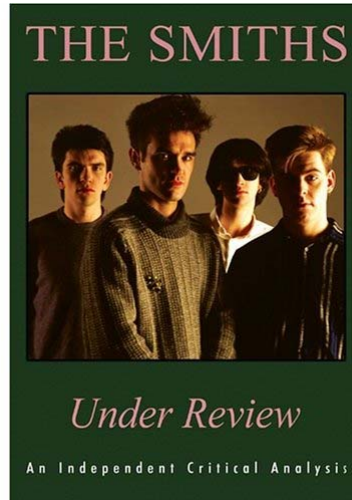


death: "Dear God, take him, take them, take anyone, the stillborn, the newborn, the infirm, take anyone, take people from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, just spare me." Most of us wouldn't say it out loud, but Morrissey outs our true sinister thoughts that pass through our brains.

The Smiths: Under Review, An Independent Critical Analysis

The traditional topics in any Smiths biography are all covered here: the band name, traditional four piece lineup, ambiguous nature of Morrissey's sexuality, being a household name in the UK (but not the U.S.), "Suffer Little Children" (Moors murders), album sleeves, singles slump, role of Mike Joyce and Andy Rourke, reluctance to do videos in MTV era, Craig Gannon, and the split. However, while some of the information may not be new, because *The Smiths:*

Under Review, An Independent Critical Analysis is a video documentary, it is a comforting companion for any Smiths fan or seeker.



Having never attended a Smiths Convention <http://www.musicconventions.com/>, and having very few close friends who are Smiths fans, sitting and watching so many writers, musicians, and people in the circle discuss what the Smiths meant and mean is like discovering that you're not alone. Others have also spent hours thinking about why this band affected them so much.

The DVD produced by Chris Davies has a BBC/public television style, but that doesn't rob the emotional tributes or song performances of their impact. The assembled commentators have much to contribute as the film follows the band sequentially through their releases.

It is especially good to hear so much from John Porter, producer of the debut *The Smiths* album, someone who has never gotten enough credit. His insights into the Smiths during that era, as well as, his comments from afar about the later years are intriguing and insightful. For instance, Porter says he was fired after helping to produce the swirling, monstrous epic "How Soon is Now?" While the track stands as one of Marr's strongest guitar wash effects, apparently the band fired Porter, because they (Marr? Morrissey) felt like Porter was taking them in a musical direction they weren't prepared to go.

Another man never given enough credit in the Smiths story is Craig Gannon. The former Aztec Camera guitarist came on board as the fifth Smith to help Marr reproduce in concert the studio layers of guitar. This during the *Queen is Dead* period, Gannon's contribution to the band always was downplayed. Many biographies seemed to point towards Morrissey as the force behind his eventual sacking, but Gannon seems to think that Marr was really the one who was calling the shots on the decision. Gannon, however, is upfront about his own

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Or Music
Palm Picture:
Parasol
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Righteous B
Rhino
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Ryko Music
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Sanctuary Re
Sounds Fami
Special Ops I
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Theory 8 Rec
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Vanguard Re
Wampus Rec
Warp Record
Wind-up Rec
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mistake of not investing enough of himself in the band, being too reclusive. Crew member and producer Grant Showbiz remembers that it was Gannon's job to loose—which is what happened. This side of the story alleviates some of the demonizing of Morrissey—at least in this case.

Journalist/author Nigel Williamson is a Smiths fan I'd like to sit down to talk to while listening to each album. Reversing a commonly held assumption—that Morrissey's lyrics led the way to the melancholy—Williamson mentions how most often Marr would lay down the guitar parts on cassette, dropping them through Morrissey's mail slot for him to write lyrics accordingly. It is Williamson's opinion, then, that the melancholy was inspired by the sadness in Marr's music because the music came first. Yet, it was still the sum of parts—Morrissey needed Marr, and Marr needed Morrissey, and while this wasn't explored enough in the DVD, Morrissey and Marr needed Joyce and Rourke.

By the way, I scored an embarrassing 12 out of 25 on the DVD Extra "The Hardest Smiths Interactive Quiz in the World Ever." I thought I knew my stuff!

Thanks to [Morrissey](#), [Attack/Sanctuary Records Group](#), Sexy Intellectual, Chrome Dreams, and [MVD – Music Video Distributors](#) for the review copies.

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Hip Hop/Rap: Border Crossing's *Ominous*



Old school scratching, ghetto bass blasting, R&B and jazz samples, R&B guest vocals from Alex Watson, and world rap voices make Border Crossing's *Ominous* a truly fresh Hip Hop disc. While you can imagine MC Rockwell fronting for a standard 00's pimped-out video for "Original Heads," there's enough rock and soul sense in these boys (Seorais Graham, Paul Mulvey, and Alex Angol) that they go beyond trunk rattling bass. This is the Hip Hop disc for those who like that slink and slide strut rhythm, but don't always like the same old, same old "bragging about my grill and girls" rap. Ricky Rankin's guest raps bring

a Michael Franti & Spearhead sense to the project, especially "Future Blues" which sounds like the second chapter in Franti's "Ganja Babe."

Thank you to the [Border Crossing](#) and [Recall Group](#) for the review copy.

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American Folk: Antsy McClain's *Time-Sweetened Lies*

