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The Smiths Under Review: An Independent Critical Analysis Sexy Intellectual, \$19.95

This no-frills DVD is for die-hard fans of "Without a doubt the most important band of the 1980s" and "the ultimate icons of a genre that's come to be known as 'indie'", as the DVD's sleeve reads. While I might've pegged U2 or Sonic Youth to share the former category, and give the Pixies full reign over the latter, you can't tell fans of the Smiths that Moz and Marr have been an iota less influential than they would believe. The operative word to pair with "most important band" is *British*, as the Smiths *did* turn the sloppy-with-synths early '80s on its head in the United Kingdom, where their formation was almost a protest against the glamour and excess of Duran Duran and A Flock of Seagulls. For those not sated by 1992's *The Complete Picture*, a Reprise video collection that included some particularly embarrassing *Top of the Pops* performances, *Under Review* arrives in a package as austere as the Smiths' catalog.

Not that this disc is intended for the display shelves—buyers for *Under Review* know who they are, the general consensus being that newbies take their time with the audio oeuvre before delving into the über-dated visuals of the Smiths' live and videotaped career. "Neophytes are strongly urged to build up a proper reverence for the band before risking the DVD," a fan wrote about *The Complete Picture*, and that advice works here, too. An avalanche of trivia—including an extra titled "The Hardest Smiths Interactive Quiz in the World Ever"—will overwhelm casual listeners. Not to mention the sight of Morrissey dancing.

That latter spectacle is represented in clips of live shows and videos interspersed with talking-head histories of the band's landmark singles (although "There Is a Light That Never Goes Out" is conspicuously absent). The heads include producer John Porter, *Saint Morrissey* author/Moz stalker Mark Simpson, and Factory Records' Tony Wilson, whose wry observations on why he didn't sign the Smiths are tinged with audible regret: "[Morrissey] announced he was going to be a pop star. . . . I almost laughed in his face."

- RACHEL SHIMP