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Metal Machine Music: Nine Inch Nails and the Industrial Uprising

2009

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You know, I think this documentary has been incorrectly titled. I would have called it something along the lines of "Nine Inch Nails: Reznor's Rise Out of Industrial".

OK, so it's not very catchy. This is why I'm not producing films or writing them. But it still fits.

What Sexy Intellectual Productions has given us is one of the better independently produced and released documentaries of a band that I've seen (and I grew up with the original MTV 'rock'umentaries, you know, back when MTV was a serious music television channel, before the game shows, before the so-called reality shows, and before it became yet another Me Too! rap channel).

It starts with a clip of NIN starting their show during the second Woodstock in New York, then goes back to the beginning, describing what genres were around at the time (punk), the social issues that were present (unemployment, people facing the fact that their standard of living was going to be lower than their parents, etc), and the first bands that appeared (Throbbing Gristle and Einstürzende Neubauten), which are credited with being the 'founding members' of industrial (which they more or less are). From here, it continues on, describing the bands that followed, important music labels of the time (Mute Records is brought up) and interviews various people involved with and in the music industry (which is better than some documentaries I've seen and heard that were not much more than talking with the fans of the band), leading up to how Trent got started in the music industry, his first bands (with pictures of a young Reznor smiling!), and how he was able to release his first album under the Nine Inch Nails project name. From there, it follows NIN along the years, covering each album up to the present releases, describing the situation of the industry and society at the time of each release, as well as information of how each album was made, including video clips that were before only in private collections (such as the clip of Trent and one of the band members discussing a particular part of a song in their studio that was put together in their rented house, the same house the Manson killings occurred in. Trent claims that he had no idea that it was 'that' house).

Interviews include Genesis P-Orridge (one of the founding members of Throbbing Gristle), author Alan Cross, author of *The Making of Pretty Hate Machine* and *The Downward Spiral*, and former band members Chris Vrenna and Richard Patrick. Every person they include in this documentary is either in the industry or involved with the NII project in one form or another. This is actually somewhat rare and presently surprising, especially for an independently done documentary for such a big name project such as NII.

All the video clips were of good quality and the interviews were well done. Clips of the interview were placed well and none of the people interviewed came across like they were 'blessing the viewer with their presence', as I've seen some people in the industry act. Their commentary for the piece that was being examined was well spoken and relevant (mostly, one of the people interviewed had on a pair of some of the blackest sunglasses I've seen anywhere, and gave me the impression that he may have been feeling a bit too good, if you know what I mean).

Another thing that did impress me was how current this release is. It covers all of NII's studio releases, and a few of the remix releases as well (such as *Fixed*). It even covers the fairly recent releases *Ghosts* and *The Slip*, going into detail of how much of a shock it was to many that Reznor sold the albums on-line on his own (without the labels) and commercial success they were. Unfortunately, as this was not authorized by Reznor, he isn't interviewed, so some of the information is speculation more than hard facts.

The only extra on the disc are "The Genesis of Industrial", a short video which elaborates on the clips from the P-Orridge interview about the founding of Throbbing Gristle, as well as going into a bit more depth on the founding of the band. The biographies of the contributors (AKA people they talked with) is included in the extras, when it should have been something added to the main menu.

At a run time of 136 minutes, it does a fairly good job condensing a lot of years into that time, but the last few albums covered did seem that they were rushed through a bit and didn't seem to have the same depth of coverage the earlier albums did.

All in all, this was an enjoyable documentary to watch. Any fan of Nine Inch Nails will enjoy watching this and find it a worthwhile addition to their NII collection. And those who are not fans should find it interesting to watch as well, if nothing else to find out more about how the hell NII became so popular.

-Justin-

DVD Features:

Audio: 1.33:1

Audio: English Dolby Digital 5.1

Extended interviews

The Genesis of Industrial

Digital Contributor Biographies