

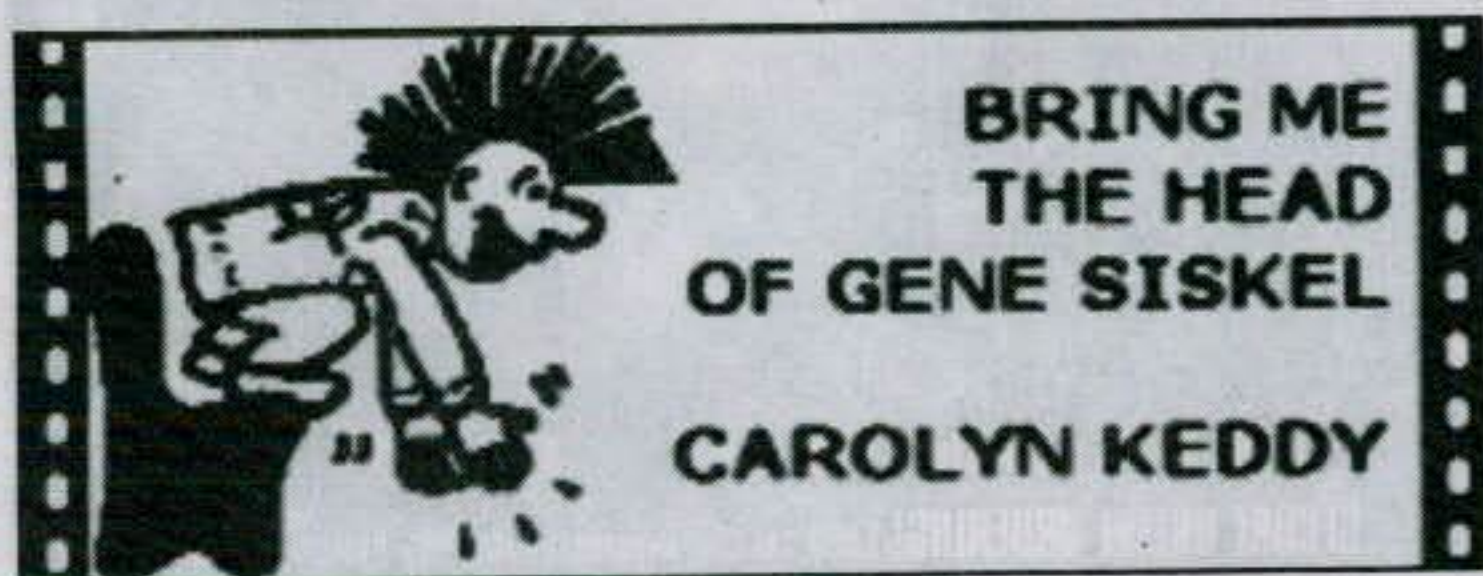
leaving the property intact.

Considering the grubby Paris envisioned here, and you might find yourself wondering why anyone would bother. But this film exists primarily to frame its action sequences. These sequences are, incidentally, spectacular, and the stunt action (all performed by the original actors) makes for any number of memorable sequences. In the style of a Hong Kong actioner, drama has been replaced by spectacle.

The thrills start early, with Leito evading the cops with an acrobatic rooftop chase sequence; he flies across the eaves, breaks through windows, bounds along tiles, and uses storm gutters to change directions. He's like a latter-day Robin Hood, except using the urban world to effect his escapes. He's sometimes assisted by his sister (Dany Verissimo), a firecracker who spends most of the film tied to the neutron bomb platform. So, how does Leito save Paris while Damian is trying to save his sister, both of whom seem much more interested fighting each other?

It all gets pulled together, and you'll either be gripping the arm-cushions of your seat or groaning at the silliness of it all.

Director Pierre Morel, working from a script from stuntman Belle and producer Jean-Luc Besson (*La Femme Nikita*), pulls a series of exciting sequences from the mess. Having them drive hydrogen-powered cars would have been the icing on the cake.



THE INEQUITY OF BEING ADORED FOR A MONTH AND IGNORED FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS

I can't begin to tell you how excited I was to get my hands on a copy of *Not A Photograph: The Mission Of Burma Story*. I have a friend who knows somebody who knows another who had a copy so I borrowed it. It is amazingly difficult to get some people to send a film to *MRR*, even when it seems so obvious. When I heard the documentary existed I tried, but never received an answer.

I saw Burma back in 1983. That was the year I started going to see shows. Anyone that played an all ages show in Boston that year and subsequent years I saw. It was all I wanted to do. So I did. I heard them on the radio. I loved the songs. I bought their records. In my eyes, they were famous, though I'd eventually find that outside of Boston that wasn't really true. But they had something better; they were infamous. They were influential. Yeah, I know that and two dollars will buy you a cup of coffee.

I can't begin to tell you how disappointed to find out that *Not A Photograph: The Mission Of Burma Story* is really just a document of their reunion. The band reformed in 2002 for a few shows, which expanded to a more permanent thing and by now, have recorded and released two recent albums. I will agree that it is exciting. I went to both San Francisco shows. I had the band on my radio show. I like the new records. The whole event just seems too recent to want to look back on it nostalgically. I guess the film is more for those who weren't there as kind of a "see what you missed."

The documentary has a bit of history, twenty minutes worth, which fills in the casual viewer on the importance the band had on the Boston scene and some more popular rockers: Moby, Sonic Youth, etc. There is some great footage of the band playing back in the day and some old interviews with the band. But it isn't enough for me.

The band is funny in a self-deprecating way. Peter Prescott seems to get all the best lines, immediately admitting, "How can you not do a lame version of what you did when you were 20 years old?" While Roger Miller sar-

castically states straight-faced, "We're kind of legendary." That's one of the great things about *Mission Of Burma* is their appreciation of the irony of being in their position. The filmmaker calls the band the "most influential band you never heard," which I find rather annoying. Obviously, many people have now heard of the band or the reunion wouldn't have been so successful. Prescott sums it up nicely, "I spent a lot of time getting way less than I thought I deserved. Now I'm getting way more. I don't know which is right." (www.notaphotograph.com)

I have become somewhat obsessed with the wave of unauthorized biographical DVDs that have sprung up recently. They are a truly interesting phenomenon. I like the idea of breaking the rules with a simple disclaimer that the opinions on this DVD do not reflect the band. Now they can say or show whatever they want. I wonder how they get away with it? But at the same time I don't care—just keep it up.

The two latest are *The Smiths: Under Review* and *Kate Bush: Under Review*. Neither band really matters that much to me, but that won't stop me from reveling in their authorized DVD. The idea behind the "Under Review" series is that bunch of journalists and self-proclaimed experts weigh in on what the band was doing and thinking during each moment of their career. I wish I had such balls to claim I knew what Kate Bush was thinking back in 1979 by simply listening to a track on her record. The ego is a wonderful thing.

For some reason *The Smiths: Under Review* doesn't take as many liberties as most unauthorized DVDs. There is little footage of the band performing and none of the archival interviews I have come to expect. One thing I do like is that almost every person interviewed is a "journalist and author." Most of them blather on like idiots in an entirely entertaining way. John Porter who produced the first few albums weighs in with how he helped Johnny Marr develop his guitar style by pointing out while he was playing what notes he should play next. Porter gave Marr the idea for some of his signature tunes though Marr took those ideas and went further with them. It cracks me up.

Having my own opinions of The Smiths, I can't take anything seriously these guys say. There is a constant chatter about how charismatic Morrissey is and what a "phenomenal live experience" it was to see the Smiths. I saw them twice and I never thought either to be true. Morrissey was always too overly dramatic and the band was just there. I may be reading too much between the lines, but after watching *The Smiths: Under Review* I came away with the feeling that Morrissey and Marr's relationship may have been more than just band mates. Was there something else going on that caused the break up?

Kate Bush: Under Review was another animal all together. I know absolutely nothing about Kate Bush except that she sings in an annoying falsetto style. When I would hear her on the radio I would turn the station off. I don't know if my lack of knowledge contributed more favorably to my enjoyment of her DVD. It did seem to have all of the elements *The Smiths: Under Review* DVD was missing. There is loads of footage spanning her entire career. She made a bunch of videos for her songs, all shown on the DVD. There are clips from interviews from 1980 and 1985. There is TV appearances and even some clips from a short film she directed and starred in. This is when the unauthorized biography is at its best. Bush may not participate in the DVD, but it seems like she is.

Kate Bush: Under Review gives a very detailed account of her career. I am amused that the interviewees always refer to Bush as an artist even though she wrote, composed, and performed all of her own songs. She is not a musician. She's an artist. Journalist Nigel Williamson appears in both DVDs and each time it seems like he just repeating what he had heard at one time about the band. For someone who wants a serious look at her/his favorite artist, this isn't for you. If you are like me and love to have a good laugh watching something entertaining, it's time you jumped on the unauthorized DVD bandwagon. I can't wait to see who will be next.

I am always looking for films to review. If you made one, send a copy to Carolyn Keddy, PO Box 460402, San Francisco, CA 94146-0402. If your film is playing in the San Francisco Bay Area, let me know at carolyn@maximumrocknroll.com. I will go see it.