



"So good, so quick -- almost unworldly"

Short notice, but what the hell -- there's an awfully cool doc playing tonight and tomorrow at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts on seminal yet underappreciated Boston post-punk band Mission of Burma. *Not a Photograph: The Mission of Burma Story*, from co-directors David Kleiler, Jr. and Jeff Iwanicki, kicks off as the band is prepping for its first public performance since 1983 -- the New York City show that launched their rapturously received 2002 reunion tour.

Initially reluctant to reform, having long since moved on to quieter lives as suburban dads and record-store owners, Mission of Burma's members (singer-guitarist Roger Miller, whose tinnitus signaled an end to his 1980s rock career; bassist-singer Clint Conley; and drummer-singer Peter Prescott) realize that playing together simply "feels right." All are good-natured and humble (no diva acts here -- if anything, they're refreshingly anxious about taking the stage again), and despite high-praise testimonials from rock journos and fellow musicians, *Not a Photograph* manages to avoid feeling self-congratulatory or even nostalgic.

A quick history lesson covers trivia (the name came from an obsession with the word Burma, deemed "very New Wave" for whatever reason) and milestones (the band's first shows, with exciting early footage); the film also points out that the band was never interested in fame or fortune. In fact, they viewed their commercial limitations as entirely positive, as that was the reason they were able to play exactly the kind of music they wanted to. "There was no use in playing the game," Prescott recalls. "We were never gonna get signed. We were too harsh for a dirty rock club -- forget about the radio!"

The 21st century live shows (including one at San Francisco's Fillmore) bear out the band's rep as influential and important -- Mission of Burma still sounds fantastic. (And they're still at it -- visit [Matador Records](#) for info on their new recordings.) And yep, Moby turns up to answer for his "That's When I Reach for My Revolver" cover, much-reviled by diehards. "I was either gonna get a Mission of Burma tattoo or put that song on one of my records," he shrugs. "I still might get that tattoo."

*Not a Photograph: The Mission of Burma Story* plays Fri/3-Sat/4, 7 and 8:45 p.m., Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, 701 Mission, SF. \$6-8. (415) 978-2787, [www.ybca.org](http://www.ybca.org).

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