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# Leigh Paatsch

reviews the latest releases



**Despair:** Joy Division member Stephen Morris.

## Joy Division (M)

**Director:** Grant Gee  
(*Radiohead: Meeting People is Easy*)

**Starring:** Bernard Sumner, Peter Hook, Stephen Morris, Tony Wilson, Peter Saville

**Rating:** ★★★

*New vision for an old sound*

LATE last year, we had *Control*, a beguiling and revealing biopic of the late British singer Ian Curtis.

Now there is *Joy Division*, a straightforward documentary profile of the band with which Curtis made his name before taking his own short life in 1980.

Owing to the dearth of footage of the Manchester four-piece in action, this production is compelled to be more visually sussed than most music docos.

Audio clips of key recordings and live performances are represented on screen with waveform graphics.

This device proves most effective in getting viewers to listen intently to the metronomic

yet all-too-human despair of the Joy Division sound.

A rolling series of then-and-now photographs of Manchester locations crucial to the story (subtitled as *Things That Are Not There*) proves the widely held theory that the band was a product of a time and place where hope just wasn't an option.

However, going on the surprisingly chipper recollections of Curtis's surviving fellow personnel, it was not all darkness and misery in the Joy Division camp. Far from it, in fact.

The quartet liked a drink and joke as much as any random group of males in their early 20s.

If the documentary does have one failing, it's that the slick sequencing of facts and quotes sometimes struggles to quantify the imposing reputation accorded Joy Division's slender body of work — two albums, a few singles and compilation tracks. As a result, those unfamiliar with the band (or who have not seen *Control*) may be left wondering what all the fuss is about.

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