

Sever Ties With Severed Ways

Written by Dave Howard



In the local band scene, first timers often go with "We don't play well, so let's just play loud!" The overlong title of "Severed Ways: The Norse Discovery of America" tells you are in for a lengthy, pretentious story. The film does have some merit as the soundtrack (Judas Priest and Morbid Angel) and cinematography are stunning. The DVD of this nearly story-less, self-proclaimed epic will fit comfortably in Mom's basement for a good smoke out after a jam session.

Neophyte Matt Stone directs, writes, edits, produces and stars in the piece based on the theory that Vikings first explored North America. In the year 1007, scouts Orn and Volnard are thought dead and left behind by their fellow countrymen. To avoid becoming victims of the Skraeling (the Viking word for "Indians") the two plan to retreat inland. They begin their journey (dear lord, do they journey and journey and journey) which EVENTUALLY brings them into contact with their enemies- Christian Friars, Native Americans and ghosts of their past.

Stone makes several artistic decisions that really take the viewer out the film. For example, this film is in the original Viking (I guess) with subtitles. While this may have worked for Mel Gibson in "The Passion" the effect here doesn't quite cut it. Slang laden dialogue such as "If we stay here, we're toast!" had me wondering for a good amount of time if Vikings, indeed, had toast. The Vikings spotless pelts and stubbled faces and make you wonder which dry cleaner and barber they found in forest. Since the story is pretty lightweight, Stone is forced to overuse shot after shot after shot of the Norse duo trudging through their New World, which is fine because this gave me time to reconsider the toast question.

So like most local bands, skip out on "Severed Ties: The Norse Discovery of America." Unless, of course, you have a friend in it.