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FILMS

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UNTIL THE LIGHT TAKES US



A FILM BY AARON AITES & AUDREY EWELL

RELEASE DATE: November 20, 2009 (NYC) / December 11, 2009 (LA)

FORMAT: Digital / Color / 93 minutes / English / 1:1.85 / Dolby SR

RATING: Unrated. Parents strongly cautioned, contains strong language, brief images of graphic bloody violence, and disturbing images. Not suitable for under 15.

OFFICIAL WEBSITE: www.blackmetalmovie.com

PRESS/DOWNLOAD SITE: www.variancefilms.com/press

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ABOUT THE FILM

Until The Light Takes Us tells the story of black metal. Part music scene and part cultural uprising, black metal rose to worldwide notoriety in the mid-nineties when a rash of suicides, murders, and church burnings accompanied the explosive artistic growth and output of a music scene that would forever redefine what heavy metal is and what it stands for to other musicians, artists and music fans world-wide. Until The Light Takes Us goes behind the highly sensationalized media reports of "Satanists running amok in Europe" to examine the complex and largely misunderstood principles and beliefs that led to this rebellion against both Christianity and modern culture.

To capture this on film, directors Aaron Aites and Audrey Ewell moved to Norway and lived with the musicians for several years, building relationships that allowed them to create a surprisingly intimate portrait of this violent, but ultimately misunderstood, movement. The result is a poignant, moving story that's as much about the idea that reality is composed of whatever the most people believe, regardless of what's actually true, as it is about a music scene that blazed a path of murder and arson across the northern sky.

LONG FORM SYNOPSIS

Until the Light Takes Us is a feature length documentary about a music genre known as black metal. Comprised of metal musicians, murderers, church-burners, and suicide victims, this previously underground scene is known today in equal parts as being an ideological movement, an anti-commercial music scene, an art movement, and a terrorist movement who terrorized Norway's Christian population. It is as successful today as it is infamous. The film examines the birth and explosive arc of Black Metal, from the perspective of the musicians: young men who tried to change the world using music and symbolic acts of violence.

In 1991, Norwegian churches started to burn. At the same time, a small underground scene of anti-consumerist metal musicians was forming. While reporters and police scrambled for answers, more and more churches went up in flames. They had no leads until Varg Vikernes, one of the leaders of the underground scene, took credit. He was held for questioning long enough for the media to run with a largely fabricated story. Spurred on by sensationalistic media reports of Satanic rituals, abductions and sacrifices, young men began taking cues as to what they should be doing, creating an escalating cycle of fiction creating reality. Black metal, or rather the sensationalized version of it, grew in popularity until it was available in record stores world-wide and was profiled in every major music publication, from Spin to Rolling Stone to Vice, even serving as the inspiration for popular animated shows in the U.S. Successful visual artists such as Harmony Korine and Bjarne Melgaard are now recontextualizing black metal as contemporary art in international exhibitions.

Black metal was created by three men: one was murdered, one's in jail for murder and arson, and one continues to release albums in the genre they created. Part modern art movement, part terrorist movement, part rock scene, Until the Light Takes Us explores the brutal history of Norway's chief musical export and the world of its creators. Far from being a "rockumentary", however, the film is instead contemplative in its examination of the impact the riotous history and misperceptions have had on its creators.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"The process of making this movie began several years ago in San Francisco. A friend of ours (and the guy who released Aaron's first full length Iran album) runs Aquarius Records and insisted that we give black metal a listen. We thought we weren't interested, because metal wasn't really our cup of tea. But to our surprise, we loved it. It reminded us sometimes of the complexity of math or prog rock, there were drum beats that we'd swear they came up with at a committee meeting with Damon Che of Don Caballero, and then there was the experimental noise and searing honesty of the early Darkthrone releases, we heard traces of Can, we heard Dead C, we heard Current 93, Jandek and This Heat. But mostly we heard something really original and complex and RELEVANT. The fact that it surprised us, and challenged our pre-conceptions, was probably the thing that hooked us the most, and that started us off on our decision to make the movie.

The more we learned about the story, the more intrigued we became. There was the mythos surrounding it all, surrounding a movement made extreme not by copious amounts of drug use or "bad" behavior, but by really doing the previously unthinkable and yet simultaneously enacting a sort of evil parody. How did these things fit together? There's really no other art or music or ideological movement like it. There may have been similarities in the late 70's Throbbing Gristle and satellite scene of Britain, or the chic terrorism of Baader Meinhof, or even the countercultural music and ideological elements of the American hippie nonviolence movement. But then, the differences are obvious.

We were also intrigued by the immediate elements, its vitality, its stunning visuals and the pure insanity of what these guys said and did. It isn't often that you run across stories about "Satanic" metal kids burning down churches, killing people and thinking they are going to change the world by doing so. It's crazy, definitely. But It's nearly as uncommon to find an art movement that feels honest, compelling, and able to somehow express the overwhelming wordless horror felt by so many in our generation. So we moved to Norway, where this all went down, and filmed for two years.

What truly inspired us and inspires us still is that at the core, there is a group of kids who actually thought they could change the world with their underground music scene, and who actually tried to do so. There was a lot of confusion and ego, and the inevitable factions, but who actually tries to change the world anymore? Who actually thinks they can? It's kind of amazing. And the fact that at the same time, they were so focused on remaining "true" and not becoming co-opted or even a part of the commercial machine, only to finally be so overwhelmingly recreated into the absolute antithesis of what they'd intended...it's tragic. Theirs was a violent movement of strange ideology and searingly raw and painful music, they were truly in search of a truth, and as the movie shows, they are now incorrectly known for being exactly what they despised.

Until the Light Takes Us is as much about the struggle of retaining authorship and core identity against the overwhelming force of mediated perception as it is about a movement of metal musicians that blazed a path of murder and church arson across the northern sky.

In telling this story we were able to examine a mechanism of modern life that is invisible, yet which has a great hand in shaping our understanding of ourselves and society: the mechanism by which reality is created, recreated, re-contextualized, whereby a historical idea of something or even *someone* is irrevocably modified by popular perception. The idea that a myth, if repeated often enough and by enough people, becomes the foundation for the new reality - and forever erases the truth that used to stand in its place."

- Audrey Ewell and Aaron Aites

BIOS

Aaron Aites is the singer/songwriter behind the band Iran, whose third full length album will be released by Narnack Records in early February. Their four song EP, "Buddy" was released Nov. 4th.

Audrey Ewell Co-Produced the 2001 comedy A Sign from God. She art directs album covers, including the forthcoming Iran album.

Their visual/video art collaborations have shown in Europe, America and Japan. This is their first feature length film.

Produced and Directed by:
Aaron Aites
Audrey Ewell

Featuring:
Gylve "Fenriz" Nagell
Varg "Count Grishnackh"
Vikernes
Jan Axel "Hellhammer"
Blomberg
Kjetil "Frost" Haraldstad
Olve "Abbath" Eikemo
Harald "Demonaz" Nævdal
Harmony Korine
Bjarne Melgaard
Kristoffer "Garm" Rygg
Bård "Faust" Eithun

Executive Producer:
Gill Holland

Associate Producer:
Frederick Howard

Production Manager:
Torstein Grude

Camera:
Audrey Ewell
Odd Reinhardt Nicolaysen

Additional Camera:
Ellen Lande
John Harlow
Aaron Aites

35mm Camera:
Calle Børresen
Odd Reinhardt Nicolaysen

35mm Camera Assistants:
John Harlow
Anne Dorthe Kalve

Production Sound Recordists:
Øyvind Rydland
John Harlow
Robin Coulthard
Kjetil Høidal

Film Editor:
Andrew Ford

Co-Editors:
Audrey Ewell
Aaron Aites
Michael Dimmitt
Ulysses Guidotti

Assistant Editor:
Jim Lopezzo

Translators:
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Kana Morikawa
Miyuki Shibuya

Post Production Sound Mixer:
Eli Janney

Thank you:
David and Lisa Greenberg
Leslie and Chris Mathis

Roger Tiegs
Ivar Bjørnson
Grutle Kjellson
Per Husebø
Ted Skjellum
Rune Erickson
O.J. Moe
Simen Hestnæs
Jörn I. Tunsberg
Anders Graham
Anne Karin Freastad
Warren Schofield
Lars Bohman Gallery
Laura Pecci Gallery
Patrick Painter Gallery

Fru Haugen
Martin Burga
Egg N Bacon
Thomas Haugen
Neseblod Records
Siri Eriksen
Bronco Busters
Honey Owens
Leigh Ann Sides

Julian Ong
Jason Sakowski
Eric Copeland
Ann Christin Rihm
Helge Dale
Varg Jager

Moscow Market
Elm Street
Bar Robinet
Garage (Bergen)
Hole in the Sky
Ben Mattschoss

Steve Nebesney
Dis(ign) Works Co. Ltd.
Rockefeller NightClub
John Dee
Bergen Kulturhuset
Metalion

Worldwide Film Sales
Stephen Oxman - The Film
Sales Company

Featuring Music By:
Darkthrone
Mayhem
Burzum
Ulver
Thorns
Gorgoroth
Enslaved
Boards of Canada
Black Dice
Sunn 0)))
Múm
Lesser

Post Production Services
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