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Arts & Culture > Film > "Color Me Obsessed" captures the essence of The Replacements

"Color Me Obsessed" captures the essence of The Replacements

November 11th, 2012 | By Jon Anne Willow

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"The last, best band," The Replacements.

It's virtually impossible to understand the fervor fans of the Replacements – the seminal post-punk, pop rock, pre-grunge misfit princes of rock and roll – feel every time a note of music is played, a lyric referenced, a legendary show recalled. If you care about American rock and roll history, you consider them either the most underrated band of all time, or the most overrated. As with the 'Mats roller coaster career from 1979 to 1991, there's no in-between.

Color Me Obsessed – a lovingly crafted tribute to the glorious mess that was Paul, Tommy, Bob, Chris and Slim – captures the essence of the 'Mats still-ardent admirers. Director Gorman Bechard chose not to use any music or performance footage, or even to talk to the band. As he told the New York Times, "I love the Replacements so much, and I think Paul (Westerberg) is one of our five greatest songwriters. And I get the impression that he can be difficult. And if he were rude to me, I don't think I would be able to listen to him anymore. So I'm able to do a movie about the band and still idolize them from afar."

Bechard chooses instead those who have followed the band for 30 years or more, from influential music writers to contemporary musicians and actors. Some of the film's best moments come from regular, now middle-aged fans. Hearing them recall legendary shows and sharing a common, unprompted oral history conveys the magnitude of how fully the band shaped both the musical sensibilities of those who loved them and even rock and roll itself.

At 123 minutes, with not a single musical interlude to latch onto and only rare visual flashes of the band, Color Me Obsessed could have been a rambling mess. Instead, Bechard succeeds in weaving a narrative from more than 130 interviews that is at once charming, funny, relatable and tragic. It's a great piece of storytelling, even for the uninitiated, and the several hundred who turned out at Turner Hall Saturday evening were openly enthused; clapping, shouting out and laughing along to what Bechard calls "the potentially true story of the last, best band."



Post-screening, country rockers [Hugh Bob and the Hustle](#) played a short set of Replacements covers. While the band's talented lineup easily mastered the material (the 'Mats weren't rocket scientists; they played rock and roll), the band struggled with an audience hungry for a sawy homage. Instead, they got a mishmash of substandard late-career tracks sprinkled with a couple of classics like "I Will Dare" and an unfortunately superficial rendering of the heartbreaking "Answering Machine." The Hustle gave it a shot, but their lack of peer fandom with the audience and country-tinged interpretation of the music made for an awkward date at best. Rather than giving in to the moment and attempting a real tribute, the Hustle played it like it was one of their own shows, just with different songs, and the crowd, who rushed to the front of the stage for the set opener, left a little grumbly.

One bright spot was a well-libated fellow in a UW-Madison jersey who rushed the stage, singing into mics and fist-pounding to the audience in beery, cheery fashion during "Bastards of Young." In a weird way, it was almost a punk moment, unscripted and energized. Just like the Replacements themselves.

The DVD released for *Color Me Obsessed* is scheduled for Nov. 20, 2012. You can pre-order [here](#).

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