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Metal Machine Music: Nine Inch Nails And The Industrial Uprising

[MVD Visual](#) // 2009 // 136 Minutes // Not Rated
 Reviewed by Judge Brett Cullum // April 10th, 2009

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Judge Brett Cullum would rather die than give you control, and he wants to do something to you like an animal.



Scales of Justice

Judgment: 78

Perp Profile

Studio: [MVD Visual](#)

Video Formats:

- Full Frame

Audio Formats:

- Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo (English)

Subtitles:

- None

Running Time: 136 Minutes

Release Year: 2009

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Genres:

- [Concerts and Musicals](#)
- [Documentary](#)

Distinguishing Marks

- Featurette
- Biographies

Accomplices

- [NIN.com](#)
- [Wikipedia: NIN](#)
- [NIN Fan Page](#)



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The Charge

Evil, dark, and scary, but always with a dose of pop music...

The Case

From the cover with Trent Reznor screaming in to a microphone, **Metal Machine Music: Nine Inch Nails and The Industrial Uprising** looks like it is going to concentrate solely on one group. It does start out with Nine Inch Nails taking the stage covered in mud at Woodstock in 1994, but then the journey gets thrown a curve. What's misleading is this documentary is not solely about Trent Reznor and Nine Inch Nails, at least not in the first half hour. We get to hear from and see Throbbing Gristle, Cabaret Voltaire, and many other bands who helped define industrial music from the very start. There are talks about Depeche Mode, Gary Numan, and the New Wave artists that pioneered the sound too. Defining who and what industrial music is presents a challenge because there are so many elements and influences that you can't cover all the history in two hours. Skinny Puppy gets a mention, and so does Ministry. But couldn't you make a whole documentary on these guys alone? This whole thing comes off like a VH-1 special on "Nine Inch Nails and the Bands that Influenced Trent Reznor," maybe an *I Love the Heavy Stuff* if they got cutesy. The main focus though by the thirty minute mark is on Trent Reznor and Nine Inch Nails. The documentary eventually settles down to simply talk about the group we see on the cover. The rest of the program goes through the entire career to date of Nine Inch Nails.

If you're a fan of Nine Inch Nails, this is pretty good stuff, but you'll know most of it already. The whole story of Trent Reznor is laid out from *Pretty Little Hate Machine* through *Ghosts 1-IV* and *The Slip*. Chris Vrenna from the live band gives his input, and we also hear from journalists who specialize in industrial music. It will make you want to pull out all the CDs and listen to them in order. Hard to believe all this came from a guy who grew up in Cleveland, and hit it big by distorting the synth pop from the '80s into something nastier.

Now here is the big problem, or the chain smoking two hundred pound elephant in the room sporting leather and a tribal tattoo: this disc has no official interviews with Trent Reznor, nor does it have sessions with any of the musicians that influenced him. Instead we hear from music critics, musicians who toured with Nine Inch Nails, and a biographer who wrote an unauthorized book on Trent's life. All we get for authenticity is archival footage of these bands playing combined with talking heads going on and on about what they think they know about industrial music. It's an interesting look at the industrial scene, but it's like hanging out with your literate friends and talking about the music of Nine Inch Nails. We do get to hear from Trent in old interview clips, but this is by and large a project

that is unauthorized by him. How can you really talk about a band that has one man running it without talking to him?

Technically we get a good fullscreen picture and a surprisingly soft two channel stereo mix. Whenever the music comes up it sounds like it is filtered down to be softer than what it is. That seems an odd choice to have the music dialed down in comparison with the dialogue when you consider this is all about heavy noise music. Extras include a featurette which extends the beginning looks at the birth of industrial. There is more of the interview with Genesis P-Orridge who was in Throbbing Gristle. It runs fifteen minutes, and just shows us more of one of the best interviews that has nothing to do with Nine Inch Nails. Also included are text biographies for each contributor so you know who the heck they are.

Metal Machine Music: Nine Inch Nails And The Industrial Uprising is a solid enough documentary, if you're curious where Trent Reznor came from, and a look back at his entire career as Nine Inch Nails. Now things obviously don't get too personal, and many questions are left unanswered. We do get a nice rundown of all the albums and theories about why they sound like they do. Of course you're left wondering what the *real* answers would be if they had gotten Reznor to actually participate.

The Verdict

Guilty of rocking out without the man who made the music. Where is Trent in all this? Do you have a Nine Inch Nails documentary without him?

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