

## Joy Division bows out with fire in its heart

by Gisele Marie Baxter

Joy Division was not a flashy band with a calculated game plan for success. The four young men never played to the screaming multitudes; they received no nationally televised awards. They never came to North America because on May 18, 1980, a few days before they were to make that step, lead singer/songwriter Ian Curtis hanged himself at his home in Macclesfield, England.

The band will not continue; its remaining members have reformed as New Order. This is in recognition that Joy Division was something unique: an incredibly unified band with each man making his own special contribution to the whole. Their last album, **Closer**, is at

and the future prospects dark. Maybe, just **maybe**, he could see the light at the end of the tunnel, but he could also see all the obstacles.

This is the crisis I knew had to come

Destroying the balance I'd kept

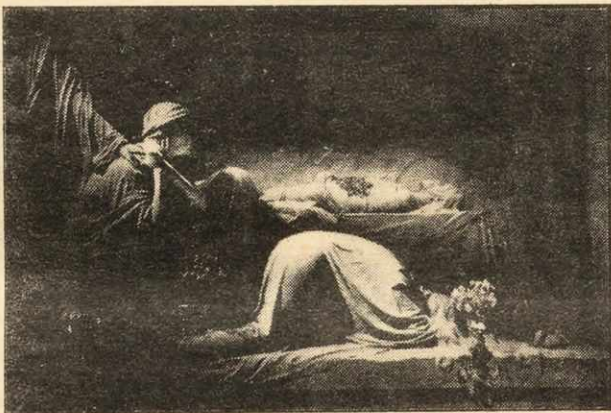
Doubting and circling and turning around

Wondering what will come next

("Passover")

The musical arrangements on this record are consistently fascinating: "Colony", an intense rocker which is both an incantation and a requiem, features menacing guitars over an excellent percussion-and-bass line, while the machine-gun-sharp drumming on "Heart and Soul"

CLOSER



last available domestically, and is an amazing collection of music, very close indeed to the essential fire at the heart.

It is far from trivial to call this rock music, for Joy Division saw great possibilities in rock and delved into them fearlessly. The result is dark yet melodic; forceful yet entrancing. This music has hints of traditional pop and of technorock, yet transcends all of its influences. Dancing to Joy Division is a singular experience.

Ian Curtis sang his lyrics in a strong, but not forceful, voice, which was deep with just enough of a lilt to make it painfully human. The lyrics capture the bleak landscape of the modern world, in which the old sources of value seem hollow

is brilliantly countered with ethereal synthesizer lines.

"The Eternal" is particularly effective; its crystal-pure, simple piano line raises it above its dirge-like qualities. Curtis's imagery is utterly lovely, conveying suppressed rage and bruised romanticism: "Cry like a child though these years make me older/Like children my time is so wastefully spent."

I don't think that Ian Curtis' twenty-three years were entirely wasted, and we cannot judge him for having taken his own life. He was a brilliant, disturbed person, and in his images of doubt and self-division there was insight. To borrow from William Butler Yeats, Curtis and Joy Division created with their music a terrible beauty.



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