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Vital Remains - Evil Death Live DVD

by Matt Hensch

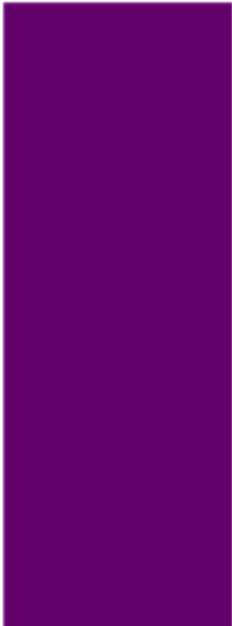
Since 1989, Vital Remains have been feeding the masses their signature recipe of raping brutality over epic textures. These icons of evil remained popular underground death metal squad for years, and continue to produce an unmatched gallery of hammering audio unlike any other group. Vital Remains has also been a prime quality of this band's immortal crusade, and since seeing them perform are slim, I figured picking up the *Evil Death Live DVD* was a good trick.

The biggest difference between a live CD and a taped DVD is the expectation: a nice set-list and production is essential for both, yet DVDs require visual quality, active settings, and stellar bonus features if added along with the previously listed attributes; DVDs are clearly a lot riskier in that sense. So considering all the following categories, *Evil Death Live* passes all the necessary qualifications to warrant a golden grab for all metalheads. Filmed live at the Festival in Poland, *Evil Death Live* captures the pure essence and spirit of Vital Remains' full-hearted aura of sand-blasting death metal.

For this show, Vital Remains was Dave Suzuki and Tony Lazaro on guitar, Hobbie on bass, Antonio Donadeo handling percussion, and Damien Boynton filling in for Glen Benton's vocals. Any kind of skepticism was put to mind upon the first few minutes of this release for one solid reason: this is much better than a stream. Suzuki and Lazaro are on spot as always, but the other guys go beyond what's expected of them; Hobbie, Donadeo, and Boynton perform flawlessly, and lift up the band's performance in a very professional manner. The set list is nine songs from *Icons of Evil* and *Dechristianize*, featuring the best of each record and a few other classics. I'll be the first to admit a little dose of "Forever Underground" would be nice, but you really can't complain when you're watching after viewing this monster.

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The work placed in this DVD is ultimately realized when the viewer dissects the impeccable audio and visual traits hovering over Vital Remains' absolute professionalism. Multiple cameras float about as the band plays, and it's quite common to see different angles of each member playing at different geometrical positions with total clarity. Also, the audio settings are superbly diversified amongst all the instruments and emissions with clean sonic vibes that come off like a misting hose during a scorcher. Alas, everything looks and sounds just the way it should; *Evil Death Live* is certainly a lot more professional compared to other DVDs of the same size.

Now there needs to be one thing said here: Boynton is a goofy motherfucker, but he's the perfect replacement for Glen Benton, but actually watching this guy go around stage making these strange faces and yelling bizarre remarks at the audience certainly causes some raised eyebrows. Oddly enough, this observation is a bit of fun to the group's overall show, mainly because his actions seem so out of place. Boynton doesn't match the evil personality that Vital Remains represent, but some unintentional humor points to a situation that seemed damned at first.

A large portion of metal DVDs also tend to fall when bonus features are included, but of poor footage that usually derails the expectations of one's previous experience with the video's main show; however, *Evil Death Live* is greatly improved because of the amazing extra material. For one, a massive bootlegged show of Vital Remains' live out classic tunes is shown to start the bonus menu off, and it isn't anything less than incredible. Vital Remains is caught playing some different songs they have never performed, like "Unleash Hell" for instance. The extra set was filmed on stage, but at the center of the stage, but it still has surprisingly-good visual and audio quality, especially compared to other taped-in-the-raw shows. The band's performance is flawless with the energy they display during the set and such, which is a real gem. Quite an unexpected gem, if you ask me.

After that rush of ecstasy is a deep, intelligent interview with Tony Lazaro and Dave Suzuki about Vital Remains' history, struggles, and ideology. It is important to note how the interview's questions are meaningful and blunt; no generic questions, but rather a series of flashy topics that force Lazaro and Suzuki to give the truth. Also, you learn a lot about the band's previous material and some neat facts about Glen Benton's original involvement with Vital Remains, and Lazaro's love for the band. It is very interesting, and probably the best interview I've ever witnessed.

Finally, a cool guitar tutorial with Dave Suzuki is given, the explaining and demonstrating of his instrument filling the final slot on the bonus menu. This brief section on how his guitar is basically done to better explain many Vital Remains solos, and a sequence of chord progressions was originally established for each lead section to be very appealing because it adamantly dissects each solo in a way that allows newer axemen to easily learn and follow these specific leads with relative difficulty. Yet another fantastic slice of bonus substance that's both absurd and delightful.

Evil Death Live is a great DVD in several categories, but it is the overall quality that makes this recording such an awesome experience; it is definitely one of the most professional things in my collection of musical items. I tip my hat toward Metal Mind Productions for making such a high-quality slab of footage a

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