



Not A Photograph (DVD) — Mission of Burma, MVD, 2006

If you don't know Mission of Burma's music — either or past or present — you'd be wise to slink down to your favorite record emporium and snag a copy of "Vs" or the exceedingly good compilation "The Horrible Truth About Burma". Sitting down for this 80-minute flick won't do much for you if you don't know the story of how this Boston-based trio called it quits in its finest hour, then reunited nearly 20 years later to make more of the fantastically sideways music that inspired several generations of indie rockers.

"Not A Photograph" offers interesting insights from bassist/vocalist Clint Conley, guitarist/vocalist Roger Miller and drummer Peter Prescott as well as Moby, Mike Watt and plenty of Bostonians who were there when the shit came down twixt '79 and '83. There are funny and touching revelations about the group — Conley works as a video editor and has a family (his young daughter and niece think MoB's a little chaotic); his wife didn't know much about his band until she read Michael Azzerad's indie bible "Our Band Could Be Your Life"; Miller still has hearing problems — the very thing that caused MoB's first demise — but plays like a soldier; Prescott works in an independent record store and doesn't seem to know what to make of the band's reemergence. None of them really expected much in the way of commercial success for the band and pulling their axes out of the mothballs seems like genuine fun.

And this documentary reads much the same way — a nice glimpse into a band that could have been a source of inspiration and joy for a long line of disenfranchised geeks for more than two decades. It's a bit short on incisive details but long on honesty and warmth. And the juxtaposition of fans irate over Moby's cover of "That's When I Reach For My Revolver" and Mr. Play himself confessing that he was either "going to cover the song or get a Mission of Burma tattoo" and then opting for the cover is accidentally hilarious.

- Jedd Beaudoin