

Joy Division: Under Review



Label: Sexy Intellectual



Released: 2006

Joy Division's short and fascinating history, post-punk legacy, and mystique – furthered by the suicide of [lead singer](#) and lyricist Ian Curtis – is given the rockumentary treatment by “Under Review,” which does a nice job of giving the evolution and history of the [band](#), as well as giving us a feel for how complicated a person Curtis must have been. This is a decent exploration, and worth a view, but I believe the band's admittedly brief existence might deserve a longer, more in-depth examination. The remaining members went on to form New Order, which has had a very successful career, and some attention to that early formation and decision to continue on could have used more attention. Joy Division's distinctive sound has influenced a slew of post-punk bands; that brooding, semi-gothic, somewhat danceable sound is unforgettable, especially in their most recognizable track, “Love Will Tear Us Apart.”

A couple of things take away from the experience. The thick English accents of the critics, for one, take some time to get used to; there are likely to be plenty of rewind moments for viewers wanting to make sure they understand a quote or a point. Hardcore fans may also feel there isn't enough detail about Curtis' problem with epilepsy, and how it affected Joy Division's other members. His diagnosis is mentioned several times, but not emphasized; the Independent Critical Analysis series is formatted to not involve the actual band and relies on writers that were involved in the scene, but some perspective from the surviving band members would have been wonderful.

The documentary does an excellent job of explaining the band's working relationship with producer Martin Hannett, and his importance in helping to create their unique music. From the punkish single “Transmission” to the gorgeous atmospheric pop of “Atmosphere,” Hannett and the band never stopped challenging themselves. There are some comparisons between Curtis and [Jim Morrison](#) and Frank Sinatra which could be argued, certainly, but are fascinating nonetheless.

Most [entertaining](#) is John Robb, a writer and musician involved in the scene; he has a thick accent and a kind of Mohawk, and looks more like an Australian Rules Footballer than a rock critic. He has an intensity about the music, and the Manchester scene, that comes barreling through in his interview. It seems like you could have a laugh or two with the bloke over a pint.

Fans will likely enjoy this, but finish wanting more; for a closer look, check out the books written about Curtis and Joy Division by the various participants in the [film](#).

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