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Morrissey: From Where He Came to Where He Went [DVD]
(Video Music) Rated: N/A
US release date: 10 March 2009

by [J.M. Suarez](#)

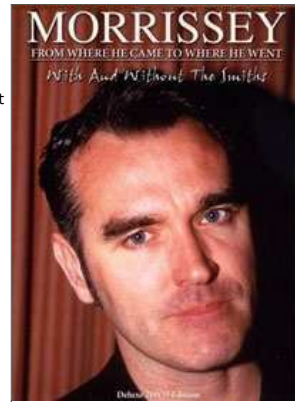
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"Lyrically, there's no one better." - Stephen Street

"Morrissey could do that thing of reaching out to people, reaching out and connecting with people. And then you have this incredibly brilliant band giving him a platform to be Morrissey. It was very exciting." - Grant Showbiz

Morrissey: From Where He Came To Where He Went - With and Without The Smiths consists of two separate British documentaries, *Morrissey: The Jewel in the Crown* and *The Smiths: Under Review*. The first focuses on his solo career up until the release of 2004's *You Are the Quarry*, while the second follows his early career with The Smiths.

Unfortunately, this set is an unauthorized account of Morrissey's career and it shows. The first documentary, *Morrissey: The Jewel in the Crown*, suffers greatly from this unauthorized treatment in that no original music by Morrissey is included. Instead there are little jingle-like snippets of music at the beginning of each chapter, adding nothing to the documentary. In addition to no original music, the entire thing (apart from one small interview clip of Morrissey on *Friday Night with Jonathan Ross*) is comprised of talking head interviews with ex-producers, ex-bandmates, and music critics.



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The documentary also falls short in its narration. A tabloid-esque, sensationalist voiceover is intrusive and contributes to the unauthorized feel of the production. While dealing with some serious flaws, *Morrissey: The Jewel in the Crown* still manages to offer some insightful and engaging commentary into Morrissey's solo career.

One of the more interesting portions of the documentary involves the dispute between producer and songwriter Stephen Street and guitarist Vini Reilly over authorship of music on Morrissey's first solo album, *Viva Hate*. Both Street and Reilly contend that each is responsible for key songwriting and producing on the album, an argument that has already carried over into the press and has both men arguing vehemently for his individual contribution while deriding the other's role. As no one else involved in the recording is featured in the documentary - Morrissey's absence is particularly noted during this exchange - and the disagreement never evolves beyond a he said/he said argument.

Moving into Morrissey's second album, *Kill Uncle*, there is quite a bit of insight from co-writer and guitarist Mark E. Nevin. Nevin's explanation of working with Morrissey is echoed throughout the documentary and is especially illuminating in that he co-wrote most of the songs on the album with Morrissey. Nevin says, "There was so little real communication, the way that most musicians have. You know, I don't remember really sitting there and having a conversation".

The documentary then covers the Mick Ronson produced *Your Arsenal* (the story goes that he had never heard of Morrissey or The Smiths when he was approached to work on the album); through his critically acclaimed *Vauxhall and I*; the difficult and considered by many to be lesser albums, *Southpaw Grammar* and *Maladjusted*, up until Morrissey's comeback, *You Are the Quarry*. Through it all various musicians and critics weight in. Perhaps the most engaging and certainly the most entertaining of the critics is Stuart Maconie, a former contributor to NME, he is a funny insider who also happens to be a real fan. Craig Gannon, the fifth member of The Smiths for a time, as well as a guitarist for several of Morrissey's singles, also contributes a unique viewpoint as someone who has worked with Morrissey in two distinct points in his career.

The second disc featuring *The Smiths: Under Review* includes a great deal of archival footage such as music video clips, excerpts from appearances on *Top of the Pops* and *The South Bank Show*, and early interviews. The inclusion of actual music by The Smiths serves as a direct contrast to the

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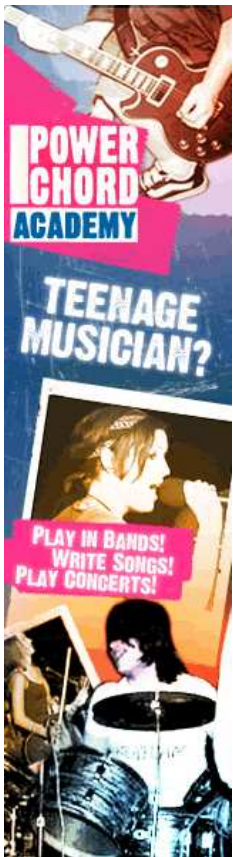
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previous disc's music-free format and it benefits greatly. There is an immediacy and an excitement to the production that is often missing from *Morrissey: The Jewel in the Crown*.

Apart from the addition of original music in the second documentary, there is not much difference between the two productions. There is overlap between many of those interviewed and the format is also a straightforward, chronological look into the subject. However, there are some interviewees that are given more time to shine in *The Smiths: Under Review*, such as Factory Records' founder Tony Wilson. His candid and opinionated talking heads make him one of the more persuasive personalities.

As for any extras included for either documentary, they are quite spare. The first disc contains a quiz and discography, while the second disc contains a short featurette on life after The Smiths titled "After the Split" that contains some overlap material from the first disc; an interactive quiz; and contributor biographies. As both of these documentaries have already been released separately and there is little in terms of new information or actual archival or performance footage to recommend multiple viewings, it is likely that this set will appeal only to a small group of completists.

RATING: 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9 10
 EXTRAS: 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

— 23 April 2009

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