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'Color Me Obsessed' about The Replacements

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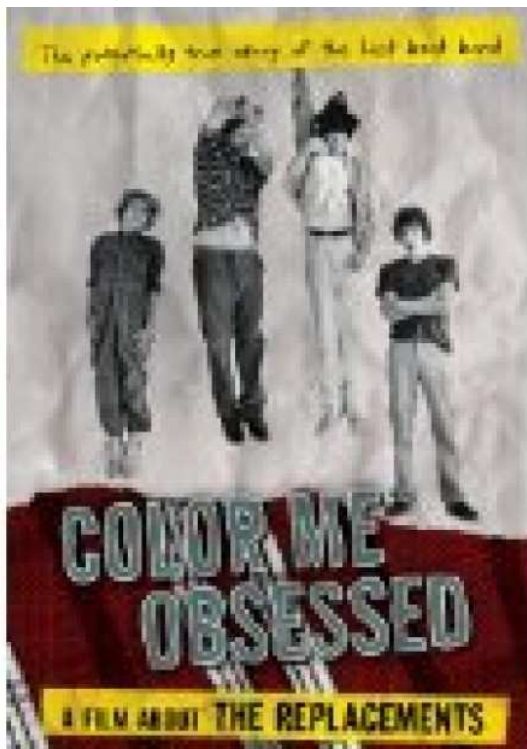
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On a wall in my house are a now-laminated 21-year-old backstage pass and show list from one of the last dates of the final tour by The Replacements. Hanging in a closet are a couple 'Mats T-shirts, and lined up on a shelf are all the records of my favorite ever.

So "Color Me Obsessed" -- just like those interviewed in director Gorman Bechard's illuminating documentary about the last great rock 'n' roll band.

"Color Me Obsessed," which takes its title from an early Replacements song, played film festivals and one-off

About the columnist



L. Kent Wolgamott covers music,

dates last year, including a one-night-only Omaha screening. But I didn't get to see it until this week, when the DVD release turned up in the mail.

movies and visual art for the Journal Star. [Follow him on Twitter @LJSWolgamott.](#)

As a longtime fan, friend of band members and management and an entirely non-objective journalist, I learned much about The Replacements watching the two-hour film -- even though none of the 'Mats or their manager Peter Jespersen are interviewed, nor is there any footage from shows, videos or even recordings of their music anywhere in the picture.

Instead, Bechard relies on the reflections of those who were there when -- from record store employees and fellow Minneapolis musicians who witnessed the earliest days of the band to sound crew members, writers and fans, including actor Tom Arnold and musicians such as the Goo Goo Dolls, who admit that they shamelessly ripped off The Replacements on their early records.

Telling the story chronologically, the film covers the band's history in detail, with insight provided from the likes of Tommy Erdelyi, aka Tommy Ramone, who produced "Tim," the band's major label debut and Carleen Stinson, the wife of the late Bob Stinson, the band's tutu wearing guitarist and the woman whose correspondence with singer/songwriter Paul Westerberg led to the writing of the classic song "Answering Machine."

Instructively, each time a Replacements album is discussed, its sales figures are flashed on the screen along with those of the best-selling record of that year. For The Replacements, those numbers ranged from a few thousand to 300,000. The best sellers were always in the millions.

But, like the Velvet Underground, an apt comparison I hadn't thought of until I heard it made in the movie, The Replacements were far more influential than record sales would indicate.

In fact, the old saw that everybody who bought a VU album started a band, almost applies to the 'Mats -- as demonstrated by filmed testimony from Craig Finn of The Hold Steady, Brian Fallon of The Gaslight Anthem and Patrick Stickles of Titus Andronicus.

I can't say that I agree with all the assertions put forward by the interviewees, particularly the constant drone that The Replacements didn't care about anything. My take is far different: They cared a lot, just not about commercial success and putting on identical, "good" shows each night.

I'm also not of the opinion that everything The Replacements did for Sire Records, an imprint of major label Warner Brothers was inferior to their first four releases on indie Twin/Tone. "Pleased to Meet Me," recorded in Memphis with the late Jim Dickinson producing and released on Sire is one of my favorite 'Mats records.

Late in the movie, fans give the number of Replacements shows they saw. I can't come close to matching the 300 attended by a former manager of Nirvana. But I remember seeing them at least two dozen times from Minneapolis to Los Angeles, in Texas, Missouri, Iowa, Kansas and, I think, every show they played in Nebraska.

So "Color Me Obsessed." Even today.

I last saw a 'Mat in March, when I caught up with Tommy Stinson after one of his South By Southwest shows. Still funny -- "People think I died" was the first thing he said to me -- and still rockin,' Tommy's show reminded me of how much I miss The Replacements.

"Color Me Obsessed" is a reminder of why they're missed and why they're one of the last bands that matter. See it, then go listen to "Let It Be," "Pleased to Meet Me," "Tim," "Hootenanny," "Stink"

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Reach L. Kent Wolgamott at 402-473-7244 or kwolgamott@journalstar.com, or follow him on Twitter at twitter.com/LJSWolgamott.

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