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The Smiths

Under Review (MVD)
by **Tim Den**

Under Review is a documentary series in which people involved with certain artists - **The Smiths**, in this case - get together and offer a "critical analysis" of said artist's career and impact upon society. This DVD is not authorized by any member of the band, but does include plenty of music video snippets, rare interview footage, and insight from "credible" talking heads. Usually, I'd be pretty skeptical of such a concept, but this installment features producers Stephen Street and John Porter - who helmed most of The Smiths' recordings - longtime roadie Grant Showbiz, and even Factory Records head honcho Tony Wilson, so it's not like a bunch of no-names sitting around shooting their mouths off. The panel of "experts" go through the band's history, from inception to implosion, highlighting historical moments, musical greats and no-so-greats, in an effort to present The Smiths as they saw 'em. So is the DVD worth watching? If you're a diehard fan, no. It doesn't offer any new insights - apart from a few segments with second guitarist Craig Gannon - but it does serve as a good overview for newcomers. Each single and album is dissected, offering just enough of a taste to people who might want to delve into the band's catalog. Sure, some of the journalists tend to talk nonsense ("It was as if their music came from the future!"), but overall, the chronological presentation of the works is done rather well.

The low point of the DVD, however, is the very little attention paid to why The Smiths broke up in '87. Okay, everyone knows that guitarist Johnny Marr and vocalist Morrissey had problems, but - without ever mentioning any specifics - the DVD simply states "internal problems broke the band up" and leaves it at that. What exactly transpired between the two men? How did tension build between their personalities? Were there any specific instances where the friction was apparent to outsiders? Give us anything, please! Because, at the end of the day, their fans are still puzzled as to why the two main creative forces of The Smiths refuse to reconnect even 20 years afterward. There's enough behind the scenes there to really uncover, so why not do it?

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