

Control and Joy Division

Anton Corbijn probably doesn't need any extended presentation. The film "Control" that came in 2008 is directed by him and based on Deborah Curtis' book "Touching From a Distance". Having seen the film that surprises me. The title can allude to the song "She's lost Control" but also to the book but apart from that there does not seem to be very much of the book in the film. The book may be important to the film by adding biographical facts about Ian Curtis but if so, fortunately, the script for the film keeps a very good balance which I would say is a drawback in the book. One of the great benefits of the book, however, would be the extensive amount of lyrics; both Warsaw, Joy Division and unpublished material.

The film is in black and white which I suppose is not non-typical for Corbijn. The plot focuses more on Ian Curtis and not so much on the band but there's quite a few live performances in the film, overall good ones with the possible exceptions of the first as Warsaw. Being a film on a person with a great stature in modern music the soundtrack seems obviously important. Artists in the film would be Bowie, The Sex Pistols, the velvets, Roxy and more. That all makes perfect sense. I somehow expected to hear a cut with The Doors but there didn't seem to be any.

Sam Riley, doing the part as Ian Curtis, is obviously very well suited for the part which would also be the case with Samantha Morton, although not a newcomer. Ian Curtis' struggle with epilepsia is well noted as is

his relationship with his wife and to some extent the girlfriend. The film tends to take a realistic stand from an artistic point of view and that, I feel, is favourable. The Joy Division tracks played in the film makes perfect sense. The end of the film is very predictable (why wouldn't it be? Who would like to see him flying off with Alice in Wonderland) and the song "Atmosphere" comes on with a very precise timing adding to the suggestive end. The DVD includes a music video with that song which I suppose is new work by Corbijn and in my opinion excellent.

The overall impression of the film is good but I wouldn't rate it as high as some tend to do, despite my background as a fan of the band.

Joy Division only released two full length records; "Unknown Pleasures" (1979) and "Closer" (1980) both of which earned them a prominent position in modern music. Ian Curtis' lyrics tend to be very original but sometimes obscure with no obvious references. This may add to their grandeur these days since a quite common trend, which I don't tend to appreciate myself, is to praise originality and disrespect other things. This does not, of course, mean that originality is wrong but it would be pretty strange if an artist went through life being totally unaware of what was going on in his or her territory.

Fredrik Zander, October 2009. www.zanderette.com