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DVD review: Vader, "And Blood Was Shed in Warsaw" (MVD)

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This is Polish death metal that saturates, whether you prefer bathing in blood, swimming in blood, bleeding blood, chugging blood or just indulging in a quick blood facial before killing or dying. Named for archetypal death-metal vocalist Darth Vader and pronounced the same in Polish, Vader have slain without cease for a couple of decades and have plentiful trophies to show for it, on display here. Shot in a Warsaw club, "Blood Was Shed" is their third or fourth video. Possibly that will be enough for now.

In any case, deep satisfaction awaits the buyer, in sound and content. Not that Vader offer huge variety, just chomp after chomp-size chomp of raw meat, lean yet flavorful. The main flinger is of course Peter a.k.a. Piotr Wiwczarek, an amiable-looking ghoul who throats more humanly than most while plucking his coronation-worthy riffs-o'-Satan, often bending his storm-tossed head to concentrate on needling painful solos accentuated by violent yanks of the whammy bar that look and sound like he's vivisectioning an alleycat with a boning knife.

Second guitarist Mauser and bassist Novy represent pretty much your standard efficient henchmen/headsmen, but this is a band known for drums. So what a downer it was a couple of years back when the famous skinsman Doc took his last paddle down the Acheron amid rumors of narcotic overdose -- it was not that he loved death metal less, but he loved death more. Auditions, however, turned up this demon Daray, whose array of percussibles, spotlighted in many an overhead shot from one of the seven cameras, stretches so vast that one expects he would require stick extensions. Daray lays on the double-kick mightily and nearly incessantly, which would cost in dynamic flex with most drummers, but he's got the things tuned low enough that they give you a spine massage rather than a headache. And it's priceless the way he holds back to build tension before cutting loose with fists and feet on "What Color Is Your Blood?"

Part of the drums' impact springs from the audio engineering, which stands as some of the most intelligent I've heard on DVD, no Polish jokes here. True, the 5.1 mix underserves the low end, but crank up the bass and there's bass to crank, unlike on many discs. (If other listeners have noticed the same bass deficiency in surround-sound discs, I would like to hear from you.) You could resort to the basic stereo mix, as I usually end up doing, and that delivers the bombs heavier, but then you'd miss swell effects like how the shrieking drone swarms around your head on the intro to "Halleluyah!!! (God Is Dead)," or how the toms bang around the periphery on "Lead Us." Please don't tell me you're watching this on your laptop with ear buds.

Some good visuals, too. The hard-edged flashing white lights on "Out of the Deep" convey big electric motion even on a non-huge screen. Peter trots out enough eye-pops, mane-shakes and slayer hunches to make him look like five different criminals. And it's hilarious the way one camera keeps framing Mauser over/through the very stage fan that's blowing his hair around with such Conan-like zephyration. As a guest, the redoubtable Polish warrior Orion (Vesaria, Behemoth) steps up to headlead the final thrasher

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