



## THE SMITHS: UNDER REVIEW

A review by Joe Milliken

Under Review: An Independent Critical Analysis is a 90-minute documentary, and the first, to explore the complete storied history of The Smiths, one of the most important, if not underrated bands of the 1980's.

The DVD, which is exclusively released by MVD Video Distributors as part of the Under Review series of music documentaries, features insightful interviews, rare television appearances and videos, as well as interviews with several producers, authors and journalists who were close to the band.

Obviously when you talk about The Smiths your going to start with Morrissey, the bands' dark and charismatic front man. However another aspect of the project that was quite interesting and eye opening for this reviewer, (admittedly, I don't know a lot about the band) is just how important guitarist/song writing partner Johnny Marr was to The Smiths overall sound.

This documentary is indeed a thorough examination of the rise, and then dramatic fall of The Smiths. Telling the history of the band, while shying away from all the tabloid rumors that circled for much of their career.

Instead, Under Review takes a straight forward approach in describing the bands' history, why they was so important and influential, and what went wrong in the end.

Some of the interviews are quite interesting, including intimate conversations with such band insiders as producers John Porter, Kenny Jones and Stephen Street, Factory Records head Tony Wilson, music journalists Jake Kennedy and Paul Morley, and the sometimes forgotten "fifth Smith" Craig Gannon. However, the omission of any interviews from band members themselves, seems to leave behind a perspective unfulfilled.

However what does make the documentary great is the extensive analysis of Morrissey's dark and often controversial lyrics, Marr's distinct guitar-greatness and the dissection and insight of many Smiths albums and singles.

All of which is much more interesting than going on about unreliable rumors over the <sup>3</sup>true meaning<sup>2</sup> of Morressy's lyrics or why his working relationship with Marr failed.

Overall, Under Review offers an informative history of The Smiths, talking more about what made them great and influential, rather than throwing around innuendos that may or may not have been fact. I do wish however, that some of the footage of rare television appearances and videos were shown in their entirety.