

AURAL AMPHETAMINE: METALLICA AND THE DAWN OF THRASH

Dir: Keith Carman

MVD

The problem with a lot of these unauthorised DVD biographies is that, like this Metallica DVD, they look a bit like they've been made by BTEC media students.

Thrash was a thrillingly one-off subgenre, the genuine legacy of which is only now really being appreciated, more than twenty years after it peaked artistically. A comprehensive and understanding overview of the movement, which shredded its way out of the San Francisco Bay Area in the early and mid eighties, is long overdue. And now is precisely the correct time to capitalise on the resurgent interest in the iconography and velocity of thrash, especially with bands like Municipal Waste rewriting the genre's history as a tiring, one-note, Darkness-esque retro-rock gag. We need someone who was on the frontlines in those halcyon days to put some thoughts together, saying 'I was there, this is what it was like.'

The sprawling, confused 'Aural Amphetamine...' is not that biography. Not quite sure if it's a Metallica documentary, an oral history of thrash, or a random collection of anecdotes, the narrative ping-pongs almost randomly across the history of heavy metal, from one half-remembered reminiscence to another. Metallica themselves, somewhat predictably, only appear briefly, in pitiful Load/ReLoad-era interviews that have quite obviously been taped off the telly onto knackered VHS. Barrel-scraped NWOBHM and thrash footnotes like Elixir, Sacrilege B.C., Laaz Rokit,

and, er, Chris Kontos, the first Machine Head drummer, put their twopenneth in, and the entire story seems bizarrely anchored around Brian Tatler from Diamond Head, who embarrassingly struggles to connect the dots between punk, New Wave Of British Heavy Metal and thrash like some granddad lost in his recollections of the war.

Metal experts Joel McIver and Malcolm Dome inject some much needed lucidity, but if you're really that unfamiliar with the genealogy of Metallica, metal's most prosperous sons, then you'd be much better off investing in McIver and Dome's own tomes on the subject.

[3] DAVID MCNAMEE

TAD

'Busted Circuits And Ringing Ears'

MVD

Whenever grunge history teachers like Everett True are wheeled out as talking heads in Nirvana documentaries, there's always the slightly patronising anecdote about how no one in Seattle expected Nirvana to be the leading grunge band, the deluded sods actually thought it was going to be Tad who was going to make it, er, big.

Okay, and that's the last fat joke in this review. Of course Tad were never going to blow up; my god, have you actually listened to them? Although the Seattle bands were undoubtedly cut from the same cloth in terms of styles, approach and general musical orientation, whatever bit of the grunge rag God chewed off to make Tad Doyle

was undoubtedly beaten into inch-thick leather by the time his 1988 debut single 'Daisy/Ritual Device' was released. Instead of the anodyne groan of Cobain and chums, Tad are roaring, elemental, full of life and blood and piss. All of the adjectives that are normally conjured for bands in this magazine apply: howling, psychotic, distortofuckmental. But also: funny, and very, very smart.

Although Tad never had the benefit of real tragedy or controversy to plump up their under-reported tale, this DVD is a great watch just because of how likeable Tad Doyle – an intelligent, classically-trained musician intentionally, crudely marketed as a hiker-killing redneck idiot-savant by the savvy Sub Pop – and his former bandmates are. The concert footage is electric, the music videos a dorky reminder of how genuine grunge-era slacker Americana looked before the weirdness was drained out.

'Busted Circuits And Ringing Ears' only loses points for the sheer number of dunderheaded Tad-is-fat/Tad's-music-also-heavy comparisons each one of its talking heads (including Sub Pop founders Jonathon Poneman and Bruce Pavitt, Soundgarden's Kim Thayil, and various mates of the band) makes. But it's made up for in the detailed interviews with each former Tad member, and Doyle himself, who nails down the essence of his band most perfectly when he says "It just felt good to get up onstage and be louder than God for an hour."

[7] DAVID MCNAMEE

by Mater Lachrimarum, supposedly the deadliest of the witches.

Three decades after the trilogy was originally conceived, there was plenty of expectation surrounding this screening. After an introduction by the great man himself, 'Mother Of Tears' cruelly delivers the goods with a panache not seen since 1987's 'Opera', answering many of the questions posed by its predecessors along the way.

Dario takes the action home to Rome. The sleuth unravelling the mystery is daughter Asia, to whom he so brutally subjected all manner of horrors in 1996's 'The Stendhal Syndrome'. The folkloric aspects of 'Suspiria' are built upon, as an ancient urn is unearthed and evil unleashed on its opening. Mater Lachrimarum, Mother Of Tears, is said to be the most beautiful of the three, and witches form a coven around her, designed to bring about the second fall of a Rome gripped by crazed violence and mayhem. The deaths are as brutal and inventive as any we have previously witnessed; although incurring severe censorship in Italy, the BBFC have authorized an uncut version, complete in all its eye popping glory. We voyeuristically follow the camera, twisting and turning through intriguing depths and hidden passages complimented by Claudio Simonetti's masterfully atmospheric soundtrack. Making it a family affair, Argento casts former wife Daria Nicolodi as Asia's deceased mother, providing help from beyond the grave. Udo Kier steals his scenes, meeting the axe in excesses not seen since 'Blood For Dracula', and Rome is portrayed as a city where magic abounds, as Argento wraps up what is surely his lifelong ambition in style, thankfully preserving 'Suspiria's formidable legacy.

[8] PETE WOODS