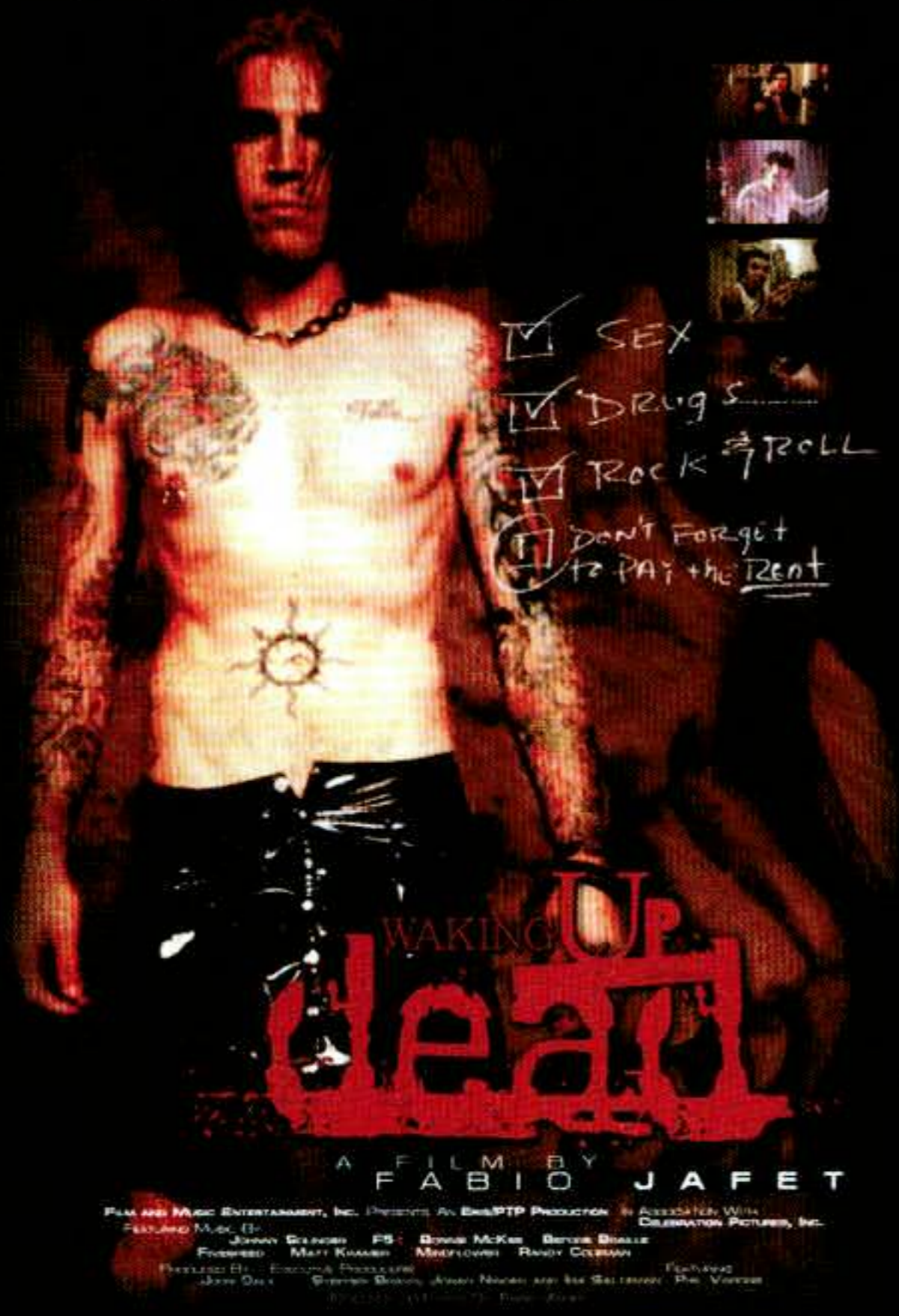


PHIL VARONE



Waking Up Dead
MVD
By Blake Owens

Meet Phil Varone, a drummer who got his start with Saigon Kick back in the '80s, had two gold records and went on to join Skid Row in 2000, touring with the likes of KISS, Poison and Vince Neil, among others. Along with the benefits of being on tour, (large crowds, groupies, etc.) his marriage disintegrates, he can barely pay his rent, he develops a life-threatening coke habit and ends up bowing out of the music business altogether. It's like Mötley Crüe's autobiography, *The Dirt*, only without the success. *Waking Up Dead* catches up with Phil right before his life starts really going downhill. Interviews with him are interspersed with footage from the road and at home. There's sex (lots of shots of groupies saying/doing various things), drugs (coke use, sometimes during said groupie activity), and rock & roll (cool crowd shots, footage from the bus and hotel rooms). Then there's the downside: poverty (despite the record sales Saigon Kick had, he never saw a penny), divorce (he was supported by his wife and missed out on a lot of his kids' lives), and near-death (due to his drug use).

Phil's good friend Fabio Jafet films the whole thing over the course of four years, and puts together an impressive package. The film never lingers too long on one scene, often relying on montages of shots to get its point across. Curiously though, many things are blurred out – even Skid Row's logo and most of the band members' faces are hidden. The interviews with his ex-wife provide a good balance to Phil's perspective, with insight to how many people one person's choices truly touch. *Waking Up Dead* is a good cautionary tale for those who would go for the brass ring of the music industry, and also a good example of choices not to make. Recommended for those that think *Behind The Music* never delves deep enough.

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