

Scanner zine

Larger than life and twice as natural

TIM BARRY + LA PAR FORCE - Live {*Punkervision*} "What the fuck am I doing in London?" bellows Tim Barry at the start of this DVD. I'm sure Tim knew exactly what he was in London for and judging by the quality of tunes here, everyone else knew also.

Regular readers and those who know me will testify that I have nothing but utter respect for Tim Barry and AVAIL. He and the band have always come across as completely genuine, sincere and constantly deliver the goods be it via records like the classic 'Over The James' or via stunning live shows that are without parallel. Even so, I was unsure of just how the Barry vocal would transfer to more Countrified songs where his voice didn't have to battle against Joe's bombast of electric guitars and the barrage of the mighty AVAIL rhythm section. More to the point, would the songs be any good?

'Sagacity Gone', the opening track dispelled any doubts. Tim's gravel-toned vocals perfectly matched the raw, acoustic songs - and it only got better from there. 'Ain't Right Sure' is a poignant - almost despairingly so - song of the increasing property prices in his home suburb of Oregon Hill in Richmond, Virginia while 'Church Of Level Track' is a slow, reflective and sobering track. The slower tracks seemed to work better than the faster ones; they seemed to carry greater lyrical power and in the live setting (filmed at London's Camden Underworld) carried an increased musical clout too. Even the AVAIL chestnut, 'Fall Apart' gets a brief airing and losses none of its visceral power. The in-between song chat is riveting too; Barry is a great person to talk with and to listen to and his reflections and anecdotes here confirm that.

Besides the Barry live show, you get a Travel Diary of Tim's tour with LA PAR FORCE. It kicks off with the first rehearsal and then, two days later, it's the first show! Again, Tim's sincerity for what he does continually shines through the whole 54-minute documentary. He goes to great pains to stress that he is not the only songwriter in AVAIL and reassures any doubts and fears with the statement that he, "always wants to play in AVAIL." There are some intimate, buzzing solo performances and a brilliant squat version of 'Idle Idylst' with its message of 'keeping life simple' virtually embodying the Barry ideal. There's another nod to AVAIL with a version of 'Fifth Wheel' and a shot of Tim's scrapbook/ diary that would make for awesome reading.

The final extra is a set by LA PAR FORCE from the same Camden Underworld show. The band's sound is an interesting amalgamation of JAWBOX with THE BREEDERS and a hint of SAMIAM - The Smiths had they been from DC and signed to Dischord is another possibility. The band is from Bavaria, seem a nice bunch of people but ultimately didn't stand up to the quality of Barry's gear.

A great DVD for fans of Barry and AVAIL and one that proves the respect I carry for man and band is not unfounded.

<http://www.scannerzine.com/tvpartyb.htm>