

AURAL ASSAULTS DVD REVIEWS

Vital Remains Evil Death Live Metal Mind



It's a shame that Vital Remains doesn't tour more often, as this live DVD shows the pummeling power and virtuosity of this Providence, RI band isn't limited to their excellent studio work. Even without session vocalist Glen Benton (of Deicide fame) this March 2007 set from Poland is filled with contagious energy and fits of mind-boggling guitar playing by Dave Suzuki — easily among the most skilled death metal guitarists.

Suzuki and longtime partner and band founder Tony Lazaro are the show here. Touring vocalist Damien Boynton (Desolation) does a solid job filling in for Benton but most people don't pick up a Vital Remains album for Benton, anyway — they pick it up to hear these two go to work. This live set proves the pair can effortlessly translate their studio work to a live setting.

The show opens with a scorching version of the eponymous track from the 2007 CD *Icons Of Evil*. It's a marvel to watch Suzuki almost effortlessly pull off solo after solo with the only signs of difficulty being the beads of sweat on his forehead. Lazaro's meaty hands and meatier bass hooks keep the songs grounded throughout the set. I found myself wishing I was in the pit.

One of the enduring criticisms of Vital Remains is that the band's songs are sometimes too long or self-indulgent, but this DVD proves otherwise; you can keep an audience throughout an eight minute song if you provide the goods. The video quality is solid although not pristine, and the concert was recorded in surround sound, so listeners with beefed up home theater systems will enjoy an even more authentic experience.

Evil Death Live is also a primer on the band's history, packed with extras. Among the most interesting are the lengthy interviews with Suzuki and Lazaro where they discuss how they developed a relationship with Benton, how the band once wore corpsepaint and the importance of "brotherhood" in the underground metal community. Both men are completely at ease with each other and none of the responses seem scripted — it's like you were talking to the pair in your living room. The artwork and packaging are also excellent for a largely underground metal release.

Vital Remains is among the most important death metal bands out there and this DVD shows why. Let's hope the band gets on the road more. Until then, this is an apt substitute. [www.vitalremains.com] — Justin M. Norton

Paul Booth Last Rites Vol. 1 Paul Booth Productions



View The Teasers or Play This Bitch — those are the two options presented on the menu screen. If that doesn't tip you off to the fact that what lies in wait is no ordinary film, perhaps nothing will. Paul Booth is one of the most highly respected tattoo artists in the world. In fact, there's a two-year wait list for his work. *Last Rites Vol. 1* marks Paul's directorial debut. This 113-minute DVD takes viewers inside the macabre dungeon that is Booth's NYC studio — both the previous and current locations. The complete antithesis of *Miami Ink* and *Inked*, *Last Rites* is a dark and often disturbing glimpse into the life and mind of a truly talented and slightly twisted tattoo master. Never-before-seen footage of Paul inking numerous metal luminaries including Slayer's Kerry King and Tom Araya, Phil Anselmo and Jimmy Bower of Down/Superjoint Ritual, Chimaira's Mark Hunter and Chris Adler from Lamb Of God to name but a handful is presented along with clips of crazed, lunatic fans who truly believe Booth to be a God. Filmed like a haphazard documentary, with B-rated horror/fetish clips separating the many segments, *Last Rites* runs on a stream-of-consciousness akin to sporadic diary entries. Utilizing both black and white as well as color, this DVD satisfies the curious, yet only the truly obsessed will likely watch it more than once. [www.paulboothfilms.com] — Aaron Small

Hawkwind Out Of The Shadows MVD



While not a *Metal Maniacs* headliner per se, Hawkwind nevertheless remains a fascination for rock fans of many creeds, and many readers here will know the name. The long-running space rock institution has generated countless studio and live albums and a growing range of video and DVD releases. As it happens, the *Out Of The Shadows* DVD does a fairly comprehensive job of illustrating the band's strengths and weaknesses over the years. Recorded live in December of 2002, the nearly two-hour concert features vocalist Arthur Brown as a guest performer, venturing on and offstage as the set list demands. Himself of the British progressive rock pedigree, Brown isn't out of place in theory. However, a lack of rehearsal is evident with such classic numbers as "Master Of The Universe" and "Angels Of Death," and it's not until "Sonic Space Attack" (a re-titled and expanded version of the "Sonic Attack" spoken-word standard) that he seems comfortable or even welcome on the stage. Indeed, Hawkwind's openness to friends and relations, its willingness to stake an album or tour on a particular performer, has had some excellent results over the years, noting the *Chronicle Of The Black Sword* extravaganza in the mid-1980s. On the other hand, vocalists such as Ron Tree and Nik Turner have nearly hijacked the band's appeal on other occasions (the former during the embarrassingly cheesy UFO phase in the 1990s, and the latter upon his brief return to the fold circa 1994). Arthur Brown indeed ruins the aforementioned classics but not the atmosphere of the overall concert.

A surprising number of classics make their way into this 2002 set, notably "The Watcher" (sung by bassist Alan Davey) and "Hurry On Sundown." The band's especially electronic albums from the early 1990s (*It Is The Business Of The Future To Be Dangerous*) provide some of the segues and extensions for what is largely a '70s-based song selection. The aforementioned Davey has a perfect foil behind the drums, the ever-moving Richard Chadwick, and the two surely constitute Hawkwind's longest-serving and most gifted rhythm section. *Levitiation*-era keyboardist Tim Blake also joins the fold for this concert, as well as a personal favorite here-again-gone-again Hawkwind member, lead guitarist Huw Lloyd-Langton. In the captain's chair, as always, sits Dave Brock, in basically the same shape he's always been, guiding his ragtag band of musicianouts through the show.

Hawkwind has endured its ups and downs and will continue to do so in spite of competitive ex-members, unprepared special guests and bizarre marketing. Indeed, *Out Of The Shadows* was recorded in 2002, released in Europe in 2004, and now in the US in 2007. The Brock/Davey/Chadwick lineup of the early 1990s may have been the band's best ever, but part of what makes Hawkwind Hawkwind is that it's never the same twice, for better or for worse. With that, there's no one album or DVD to cite as an outsider's best introduction to the Hawkwind universe. However, *Out Of The Shadows* might be a good option, so long as the viewer is aware that Arthur Brown isn't anything more than a questionably-welcome guest.

[www.hawkwindmuseum.co.uk] — Professor Black

Onslaught Live Polish Assault 2007 Metal Mind



As a long-time Onslaught advocate, I was always intrigued by the fact that the band always seemed to distance themselves from the polished yet fantastic *In Search Of Sanity* (1989) album. It was their last outing, until this year's *Killing Peace*, and they didn't quite explode as they should have, but no need to write off a tremendous record. The interview section of this DVD includes an in-depth explanation as to what happened and why the band was so detached from that LP and it's surely worth watching.

Guitarist Nige Rockett looks hurt by the interviewer's accusations that fans were disappointed by that album and he insists it featured some great songs. There are in fact eight full-length classics and anyone who doesn't see that is a thrash imbecile. It's relevant because on this 14-track live DVD, there is only one cut — "Shellshock" — from that fated album which certainly is *not* the best song. In addition, the band dispenses with the flashy guitar parts, which kind of ruins the song.

Despite a strong new release, Onslaught do have a failing in vocalist Sy Keeler. His voice begins to grate after just a couple of tracks. It's too high in the mix and most importantly, he isn't a patch on former throat Steve Grimmett as a singer. That said, his voice *does* suit the old classics — of which there are many — from "Power From Hell," "Metal Forces," "Let There Be Death" and so many more. Rockett also hampers proceedings with a seriously spaced look and a reluctance to be too intricate with his six string antics. Far be it from me to suggest there are some chemicals at work either in the bloodstream or the venue but something is not quite right. Too often these days, new and veteran bands alike are flooding the DVD market with average live releases. There's nothing especially wrong with the Warsaw gig at hand here but it's hardly a reminder of the chief qualities of this re-emerging quintet. [www.onslaughtfromhell.com] — Paul Stenning

The Most Offensive Comedy Ever Made Bill Zebub Productions



Heavy metal satirist/comedian/filmmaker, Bill Zebub, made his intentions very clear in the title of his latest film, *The Most Offensive Comedy Ever Made* [an edited/reworked version of Zebub's acclaimed *Stereotypes Don't Just Disappear Into Thin Air*]. Practically every scene and character in the film

aims at the complete embodiment of the most taboo racial stereotypes that exist in our society. He pushes the boundaries of how far humor should go before it becomes flat out hate-speak, and it seems to be that this was his exact intention. The film itself is, of course, extremely low budget and the acting far from good, but this only adds to the movie's off-color objective. The plot is loose and it's obvious that this film is more about memorable characters and cutting one-liners. Characters such as the masochistic-chronically-masturbating-Nazi-police officer got some serious laughs out of yours truly. The scenes of his bondage fantasies set to epically cheesy German goth metal are completely absurd and worth the price of the DVD alone. The offensive nature of the movie is obviously satirical. The racist characters were as laughable and stupid as the exaggerated black, Jewish, polish, Latina and Italian stereotypes found in the film. There's an extreme loathing of political correctness throughout the movie and there's more to this flick than a slew of absurd racist jokes. The core of the message is that blind political correctness is almost no better than blind racism and any herd mentality is abominable. This is an important point reached through ludicrous humor and scenarios. If you watch this and are offended then you are clearly missing the point. [www.billzebug.com] — Andrew Hock