



## The MESSAGE FOR THE WEEK

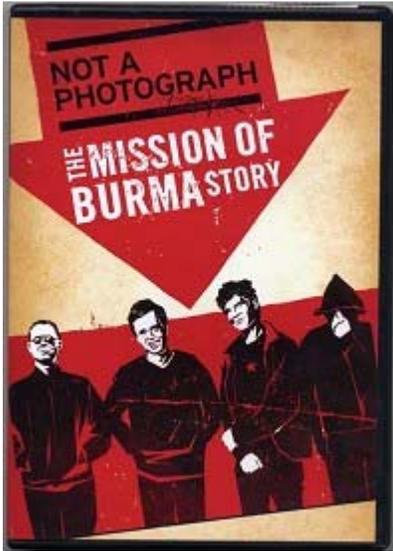
Wednesday, December 13, 2006

### DVD Review

#### *A Message Exclusive Look At New Music*

By: Joe Milliken

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Mission Of Burma's "Not A Photograph"

Mission Of Burma was a very short-lived band, however they have been described by critics and musicians alike as "the most influential post-punk band you never heard of your life", and were very much ahead of their time.

Formed in 1979 out of Boston, Clint Conly (bass/vocals), Roger Miller (guitar/vocals), Pete Prescott (drums), and Martin Swope (tape effects, looping, soundboard) were a powerful foursome that combined intelligent, art-rock lyrics with the energy and attitude of punk that created noisy-yet-melodic outbursts that would strongly influence everyone from Husker Du, Sonic Youth, The Pixies and REM, to current artists such as Prodigy, Moby and even Nirvana.

Unfortunately, the band would only release two singles, one six-track EP titled Signals, Calls And Marches and one full album titled Vs., before being forced to disband because guitarist Miller's hearing was being destroyed.

However despite their all-too-brief existence, their impact on the underground indie-rock scene is perhaps without equal, and it is a shame that they didn't survive long enough to reap the rewards of a genre they helped create.

After they went their separate ways, Miller and Prescott would continue with various music projects through the years, but Conly left the music scene altogether, only producing the first Yo La Tengo album along the way.

Now flash-forward to 2002, 20 years after Mission Of Burma had originally split the music scene.

Strongly influenced by the prompts of Boston promoter and record label executive Mark Kates, who just so happened to promote Burma's farewell shows back in 1983, the band decided to reunite, with only Swope deciding not to participate. His place would be taken by Bob Weston of the band Shellac.

Burma has released two CDs of new material since reuniting, 2004's OnoffOn and 2006's The Obliterati, however the DVD release Not A Photograph documents both the history of the band, as well as the 2002 reunion tour.

What is great about this documentary is that it is not some kind of pretentious nostalgia trip down memory lane, but more an informative capsule of the bands' history and influence, plus a great deal of interview footage with the band (minus Swope) as they not only talk about their past, but why they got back together in the first place. The ironic part is however, that the band is not really quite sure themselves why they reunited, "but it feels right".

Other interviews include family members, other artists who were influenced by Burma, and assorted members of the Boston media and music scene during the time of their break through on the Boston music scene, then consequent break up.

Bonus material includes vintage live footage from both the early days in the clubs of Boston, the reunion tour, as well as the recording of OnoffOn.

If this reviewer has one quibble, it is that the music is not produced quite loud enough as compared to the interview footage, a minor detail.

Overall, Not A Photograph is an excellent DVD package and highly recommended for both long-time fans, as well as those who might not know the music of Mission Of Burma, but may be ready to investigate.

## Related Links

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