

MOVIES



DESTROY THE MACHINES

I have a love/hate relationship with film festivals. I love going to a theater to see a film on the big screen. I like the atmosphere of the movie house especially the smell of popcorn in the air. I don't like the usual Hollywood fare so a film festival is usually the place to see films I won't get to see on screen otherwise. I can mostly deal with the overall annoyances of the films starting late and the inconsiderate people who attend. A grown man sitting next to me chewed on his thumb throughout an entire film. I tried not to look at him doing it, but it was hard not to hear the disgusting slurping noises. That situation is fortunately easy to deal with. I changed seats before the next film.

I hate the pre-film introductions. These introductions are the thing that really turns me off at any film festival. I wish festival organizers would save them until after the film has ended. Then I could just leave and avoid them. Fortunately, this year's **San Francisco Silent Film Festival** managed to tone down the self-importance of the so-called film experts. Almost all resisted the urge to summarize the plot before showing the film. If I haven't seen a film I never want someone giving away plots or other details before I do. If I have seen it, I know there are others in the theater that haven't so I am annoyed for them. Yet, I have been to many of these where the introduction goes way too far.

The **San Francisco Silent Film Festival** is a very unique film experience. Watching a silent film from the '20s with live musical accompaniment is the only way to see it. This year's **San Francisco Silent Film Festival** had the heightened excitement of showing the almost complete, recently discovered original version of Fritz Lang's **Metropolis**. Shortly after its release in 1927 **Metropolis** was cut from 150 minutes down to 107 mostly to appeal to American audiences. After that the American cut was used worldwide. Parts have been recovered over the years, but no one thought they would see the original version ever again...until Paula Félix-Didier and Fernando Peña found one.

Félix-Didier and Peña were at the festival to tell the amazing story of how they came to discover a complete version of **Metropolis** in the Museo del Cine in Argentina. Peña was working with an Argentine film critic Salvador Sammaritano cataloging the film collection of another film critic Manuel Pena-Rodriguez. Sammaritano recalled once screening **Metropolis** where the film was loose and he had to hold the gate of the projection so the film would stay in focus. He held it for two and a half hours. Peña knowing that **Metropolis** was much shorter than that questioned Sammaritano's memory. Sammaritano said he would never forget that length. This began Peña's twenty-year attempt to get access to Pena-Rodriguez's film archives to see if this version of **Metropolis** was a complete one. He was continually denied access until his ex-wife Félix-Didier became director of the Museo del Cine.

Félix-Didier recalled Peña's attempts to get access to the film and when she got her new job the two immediately went looking for **Metropolis**. It took about ten minutes to find it. As conjectured it was the full version of the

film. Then the two tried getting in contact with the German film company who owned the rights to **Metropolis**. This was not easy even for the director of Argentina's Museo del Cine. Félix-Didier was ignored until she finally convinced a European what she had and to act as intermediary with the German group. Apparently no one thought this type of film history discovery could be made in Argentina.

The version of **Metropolis** found was complete, but a small part of the film was in such bad condition that it couldn't be fully restored and shown. The one we saw is 148 minutes. Also the print discovered at the Museo del Cine is a 16mm one and old so when the missing shots were added back into the 35mm print they have a very different look from the rest of the film. These parts are much darker and less crisp. Although, it would be ideal to have a flawless print of the film I was glad that the re-added shots have such a distinct look. It makes it much easier to see what was originally cut and wonder why anyone would do it in the first place.

I won't bother to summarize **Metropolis** for you. It is a classic, beautiful and entertaining film. If you haven't seen it you should. If you have, this complete version will be out on DVD in November. The Alloy Orchestra featuring Roger Miller of Mission of Burma performed the live score during the screening. Their score featured lots of wild booming percussion. It will be included on the DVD release as a second soundtrack. (silentfilm.org, kino.com/metropolis)

I was stunned when I received the DVD **Sid Vicious - Final 24: His Final Hours** in the mail. I just looked unbelievably at the cover for a few minutes. Then I laughed out loud. Could anyone really make something this truly tasteless? Apparently, yes.

Sid Vicious - Final 24: His Final Hours spells it out right there on the cover. This is a dramatization of February 1, 1979 the last day of Vicious' life. What I know going in is that on his last day Vicious was released from Riker's Island prison on bail. His mother and friends threw a party at his new girlfriend Michele Robison's apartment. Sid shoots heroin, overdoses and dies. The folks at **Final 24** try to play it up like there is some big conspiracy, yet they fail to mention that Sid left a suicide note. When this hour-long reenactment is over there is nothing new learned. However, the interview with Peter Kodick adds exponentially to the overall creep factor of this DVD.

Kodick asserts in **Sid Vicious - Final 24: His Final Hours** that Sid's mother Anne Beverley originally scored some heroin for Sid the afternoon of his release. It was pretty bad stuff so Sid begged Kodick to get him some good stuff. Kodick did. That was the heroin that killed him. Kodick describes all these events matter-of-factly, but still comes across as bragging that he was responsible not exactly for Vicious' death, but for providing him the weapon to do it. With friends like that, who needs enemies?

The overall reenactment on **Sid Vicious - Final 24: His Final Hours** is pretty poorly done. The man who plays Sid Vicious looks as if he is twenty years older than Sid was. Vicious was only twenty-one when he died. Although not mentioned on the DVD case, **Sid Vicious - Final 24: His Final Hours** is part of a series on The History Channel. This explains the annoying interruption every ten minutes of a clock countdown of Vicious' last day. "Sid has seventeen hours left to live". They need to break for commercials. There are many other last days in this series, some more obvious than others: JFK, Keith Moon and Marvin Gaye as well as Anna Nicole Smith and Nicole Brown-Simpson. After watching Sid's last day, I can't say I'm interested in seeing any of the others. (mvdvisual.com)

I am always looking for films to review. If you made one, send a copy to Carolyn Keddy, PO Box 460402, San Francisco, CA 94146-0402. If your film is playing in the San Francisco Bay Area let me know at carolyn@maximumrocknroll.com. I will go see it. www.carolynkeddy.com