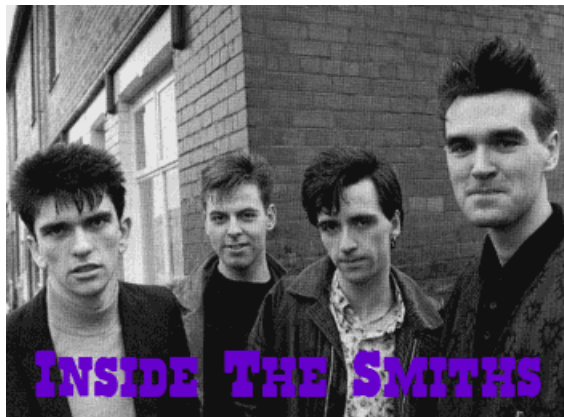


girl about town

February 07, 2008

Inside The Smiths (Tib Street Films)



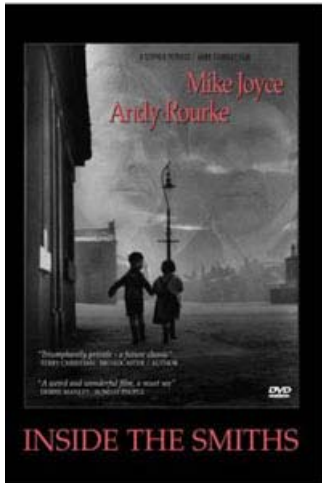
"Can you imagine what the 80's would have been like without The Smiths? With the odd exception of an idiot parade of posing buffoons with guitars up to here, ludicrous hairdos, singing vacuous platitudes about clothes, status, money. These four blokes from Manchester shone like a beacon in all that rubbish. They bridged the gap between the demise of punk rock and the beginnings of rave culture. Their contribution to that most challenging egocentric of decades was to deal with universal themes as relevant today as they were then. Thank God Johnny Marr knocked on Steve Morrissey's door and asked him to come out and play."

- Mike Standley, Director

Since the demise of The Smiths in 1987, fans everywhere have been lamenting the breakup of one of Britain's most seminal bands and have been dreaming of a reunion for twenty years. And while we all know what has become of Morrissey and even Johnny Marr since then, with no hope of a reunion, very little has been known of The Smith's less famous rhythm section of Mike Joyce (drums) and Andy Rourke (bass). Until now that is. This new DVD, "Inside The Smiths", provides an inside look into the band as experienced by Joyce and Rourke, who have been sadly overlooked as major contributors to the band's sound and success. This DVD attempts to restore the notion that The Smiths were indeed a four-piece, clearly overshadowed by Morrissey's grand persona and Johnny Marr's musical prowess. Less of a documentary and more of a recounting of the past from their eyes, Joyce and Rourke recount lots of experiences through interview clips and a collage of images. The film examines many things in the story of The Smiths, such as how the band got together, what musical influences each of the members had, how the band was a tight knit group and yet had distance. We also get glimpses into the recording of the the four Smiths studio albums and their tours. Rourke talks candidly about his drug addiction during his tenure in the band, and this is all valuable information and lends itself to credible history, as it is coming straight from Joyce and Rourke.

However, despite all these glimpses into the history of the band (and there are many in the film), there are several disappointing things that come close to distracting the viewer. For starters, no Smiths music is used in the film. This is crazy, but getting the rights to the songs must have been impossible with Morrissey's still-present anger towards his former band mates regarding their notorious legal battles over royalties. So the film uses mostly original elevator-type music that sounds somewhat familiar and identifiable as being Smiths-like, and this is the number one distraction. Also distracting are filler clips that do not need to be in the film (animation of flying guitars through the streets of Manchester) that fans can do without. So distractions aside, if you stay focused on the interviews and like the archival quality of some

of the footage, fans can glean a lot of great information and inspiration from Joyce and Rourke, and it will definitely make you get out all your Smiths records, which you will listen to in a whole new way with focus on bass lines and drums. Be sure to watch the extras (some are great, some you can skip). Great ones are of Craig Gannon - the 5th Smith, and Mike Joyce going through a box of unreleased Smiths demos and outtakes. There is also a discussion in one extra about the famous court case. (We could really do without the one meeting Mike Joyce's cats!). Expect cameos in the film from Peter Shelley (Buzzcocks), Peter Hook (New Order), and Mark E. Smith (The Fall) among others. And lest you get the wrong idea that Joyce and Rourke are bitter about the outcome of The Smiths, they will be the first to tell you that they are proud of their roles in the band. As Mike Joyce put it: "It was the best time of my life".



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