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Color Me Obsessed: A Film About The Replacements and a little true story

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<http://www.whatwerewethinkingfilms.com/colormeobsessed/>

Color Me Obsessed: A Film About The Replacements was released on DVD on November 20, you can order it [here](#).

Brenda and Jimmy were splitting up; Jimmy didn't know it but the rest of us did.

It was bad news for us, not because we cared so much for their marriage — as much as we cared for each of them as individuals, we understood it was a bad match — but because we understood what the eventual recriminatory end would mean to our band. We couldn't lose them and continue, and though in retrospect it's hard to think it mattered so much to us, in the autumn of 1984 we were still young enough to want to postpone full adulthood by playing rock 'n' roll music in nightclubs.

Jimmy was essential; he was our only real guitarist, a natural who could segue from our breakneck version of "Your Cheating Heart" into a solo quoting Randy Rhoads' "Crazy Train" riff then flow back into the song without making it seem like some great honkin' deal. Brenda was essential too; she owned the house where we held our practices. Sometimes she'd slap a tambourine and sing backing vocals. Brenda had a good voice but she also had a real job that required her to get up in the morning. She was four or five years younger than Jimmy; she might have been 22. Anyway, she was too old for us.

As I remember it, Eddie the bass player brought the record to practice because he wanted us to learn this song called “Answering Machine.” It was by this punk group from Minnesota called The Replacements and it was called *Let It Be*, which was some kind of in-joke that we didn’t quite get but smiled at anyway, because we knew the Replacements weren’t the Beatles and didn’t even want to be the Beatles.

I was aware of the Replacements, I even had a copy of their EP *Stink*, which started out with an actual recording of the Minneapolis police busting up a rent party the band was playing. Actually, the cops sound quite reasonable, telling the kids if they just get their stuff and go then nobody would be arrested or anything. Somebody — much much later we found out it was Dave Pirner, who’d go on to date Winona Ryder and front Soul Asylum — yells an obscenity at the cops and then the band starts shredding these fierce hardcore numbers.

We knew it was a fantasy; when the cops showed up to tell us one of the neighbors had complained about the noise we clicked off our amps and slid the beer bottles out of sight. We couldn’t really practice past 9 p.m. — that’s when we’d put on records and strum acoustics and talk about what kinds of songs we wanted to write and what kind of heroes we wanted to be.

So after practice, Eddie went over to the turntable Jimmy had suspended by velvet ropes from Brenda’s ceiling and put the record on.

People who write about music tend to overuse words like “epiphany” and “revelatory.” Maybe there’s a reason for that, maybe we are, at certain moments in our lives, particularly susceptible to the music’s superverbial powers of suggestion. I can name a few record albums that doubled me over the first time I heard them — *Blood on the Tracks*, *Late for the Sky*, *Honky Chateau*, *London Calling*, *Proof Through the Night* — and maybe you can too. And maybe the reason we reacted the way we reacted had as much to do with the time of life we found ourselves in, the circumstances surrounding that first hearing. Maybe we were falling in love; maybe the scales were popping from our eyes.

Anyway, Let It Bewas crushing on that first hearing because it showed me where I’d gone wrong. It wasn’t that the ’Mats — we were hip enough to know their nickname — were so much better at making noise than we were, because they weren’t such great musicians either, it was because there was something unfakeable and acute in their performance. With their crash and damage, with a brushed snare and a tinkling piano, they got at something we’d been faking. We were too cool to consider covering KISS — but here they were stomping without irony through “Black Diamond.”

They say the Velvet Underground might have been the most influential American rock ’n’ roll band despite not selling many records because everyone who heard their records started their own band. Well, Let It Beconvinced me that there was nothing to do but pack it in; I couldn’t expose myself like that. And if I couldn’t expose myself like that then I had no business trying to play rock ’n’ roll.

After the record was over, we sat around and talked for awhile and Eddie said something that caused Jimmy to wonder aloud if he shouldn’t maybe buy a second-hand Telecaster to go with his SG and Rickenbacker
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And Brenda finally let us know how sick she was of it all. She was sick of the overgrown boys talking dream talk in the living room. Sick of the drum kit and the Marshall stacks that occupied as much of her house as her sofa and coffee tables. Sick of the goony post-adolescent male weather that hung over her otherwise tidy little brick ranch house like a curse. Sick of Jimmy working nothing jobs for no money and buying new strings and effects pedals on store credit.

Jimmy stayed at Eddie's that night; I helped him move his stuff out a few weeks later. We played together a couple of more times near the college at a bar called the Blarney Stone, but we never found a new practice room. Brenda got remarried to a lawyer. Jimmy joined a funk band. Eddie moved to Florida. Our drummer went on drumming until a couple of years ago, when he was hit by a train as he walked along the track late at night.

I bought a copy of *Let It Be*. And I listened to it. I still do.

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