it does a legitimate part of the man's deterioration.

The focus here is on Varone's spiraling drug use. Cocaine seems to be the drug of choice and this is where things don't start to quite match up for me. You see, in many scenes Varone is complaining of the measly pay he gets considering he's a rock star and how his bank account is empty. However, in the next scene though he's blowing thousands of dollars in cocaine up his nose. You can't have a cocaine habit if you don't have money to buy cocaine with now can you? I'm sure he may not have been so broke if he would have had that money. He seems to blame crappy pay and being screwed by royalties (in Saigon Kick) for his spiral, never embracing the fact that no one is forcing him to take drugs. As a matter of fact, he never even mentions that he is choosing to do drugs and waste his money while his kids sit at home with his ex-wife wondering where their daddy is.

There are a number of things that bother me about this documentary. Varone pretends here like he is a big name rock star when in reality his is a working class musician, having played in one band with a big hit (Saigon Kick) and one massively popular band (Skid Row) way past their prime with an unrecognizable frontman. He seems to have an awfully big ego considering he's been playing state fairs with the Skids. He also successfully avoids getting into the fact that he's a dead beat dad at best. None of this would really bother me if he took ownership of anything, instead he simply blames the rock and roll lifestyle over and over again. Fortunately I've been around long enough to meet plenty of rock stars in the same situation who make decent livings and who do not do





bands don't live this lifestyle anymore and, watching an old
bands from the seventies and eighties lose all their money,

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