

# MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL

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BRING ME  
THE HEAD  
OF GENE SISKEL  
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It is a good time to be a fan of Joy Division. Unlike most bands (or scenes or other musical things), Joy Division attracts talented filmmakers with overwhelmingly personal interest in their subject. First there was the feature film **Control** and now **Joy Division**, Grant Gee's compelling band documentary. Both come across as labors of love, painstakingly compiled without the usual band bio-pic nonsense. In the case of Joy Division it is important since it would be so easy to get overly melodramatic with the story.

Unlike **Control**'s director Anton Corbijn, Gee wasn't involved with Joy Division when they were a band. Because of that **Joy Division** comes across as the ultimate fan film. Gee manages to get access to virtually everyone involved in the Joy Division story to participate, including Ian Curtis' girlfriend Annik Honoré. Honoré until recently wouldn't discuss Curtis. The two most prominent missing interviewees are Joy Division manager Rob Gretton and Curtis' wife Deborah Curtis. Gretton is deceased. The film quotes from Deborah Curtis' book *Touching From A Distance* so there seems to have been some involvement on her behalf. In addition to the mandatory interviews with the remaining members of Joy Division, Factory Records co-founder Tony Wilson, writer Paul Morley, Gee also includes lesser known people such as filmmaker Malcolm Whitehead who shot early footage of the band and co-editor of Manchester's *City Fun* fanzine Liz Naylor. It is refreshing to finally see a woman who was involved in the Manchester scene and who is neither wife nor girlfriend to one of the main characters. Although it would have been cool to also hear from some fans who went to see Joy Division, but weren't involved with their story outside of that context.

Gee also includes some amazing rare footage of the band. The most notable are clips from **The Factory Flick** featuring early footage of Joy Division playing at the TJ Davidson's Rehearsal Rooms and a live performance of the band at the Bowden Vale Youth Club. There is also part of the short film **No City Fun** (also included on **The Factory Flick**), which uses Joy Division's music as the soundtrack to footage of what was happening in Manchester. There is footage of the band playing at Plan K in Brussels and Eindhoven, Netherlands. The band performs "She's Lost Control" on *What's On* from Granada TV. Perhaps the funniest is an audio clip of John Peel playing "Atmosphere" on his radio show at the wrong speed and then jokingly berating himself as he restarts the record at the correct speed. The creepiest is a cassette recording of guitarist Bernard Sumner attempting a hypnotic regression on Ian Curtis. Curtis discusses being 28 and reading books about laws.

**Joy Division** paints a comprehensive picture of Manchester in the '70s and the rise and demise of the band in that environment. The landscape was bleak. The tower blocks were going up, which drummer Steve Morris describes as futuristic, but a "concrete fortress". Sumner claims he never saw a tree until he was nine. Tony Wilson's now typical melodramatic assertions that Joy Division had to become a band because there was nothing else for them to do and Paul Morley's claim that once they had the name Joy Division everything immediately clicked into place still come across as clichéd over-simplifications. Yet, it will never be easy to explain why Joy Division became as popular and influential as they did in such a short period of time. Gee has fun with the scenery showing important story landmarks now and then. Some of the ones that no longer existed were amusingly referred to as "Thing That Aren't There" and were shown in their more upscale present state such as The Electric Circus, Pip's Nightclub, TJ Davidson's Rehearsal Rooms, Rafters, The Factory, and Factory Records.

The only frustrating part of **Joy Division** is when Curtis' suicide is discussed. Bass player Peter Hook comes off the most crass when he tells of getting a phone

himself for not being able to do anything to help.

Of all the bands left to make a documentary about, Tad would probably never have crossed my mind. In fact, when I heard there was a **Tad: Busted Circuits and Ringing Ears** DVD I found it pretty funny. I saw Tad a couple of times and had a good time. I always enjoyed when singer Tad Doyle would stage dive, which of course you get to see in this documentary. But apparently like most people I kind of forgot about them after they were sued for their *8-Way Santa* record cover. I didn't even recall they were signed to a major label.

**Tad: Busted Circuits and Ringing Ears** opens with some amazing footage of a Tad video shoot. Tad Doyle is sitting in a chair on the roof of a moving car. The car is driving on the highway and going pretty fast. Tad then stands up and starts surfing and swinging his arms. I don't know many people who would do that and seeing Doyle do it is pretty cool. The actual video is included as an extra on the DVD, but unfortunately the shots of the car aren't featured in it enough.

The Tad story is an interesting one. Doyle was a drummer who learned to play guitar and started writing songs. He recorded some songs where he sang and played all the instruments. These songs were released as Tad's first single for Sub Pop records. Doyle then got together a full band, but decided to keep the name Tad. Tad went through the usual band bullshit: drug use, mistakenly signing to a major label, line-up changes. They were supposedly more popular than Nirvana at one point. MTV wouldn't play their first video because it was too ugly. MTV claims they didn't say that and airs their next video. Tad seemed to endure most of it. It could've been the drugs. Then they broke up. ([www.kingofheartsproductions.com](http://www.kingofheartsproductions.com))

Watching **TV Party: The Documentary** makes me think of not that long ago when alternative-type folks would do things just for the fun of it. When the idea of getting famous didn't really seem like an option so people were less self-conscious. Yeah, there were usually booze and drugs involved, but it seemed like people did things for the sheer enjoyment. Now there always seems like there is some other agenda in play. *TV Party* was "the TV show that's a party!" and it sure was entertaining to watch.

*TV Party* aired on New York cable access. It was hosted by Glenn O' Brien, a magazine writer, and co-hosted by Blondie's Chris Stein. The regulars included many soon to be New York luminaries Fab Five Freddy, Amos Poe, Deborah Harry, and Walter Steding. The show was based on Hugh Hefner's '60s TV shows, but came across more like a late night talk show. David Letterman called *TV Party* his favorite TV show. People talked, bands played, and the on-air people took insulting phone calls from viewers. The guests were also amazing for a cable access show: Mick Jones, George Clinton, David Byrne, Tav Falco, The Screamers to name a few. You see attempts at this type of authenticity on TV these days, but somehow it never comes across as this much fun.

In addition to **TV Party: The Documentary**, Brink Films has also released full episodes of the show. Get acquainted with the documentary and then settle in for the complete experience. ([www.tvparty.org](http://www.tvparty.org))

I heard a rumor that David Lynch directed the documentary about himself **Lynch**. When you think about it a director named blackANDwhite could obviously be a pseudonym. In the imdb.com listing of the film a director isn't even listed. Not to say that imdb's exclusion of a person is an indication that they don't exist, but you'd think someone who did a documentary on David Lynch would at least be listed. It is a novel concept, an autobiographical documentary. It's done in books so why not?

The autobiographical theory would explain why **Lynch** is so surprisingly boring. I realize it is hard to completely reveal yourself. The film seems set on only showing what interests Lynch at the time: transcendental meditation, davidlynch.com, Czech factories, and making his latest film. These four subjects could have made an interesting film. Just watching Lynch work is fascinating enough. He isn't above menial tasks like mopping the floor, but he also gets agitated and says "fuck" a lot. ([www.lynychdocumentary.com](http://www.lynychdocumentary.com))

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](mailto:carolyn@maximumrocknroll.com). I will go see it. [www.carolynkeddy.com](http://www.carolynkeddy.com)