



Jun
24



METAL MACHINE MUSIC: NINE INCH NAILS AND THE INDUSTRIAL UPRISING

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REGEN MAGAZINE BLOG

"He became the central figure (of industrial music) almost by default" - Ned Raggett of [Metal Edge Magazine](#) on Trent Reznor.

For many of us in the industrial scene, we cut our teeth on listening to Nine Inch Nails. You may think that NIN and especially Trent Reznor are not the figureheads of our scene, but to many outside of the goth/industrial underground, they are. Whether you love him or hate him, he is what the mainstream thinks we are. All opinions aside, the music of NIN is groundbreaking; over 21 years and countless albums, EPs, and singles, NIN and Trent Reznor have shaped and reshaped what we think of as music. *Metal Machine Music: Nine Inch Nails and the Industrial Uprising* is a documentary that goes into great detail of what Trent Reznor has done in the world of music and pop culture, presenting a comprehensive if unauthorized history of the man and his band, starting off with a great - albeit limited - history of the industrial genre. It is very rare that the scene is given any notice outside of the clubs or publications such as ReGen, let alone a full documentary about one of its greatest contributors. So this is not a simple review of a DVD, pointing out its positives and negatives; you, reader, if you have any love for industrial music, need to see this DVD for the fact that something like this is both rare and pure - rare in the sense that DVDs like this are almost never done and you may never get a chance to see this kind of in-depth analysis of what the music we love is and where it comes from, pure in that this is not some MTV production just made to hype up another album release by the band. This is done by people who actually express a genuine passion for the subject matter in a way that shows a true love of the music and the people who make it.

"We didn't want to be elitist; we wanted to be out on the street, causing trouble, and making art." - Genesis P-Orridge of Throbbing Gristle.

The first part of the DVD is a brief and somewhat narrow-viewed history of the industrial genre. Its scope is rather constricted due to the limited amount of time spent on the subject of industrial up to the arrival of NIN onto the scene, leaving out of many important acts to the genre along the way. Not to say that is at all bad; it just may not be a fully accurate history of our scene, or more to the point, it may not be *your* idea of the history of the music of our scene. However, it does manage to cover most of the important bases from the evolution out of the '70s punk rock and early experimental electronic acts (i.e. Kraftwerk and Throbbing Gristle) into bands like Skinny Puppy and Ministry. The really nice part is that since the people interviewed are a mix of musicians, critics, and DJs, you get a fully encapsulated idea of what the emotional vibe was as this music was being made by the artists and felt by the fans. This was a time of discovery for all of those involved and you get that sense of passion when they talk about the music, because let's be frank, that's what all of this is about. Hearing about the experimentation and trial-and-error that went into the making of this brand new



genre was riveting to watch and it's especially nice for those younger fans that may have just come onto the scene and want to know more about how this sound was developed and to find out about bands they may not know about. For young NIN fans watching this, it's fair to say that they will come away from watching this DVD looking to find out more about Ministry and industrial rock or will want to know more about the '70s experimental movement led by groups like TG or Cabaret Voltaire.

"Nobody was happy enough to sing Thompson Twins songs." - Chris Vrenna of NIN on growing up in the rust belt.

After the brief rundown of industrial music's beginnings, the DVD then starts to narrow its focus into the evolution of Trent Reznor and his music with Nine Inch Nails. The great part about the documentary is that it doesn't simply start talking about Trent and when he formed the band. It takes the viewer through a path showing his all of his potential influences at the time and how those influences affected him. For example, prior to Reznor's formation of NIN, he was in two synthpop projects: The Exotic Birds and The Urge. This was of course due to the popularity of synthpop acts of the time like Depeche Mode and Flock of Seagulls in the early to mid '80s, but later on, depicting how those early bands and influences came to affect NIN's music later on in Reznor's career. We are then shown how Trent became enamored with and soon a part of the burgeoning industrial rock scene, highlighted by many of those interviewed remarking on Reznor's admiration for his hero at the time, Ministry band leader and grandfather to the industrial rock genre Al Jourgensen. This is important to note as Reznor began work on NIN's seminal first record, *Pretty Hate Machine*, you can clearly hear those influences in that record. Another great facet of the DVD shows Reznor's struggles with his first record label, TVT Records. For those of you not in the know, TVT started out as Steve Gottlieb's label that had previously just released music from old TV shows and movies, before deciding to start signing and releasing regular record acts. NIN was brought on to be TVT's version of Depeche Mode, and so Gottlieb and the label hated *Pretty Hate Machine*, but released it and were surprised by how well it did. These struggles lead Reznor to not record anything for three years and his frustrations spawned one of the greatest EPs ever recorded in *Broken*. Now, while fans can listen and enjoy *Broken* for what it is, the back story explaining how that record was made and how Reznor got to that place is an utterly fascinating tale that needs to be seen and enjoyed.

"He was never afraid of a hook." - Ned Ragget of Metal Edge Magazine on Trent Reznor.

The rest of the DVD continues from the production, release, and overwhelming success of the band's second LP, *The Downward Spiral*, and its notorious hit single "Closer" to the his latest record, *The Slip*. But what you get in-between is in-depth analysis by critics, fellow musicians, and former band mates to give you a real insight into how these records were made. There are also reactions by the media and their portrayal of a man and his journey from rising industrial scenester to a worldwide musical juggernaut. You get footage of live performances and clips of rarely seen music videos that show you just how well Reznor knew to play to his audiences. A great example of this is detailing how Reznor used to incorporate violence into his early live tours, bringing his audiences to frenzy as he tore apart failing instruments or bashed into band members leaving each other bloody and scarred. Also discussed is Reznor's drug and alcohol addiction and mental depression and how these affected his music, even though it was not always for the better. This brings up another great reason to watch this DVD; most documentaries on bands are really long, extended commercials for the bands, rarely ever showing the flaws of the group and its music. That is not the case with this DVD as they talk about and show how when Reznor was at his worst, it would show in his music and that there were NIN releases that were not to the liking of many critics and fans alike. Its also goes into the backlash he received from the industrial scene and how they considered him a sell-out and his problems with bands he had a hand in helping to make famous like Marilyn Manson and Filter. But for all the highs and lows, the DVD shows a man who orchestrated his vision to produce some of the greatest records and live performances ever and how those have had an impact on our lives.

"It takes pretty Beatles pop hooks, sharpened, and then drags them through the dirt." - Jared of Chemlab on *Pretty Hate Machine*.

The DVD also has a nice portion of extras including bios on all of the people interviewed, as well as a 15-minute interview with Genesis P-Orridge on the beginnings of Throbbing Gristle and the origins of what came to be known as industrial music. There is a great deal more detail and analysis in the DVD, but there is just not the space

or time to write about it all. What can be said is that this documentary gives you a fair helping of insight and history into a band that we have come to know as the public face of industrial music. While the music may not have always been what we exactly wanted, we have to admit that the albums on a whole are terrific and have been influential to many of the younger bands in the scene. This DVD is a must have for any of us... hell, for *all* of us in the scene. This music is what we are, and this band for many of the younger people in the scene is what first made us take notice. Maybe we saw the video for "Closer" and thought to ourselves, "I like this. I wonder if there is anything else out there like it?" and for many, that is how our collective journeys began. So find this DVD, watch it with friends, and share the memories because we don't get enough good memories in this scene.

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