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## REVIEW

# DVD Review: *Aural Amphetamine - Metallica and the Dawn of Thrash*

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While I was a little too young to have seen any shows at the dawn of the thrash era, I was into the music by 1984. Serving as a part of the soundtrack of my high school years through 1989, thrash metal was the kind of music perfect for teen angst, but also contained enough musicianship to last through the years as a viable music form. In the beginning there were four bands: Anthrax, Megadeth, Slayer, and Metallica. While the first three get a mention in this documentary, the focus is on Metallica's place in the music scene.

*Aural Amphetamine* starts with the fall of punk and rise of the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM) and its direct effect on the early genesis of Metallica in California. Lars Ulrich became such a fan of bands like Diamond Head that he flew to England to meet the bands without having a place to stay or much money in his pocket. The interview with Diamond Head's lead singer is one of the better ones in the movie. He tells a number of anecdotes from the era essential to understanding how influential the movement was to the burgeoning American music scene.

There are interviews with ubiquitous music journalists Malcolm Dome and Lonn Friend. Both give historical perspectives on the scene, nicely balancing the artist interviews which are anecdote-driven. Among the artists is Chris Poland from Megadeth, looking grey, but surprisingly normal considering the high-partying reputation of the band. Archival interviews from Metallica and Megadeth are featured, but it's basically material that has been seen before, and quite frankly, very poor copies of some of it. It's a little jarring seeing an interview from the mid-'90s with inferior film quality than clips from the early '80s. Whether the producers were forced to use these lesser quality prints due to rights issues is unclear.

*Aural* touches on other bands of the genre, including props to Motorhead and Venom, highly respected in the metal world but often overlooked. When it comes to looking at Megadeth, Slayer, and Anthrax, the bands get some decent recollections, but a few assertions are left out to dry, like how Anthrax were not at all respected due to lead singer Joe Belladonna. That statement is given no back-up, leaving me scratching my head. They may not have technically been thrash, but every metalhead I knew was into them.

I would have liked a more thorough fleshing out of some of the lesser bands that were active at the time, and could have done with a few more artist interviews, especially from those who were there at the beginning. But whether you agree with the movie's overall thesis about Metallica's role in the thrash movement or that Metallica's *Kill 'Em All* was the first thrash album (which I do) or not, the documentary is recommended viewing for metalheads and those interested in music history. *Aural* is not the be-all,

and all of thrash documentaries, but it's a well done effort, save for archival print quality issues.

## Comments

