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[Anvil Redux](#)

Posted on 08 July 2009 by kane



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So, here I am at the appointed meeting place. It's midnight, and the line-up is already 50 deep. I don't see my way inside anywhere. They're probably already knee deep in sweat and beer watching another act inside, while I try to figure out how to talk my way in. The dreaded words come from the guy at the door, who looks ready to run at a moments notice. "The show is sold out, so if you have a gold pass, come to the front of the line and you're in, if you have a pink pass, then you can wait and see if you get in if people leave, and if you were waiting for a walk up ticket, you may as well go home now". "Shit...now what" I'll just hang out for a while and maybe someone I know will show up.

As I'm standing there like a kid waiting to be picked last in dodge ball, I see a guy dressed in black with long straggly hair walking down 7th Avenue S.E. towards me. The face is still half a block away but, man...he looks familiar. As he gets within feet of me, I say "Hey, Steve!" It's Steve Kudlow, the Lead Singer and Guitarist for [Anvil](#), walking from his hotel to the show, smoking a hand rolled cigarette. "What's the line-up for?" he inquires. I respond with a happy "It's for you guys, Steve. You're sold out tonight". No Shit...Cool" he responds. This guy has played to seventy thousand people at the Castle Donnington Festival in Scotland, with other huge Heavy Metal groups in the 80's and he's excited about playing for 300 in Calgary.

Steve and I strike up a conversation about the band, the movie, the music industry and anything else I can jam into this amazing impromptu interview that is still going to take place tomorrow, before they play at Olympic Plaza for the masses. I still want to get in tonight so I say, "Hey Steve, I'm interviewing you tomorrow afternoon, but I really wanted to see you guys play tonight". Steve looks at me and says "Come on with me, I'll get you in!" and with that we walk up to the security at the door and Steve says "I'm Steve from Anvil, were playing tonight, and he's with me" giving the security guard a thumbs up. "Cool, have a great show" he retorts, and we head inside. I meet with the bands Manager, and then Steve is off to get ready for the show. I grab 2 beers, down 1 and head to the front of the stage to wait for the Metal Assault.

Sled Island is alive and well and living at the Royal Canadian Legion in Downtown Calgary. Anvil is playing a "Surprise Guest" show in about an hour, and I want to be at the front of the stage to see Steve and Robb Reiner tear it up like they used to when I was 17 and had purchased *Metal on Metal*, a definitive time in my life for music. The band is having a re-birth of sorts, 30 years after their initial success, and eventual placement in rock and roll meritocracy. They have risen out of the ashes in North America, a place where they have never had commercial success, with a documentary movie called [Anvil: The story of Anvil](#), a two year trip through a failed European Tour, ups and downs in a 35 year friendship, and playing to crowds smaller than the line up for the toilet at the Legion.

With a huge Metal following in Europe, England and other places, it's unthinkable that Anvil, a band that has huge Canadian Pride, and hails from Ontario, has never had success at home. They are early pioneers of the genre, and were huge influences for Metallica, Slayer, and others, yet until this documentary rolled out, they still had day jobs at home, and the band was secondary. I remember 1982 -1984 very well. It was the Metal Years for me. Def Leppard - Pyromania, Iron Maiden - Piece of Mind, Judas Priest - Screaming for Vengeance and Defenders of the Faith...and Anvil - Metal on Metal and Forged in Fire. These were influential times, with music being a force to be reckoned with in a young man's maturing anger and distrust of society. It was hard, it was fast, and it played at every underage party I went to. We drank hard, we partied hard, and we waited for the next installment on vinyl at A&B Sound.

The show is running late, it's 1:45 am, and they hit the stage. Steve does his own guitar tuning, and Robb does a mic test on his drums. There are no expensive road crews at this level. They carry their own guitar cases, and roll their own cords when they are done. A Metal onslaught ensues. I am taken back to my high school years with classic hits like 666, Jackhammer and Winged Assassins. The show lasts for about an hour and then the lights come on. The Legion people want to go home!! "Well I guess we have to play our Rock and Roll Bible song" Steve says to the screaming crowd, who doesn't want it to end, and Anvil breaks in to Metal on Metal. I am sated. It's a great night as my ears ring happily. I shake hands with Steve and thank him for the history lesson. We plan for our interview the next day.

It's a beautiful sunny day in Downtown Calgary at the Olympic Plaza. Steve and Robb are ready for another day in the Anvil world. Interview after interview lined up, and then a show tonight. They are in their glory as Rock Stars, thirty years in the making, and they are enjoying every moment. But there's something different about these two that I notice immediately. They may be Rock Stars enjoying their labor of love, but they are real human beings, not pretentious, or disengaged. They talk with me like a friend they have known for a long time. They love what they do, and they do it with the fans and the music in mind. They love to play. If they didn't they would have probably given it up a long time ago. As Steve eats a McDonald's Filet of Fish combo, and Robb eats the cookies from a Kid's Meal, I am struck by their down to earth nature. They have amazing stories about life on the road, the people that they have met, and played with, yet they always come back to the music. They love to play.

Anvil has reached a higher rung on the ladder of success than they have been working for and after thirty years they are finally being given the respect that they deserve in North America. It isn't there yet, but it is coming. They now have 3 shows signed to play opening act for AC/DC, 2 in the U.S. and 1 in Moncton, New Brunswick. AC/DC doesn't need Anvil to open for them. They are big enough on their own. But AC/DC wants Anvil to open for them. Steve and Robb are almost there. And they deserve it after all these years.

Why?

Because they love to play!

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