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Joy Division - Under Review

Picture: C+ Sound: C+
Extras: C Program: B

I came to **Joy Division** late in life. I had recently graduated from the university and moved into my first apartment with my girlfriend. I worked days at a little bookshop and she was a newly minted librarian working in the engineering department of a much more prestigious local school than the one I had attended.

I had this weird idea that I might be a writer and she encouraged my delusions. After dinner and attending to the dishes I would shut myself in a tiny backroom we had turned into a makeshift office. I had set up my typewriter, a vintage Underwood once owned by my girlfriend's grandfather, himself an old-time newspaperman, by the window. Thus ensconced I would attempt to put something worthwhile on paper. Mostly, though, I would stare at the blank sheet for about an hour or two, then give up and watch the street below for awhile just for a change of pace.



Series

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- > The Break-Up (HD-DVD/DVD Combo Format)
- > Hellsing - Signature Series Box Set (Animé)

Thinking about that now, somehow, it’s always a winter streetscape I was looking down on. In my memory of it it’s always night and snow is always threatening to fall. Ice covers everything and the light from the streetlamps looks like solid shafts of lemon-colored ice. It’s strange how our memories romanticize things all on their own.

My first Joy Division record was a gift from my girlfriend. It was a used copy of *Unknown Pleasures* purchased at the neighborhood indie shop. I listened to it once then set it aside where it remained pretty much ignored for a year or more.

We broke up. Of course we broke up. I’m an impossible person on even my best days. Living with me was not easy. I was mixed up anyway. Not sure who I was, or what I wanted out of life. Not sure what I wanted from the person sharing that life and almost entirely incapable of giving that person what they needed from me. So we broke up.

Re-enter Joy Division.

I was miserable and broke and not writing anything good. I was listening to Nico’s *The Marble Index* a lot...and enjoying it. That record made sense to me in much the same way sticking sharp little slivers of wood under my fingernails made sense. If you can’t find a way to make yourself feel good, then do things that make you feel even worse and just call it *feeling good*.

But you can only listen to Nico records for so long. Eventually you need to hear music with more light in it. So I picked up *Unknown Pleasures* and it stayed in my CD player for weeks.

Joy Division’s music may be a world where the sun is in perpetual eclipse, but Nico’s is a world where there was never even a sun to begin with and therefore in the land of Nico there is nothing even to hope for, the sun can never return. Joy Division knew darkness, but it also understood somewhere there is light.

A necessary lesson for a broken heart.

And with this latest installment in the **Under Review** series fans can look forward to an education in all things Joy Division. Coupled with Deborah Curtis’s excellent memoir of the late Ian Curtis, our hero of the long midnight, it’s everything a neophyte Joy Division fan needs to know.

The letterboxed 1.78 X 1 picture and Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo sound are

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fine, as are the usual tough quiz and other little bits the series is known for. In all, this is one of the stronger installments in this strong series.

- Kristofer Collins

Kristofer Collins is an editor at The New Yorker and owner of Desolation Row CDs in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. You can contact him at:

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