

MULTIMEDIA

A ROUND UP OF THE LATEST ROCK FLAVOURED DVD AND BOOK RELEASES

VARIOUS ARTISTS

"Monsters Of Death 2" Nuclear Blast DVD



Well, if you like promo videos and you like death metal, then this double DVD is definitely for you; with forty two tracks spread over the two discs and a viewing time of just short of three hours, there's a lot to get your teeth into. Generally speaking, the quality of both the music and the videos is high and takes in certified genre classics and new cutting edge material as well. Of course

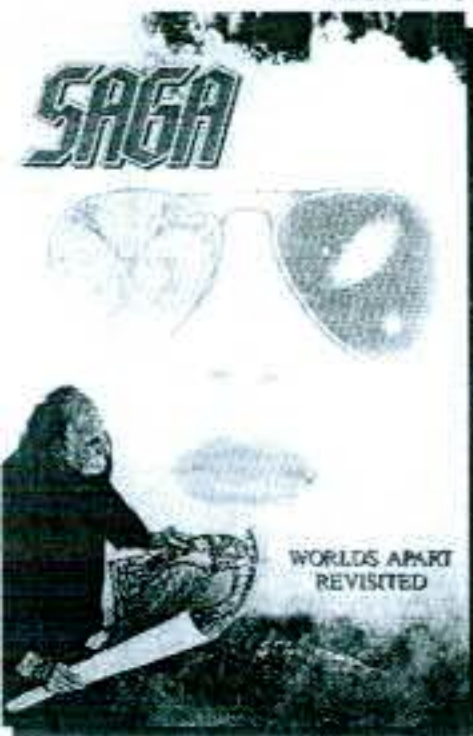
everyone will have favourites and particular hates – personally speaking the likes of Carcass, Cannibal Corpse, Morgoth, Entombed and Rotten Sound had me glued to the screen while Krisiun, Hypocrisy, Atheist, Cryptopsy and Hate Eternal had me heading to the kitchen for another cup of tea. When you add to those names above to luminaries such as Death, At The Gates, Dismember and Kataklysm, the depth and quality of the selection of bands featured on "Monsters Of Death 2" is obvious. I'll just give special mention to Severe Torture for managing to be boring and repugnant at the same time and Mortification for proving that it is possible for Christian death metal bands to sound damn good.

As I said at the beginning, if you like promo videos and you like death metal, pick up a copy of "Monsters Of Death 2" without delay – add beer and friends, and enjoy.

CHRIS KEE

SAGA

"World's Apart Revisited" Inside Out DVD



I have to be honest and say that I was never really blown away by Saga. So when it came to viewing this double-DVD I think it's fair to say that there was a certain lack of expectation. By the time I had gotten halfway through the second song, it's also fair to say I was completely won over; this is simply an incredible performance.

The first DVD is of a concert in Switzerland from 2005 where the band, in addition to their normal set, celebrated the 25th Anniversary of their breakthrough album "Worlds Apart". As part of the twenty-two song set, the band play the entire album in order.

The band are incredibly tight, the performances of Ian Crichton on guitar and Jim Gilmour on keyboards in particular are stunning. The band plays a mixture of AOR and prog, the pomp of Styx and the musical dexterity of Dream Theater.

The second DVD shows the band as they were at the time with a short set of five songs recorded for promotional purposes in 1981. The band have changed a little since then, which is probably just as well as vocalist Michael Sadler's moustache looked like it needed to be taken for a walk. Also included are Worlds Apart Road

Stories and a Worlds Apart revisited documentary. The road stories are particularly amusing and highlight the dangers of producers who decide they want a singer to sound like he's just woken up.

If you like intricate, well played rock music, this is for you. Classic stuff.

MARTIN HOWELL

KATATONIA "Live Consternation" Peaceville Records DVD



This is one of those DVD/CD double packs - I guess some people would consider them to be a CD with a bonus DVD on account of the DVD having no extras other than a choice of 2.0 or 5.1 sound, but those of us old enough to remember VHS concert videos will probably think of it as a DVD concert video with a bonus CD of the same set.

Recorded at last year's Summer Breeze festival with all the multi-camera angles that you would expect and blessed with a superb sound (even for those of us without a 5.1 system) the DVD proves Katatonia's ability to create an atmosphere combining their performance with a fantastic light show – aided and abetted by the fact that they played after it had gone dark. The set list is very heavily balanced towards the band's more recent work with older material barely getting a look in, so long time fans are likely to be somewhat disappointed but anyone into their more recent 'heavy melancholy' sound will lap this up.

The accompanying CD has just as good a sound as the DVD and whilst the lack of any visuals does result in a small drop in the overall atmosphere, the fact that it doesn't come off as just a pale imitation is testament to how strong the band's material is without the bells and whistles of a lightshow and only being able to hear and not see the reaction of the audience.

Like most live DVDs, "Live Consternation" isn't really for the casual fan but diehard fans (particularly of the recent albums) will love it.

NEIL WOODFIN

STRYPER "Greatest Hits: Live in Puerto Rico" MVD Visual DVD



As much as the members of Stryper opened themselves up to ridicule with their black-and-yellow spandex costumes and silly "777" references, these Christian headbangers created a solid body of work and some darn fine songs that still hold up two decades on. Even more surprisingly, the band reunited to tour in 2003 and 2004 after a long hiatus, sounding tougher than before and just as powerful. But what's most startling about "Greatest Hits: Live in Puerto Rico" is the reception Stryper receives from its faithful following. My goodness, those Puerto Ricans love their Stryper.

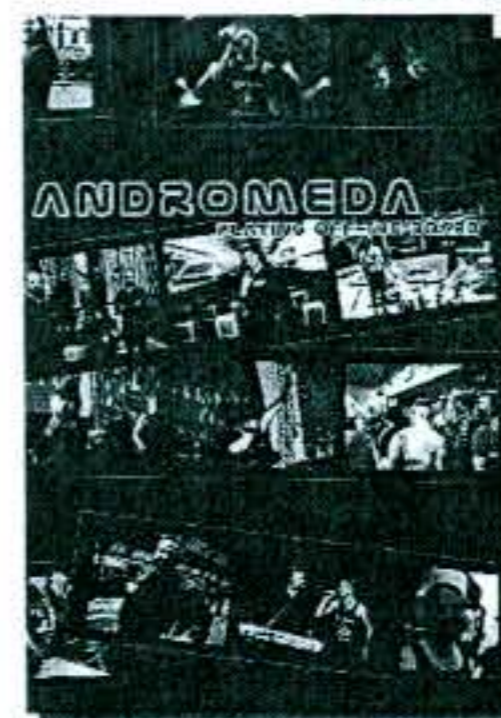
The band played a huge outdoor venue that could hold about four or five versions of the club in which

I saw Stryper perform on that reunion tour, and fans sang along to every tune in this 72-minute set - which included the fitting opener, "Sing Along Song." Other than that, not much has changed. Guitarist and vocalist Michael Sweet hasn't lost his flair (as a singer or a showman), bassist Tim Gaines (who left the band after this DVD was filmed) and guitarist Oz Fox play and sing their hearts out, and drummer Robert Sweet still thinks he's John Bonham. What's more, the stage is decked out in black-and-yellow stripes, and Fox wears an outfit that resembles a bee referee. The band even upholds the tradition of distributing Bibles to the crowd - which leads to one camera shot of a fan holding up a book emblazoned with "God's Word" while flashing the almighty metal sign. How bizarre is that?

Unfortunately, a muddy mix and inconsistent crowd noise mar the visual experience, but 18 minutes of bonus footage from a 1989 arena show (that for some reason reminded me of a Kiss concert) makes up for some of the technical shortcomings. If you were a fan, this is the only widely available video footage of the band - making it essential.

MICHAEL POPKE

ANDROMEDA "Playing Off The Board" Metal Mind DVD



This, the band's first DVD, is the latest in a long line of such products from Poland's Metal Minds label, which seems to have found a nice little business bringing in niche progressive bands for the combination of a rare Polish gig and a live video recording.

Anyone who bought some of the label's earlier DVDs (I've got the TV studio based Delight and Green Carnation concerts)

will be pleased to know that the standard of both the concert setting and the cinematography have come on in leaps and bounds.

Filmed in Katowice during the tour in support of last year's superb "Chimera" album, the venue is an impressively large and grandiose concert theatre - the type of place that usually hosts an orchestra or opera.

This is no big budget production. But having said that, the quality of the video and sound, the range and variety of camera angles, and the crisp, clean editing makes it one of the best concert films of this type you are ever likely to see. The lighting is superb, enabling the cameras to get consistently clear shots and providing a nice variety of visual moods and atmospheres. This really is a good-looking film.

The venue does lead to my only grumble - it is full but the audience who sit down throughout, are quiet and lifeless, and barely feature in the footage. If you want to see a live show with lots of band/crowd interaction, then this may leave you a little cold. On the plus side, this does mean that you concentrate on the music and, despite the audience, the band sure puts in a world class performance.

David Fremberg has long been one of my favourite prog metal singers, but here he exceeds my expectations by some distance. Combining an animated stage presence with an emotion-filled, note-perfect performance, this is a vocal masterclass. Exactly the same adjectives could be applied to guitarist Johan Reinholdz.

"Playing Off The Board" is taken from a line in the title track of their second album, yet this show covers all three albums equally. Highlights for me are the superb melodies