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MOVIE REVIEW

The Smiths - Under Review

Music Video Distribution
Now available on DVD

The Smiths: Under Review, part of a collection of music documentaries, provides essential and compelling information about the seminal, highly influential 80s band, anchored by the songwriting team of Morrissey and phenom guitarist Johnny Marr. The Smiths are as known for lyrical content as for Marr's jangly guitar and unusual melodies and compositions. For those who have lived under a mammoth rock, The Smiths created amazing songs like "How Soon is Now?" (I repeated that song over and over again), "Bigmouth Strikes Again," "Ask," my real favorite "Cemetery Gates" and lighter numbers like "This Charming Man."



I became a huge fan of the Smiths in the 80s during high school but also liked The Cure (I guess dark too), Wham and Duran Duran. The most frustrating aspect of this documentary is that only clips are shown of performances by the Smiths-Top of the Pops etc. You start to get into the song and then it cuts away to some talking heads. Although no real members of the band are interviewed in this documentary (and I have yet to watch any other of the Under Review series), there is: "fifth Smith" Craig Gannon, three of the group's producers - John Porter, Kenny Jones, and the invaluable Stephen Street, Factory Records head Tony Wilson, Grant Showbiz (who's worked with Billy Bragg for many moons as well), disc jockey David Jensen, and famed British journalist Paul Morley, as well as Mark Simpson, author of the book, Saint Morrissey. And the commentators are true fans and were involved with the Smiths in varying ways.

The Smiths: Under Review follows the chronology of the band from getting together to its break-up with singles and albums released along the way. The importance of songs like "Meat is Murder" (a battle

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cry to vegetarians), "The Queen is Dead" (an anti-Margaret Thatcher tome), "Panic" (response to the seemingly numb state of affairs on the radio), the brilliant, unforgettable "How Soon is Now?" (with Morrissey's recurring theme of death), "Girlfriend in a Coma" (ahead of its time in discussing euthanasia with its provocative tone infused with sweet pop sensibilities) and the sad story behind "Suffer Little Children" (the Moors Murders of the 1960s) are all revealed here. Morrissey really believed in "ripped from the headlines" and in delving into politics and controversial subjects via the music of the Smiths.

The Smiths: Under Review deserves to be watched and is a must-see for all Smiths fans.

By Amy Steele

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