

VCR Reporter

VENTURA COUNTY'S NEWSWEEKLY

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HOME

COVER STORY

Save the Wagon Wheel

Dirk Shepherd makes a final stand against the local landmark's last round up

NEWS

Tones of support?

An e-mail from the governor's office may suggest Schwarzenegger plans to approve a floating LNG terminal after all

Two years later

La Conchita residents count on each other

~THE COUNT~

Development on the horizon

With the release of a vital document, the Newhall Ranch project is a step closer to reality

MUSIC

~MOLE TRACKS~

~ By MATTHEW SINGER ~

One of my favorite anecdotes from *Our Band Could Be Your Life*, writer Michael Azerrad's tremendous valentine to the American indie rock scene of the 1980s, involves the Boston group Mission of Burma. In the days when every card-carrying indie band traveled the country in a crappy, on-the-verge-of-exploding Econoline van, the band decided to do an entire tour via plane. They found an airline offering one month of unlimited miles for a single flat rate — the catch being that every flight had to be taken out of Atlanta. Imagine four guys who, even in their youth, looked like middle-aged clerks at CompUSA, wearily stumbling into an Atlanta airport after a gig in San Francisco, waiting to fly to another show in Seattle. It is a sterling example of the MacGyver-like ingenuity that makes that era of music — a time before there were any institutions in place to make the experience of being a cult group easier — so fascinating.

Not a Photograph: The Mission of Burma Story does not live up to that tidbit. It is an utterly pedestrian rock doc, following the usual formula for artists of Burma's stature: band meets, develops small following, dissolves in obscurity, proves posthumously influential, gets back together and plays for bigger crowds than ever before. This plotline can work, given the right amount of intrigue, but Burma,



In Brief

EDITORIAL

Health policies can break your bank account

OPINIONS & LETTERS

PLANET VENTURA

Nuts for the New

7 DAYS

HAPPENINGS

ART & CULTURE

~ ART & CULTURE ~

Come for the cheeseballs, stay for the baked Alaska

MUSIC

Fear is power

Psychedelic bluesman Guy Blakeslee, aka Entrance, sings in the face of death

~MOLE TRACKS~

Picks of the Week

WORTH THE DRIVE

FILM

Father figures

Sympathetic surrogates search for youth

~ HOME MOVIES ~

New on DVD

THE ADVICE GODDESS

Five o'clock eye shadow

PRINT

Earthtalk

despite creating bracing music that was challenging and accessible all at once, are too ordinary to invest an hour in.

Their breakup was not a tragedy — guitarist Roger Miller developed severe tinnitus, hastening the disbanding, but the members admit the group had run its course by that point anyway — and their reunion is not a miracle. Pretty much, it's just some old friends playing music together again for the hell of it, a reason far more noble than money, nostalgia, bitterness or the desire to finalize a legacy that ended prematurely. But it makes for a way less interesting documentary. They called their 2002 outing the Inexplicable Tour, and that sums it up rather succinctly.

What we end up with, then, is an exercise in near-hagiography for a band whose members will probably agree doesn't deserve it. Mission of Burma was good then and now, as the recent and archival live footage attests; they're just not that interesting. In the DVD liner notes and in the film itself, Azerrad attempts to draw a direct line from them to Nirvana, which is not inaccurate, but it still feels like the filmmakers are inflating their importance.

Where directors David Kleiler Jr. and Jeff Iwanicki go wrong is mistaking the Mission of Burma story as greater than the time in pop history it represents. The biography can sustain an entire chapter in *Our Band Could Be Your Life* because Azerrad is considering the underground rock community as a whole. Outside obligatory comments from Sonic Youth, *Not a Photograph* offers little context for their career and asks all non superfans to care about them as an individual speck in a wide network of artists without explaining why we should. At 70 minutes, it's about 40 too long. ★

Got a tip? e-mail Mole4life@aol.com

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BODY POLITICS

Take the challenge ...

LISTINGS

~AFTER DARK~
~ MOVIE TIMES ~

DINING

IN GOOD TASTE

Super bar food Rookees has more than just
5,000 flat-screen TVsRookees

NEW - BLOGS

BLOG - SOUR GRAPES

BLOG - VC REPORTER

BLOG - POPSCURA

BLOG - PRIMITIVE COMFORTS

BLOG HUNTING & PECKING