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Category: Home > Reviews > Documentary > Rock > Record Business > Drugs > Waking Up Dead (2004)

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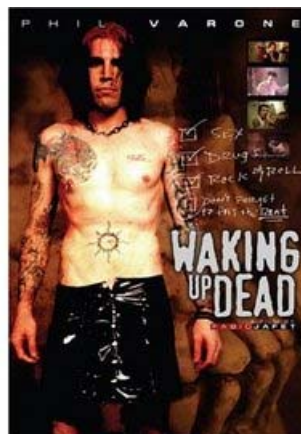
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Waking Up Dead (2004)

Picture: C+ Sound: C+
Extras: C+
Documentary: B



Phil Varone is a drummer who thought he was on his way when he joined the band Saigon Kick. *Love Is On The Way* was a big hit for the band in 1992, but they would be a one hit wonder and Varone would crash and burn more than once. He even became a member of Skid Row, but he was broke, had nothing to show for all his hard work and became addicted to drugs. Fabio Jafet's **Waking Up Dead** (2004) is a surprisingly good documentary on how Varone lived the Rock lifestyle, still alive and well despite Hip Hop, and the toll it took on his marriage and life.

Saigon Kick's record label was a division of Warner Music that handling a new sub-label founded by actor/producer Michael Douglas, who was a big man at Time Warner with hits and series films (like **Falling Down**) when the film and record companies were at the same company. With all of his respectable commercial and critical success, why not a record label? Well, the label did not work out either, which is brushed upon during the intriguing 90 minutes here.

We see plenty of stock footage and other interesting items as Jafet is surprisingly thorough and detailed in a short time period about Varone's life and makes this as much an expose of the music business today (including labels in a tailspin, not knowing how to find new talent, let alone support and develop them) as well as Varone's own troubles. These are troubles he would have had, even if the band and label were still around in full swing, non-stop since their debut. However, it was worse for him as the band imploded and things in the industry are even worse now, which if you know that, makes this all the more ironic.

The 1.33 X 1 image is nicely edited by Jafet and despite the various quality of the footage used, flows well. The Dolby Digital 5.1 mix spreads out the various audio quality, which ranges from mono and badly recorded location

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taping to simple stereo. Extras include extended interview, extended "drug zone" footage of Varone watching TV under the influence, rehearsal footage, extended EPK, two drum sessions and an alternate opening to the documentary.

- Nicholas Sheffo



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