



So This is Permanence: Joy Division Lyrics and Notebooks

Ian Curtis , Jon Savage (Editor) , Deborah Curtis (Introduction)

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So This Is Permanence presents the intensely personal writings of one of the most enigmatic and influential songwriters and performers of the late twentieth century, Joy Division's Ian Curtis.

The fact of the band's relatively few releases belies the power and enduring fascination its music holds, especially in light of Curtis's tragic suicide in 1980 on the eve of the band's first American tour.

Reproduced in this beautiful clothbound volume are Curtis's never-before-seen handwritten lyrics, accompanied by earlier drafts and previously unpublished pages from his notebooks that shed fascinating light on his writing and creative process.

Also included are an insightful and moving foreword by Curtis's widow Deborah, a substantial introduction by writer Jon Savage, and an appendix featuring books from Curtis's library and a selection of fanzine interviews, letters, and other ephemera from his estate.

So This is Permanence: Joy Division Lyrics and Notebooks Details

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Ryan says

My first “punk” girlfriend in high school was on the speech team. For one of her competitions she decided to recite lyrics as poetry, and chose songs from a favorite album of ours at the time, The Lightning Seeds’ 1990 debut “CloudeckooLand.” I liked that album, and still do, but I don’t recall poring over Ian Broudie’s lyrics the way I did of the bands who really spoke to me: The Clash, The Cure, Embrace, Fugazi, Lungfish, Midnight Oil, Minor Threat, Pink Floyd, R.E.M., Rites of Spring, The Smiths, Violent Femmes, and, of course, Joy Division.

Like so many teenagers, whether they have good reason or not (and, to be honest, I did not), I was moody and depressive. It wasn’t a full-time occupation, but I spent plenty of time sitting in my darkened bedroom listening to “Disintegration” or “The Wall” over and over again. And I wrote poetry — sad-sack, woe-is-me, life-is-shit poetry. Somewhere some high school flame has one or more of these fire starters sitting in a long-forgotten box in the attic or basement. May they never surface.

At university things didn’t get any better, at least not until some point during the back half of my sophomore year when I simply snapped out of the depressive fog I’d been living in. It’s doubtful anyone besides me had any idea, and since it wasn’t all-consuming it didn’t interfere with my social life, which primarily involved traveling to hardcore shows — in Indianapolis, Louisville, Dayton, Columbus, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati — with friends almost every weekend. My depressive moods weren’t an affectation, but they were self-imposed. And I still wrote poetry, though mainly for myself this time. I worked at it, eventually took an introductory creative writing class, and submitted to and got published by both undergraduate literary journals. I passed my portfolio review and was invited to enroll in the 300- and 400-level poetry-writing courses, both taught by Pulitzer Prize-winning poets, including Yusef Komunyakaa. But the pressure was too much for me — I’d never intended to become a writer — and I dropped both classes before the first poem was workshopped. I never wrote poetry again.

So, I was a disaffected Midwest youth — vegan, straight edge, radically liberal — pouring my energy into music (I was eventually a drummer in two bands) and poetry. If not inevitable, it was only natural that I would gravitate towards Joy Division. Their music was a perfect combination of the two. With them, as with any of the aforementioned bands (or rock music in general), the music and the message were one. I didn’t sit in my dorm room decoding lyrics without the album playing simultaneously. They were lyrics, not poetry, and the words needed the music as much as the music needed the words.

All of which brings me to “So This is Permanence: Joy Division Lyrics and Notebooks.” As a Joy Division release, it is exactly what one would expect: beautifully designed, bound in gray cloth and printed in white ink, an homage to their posthumous album “Still.” It’s a luscious look behind the curtain of a musician who took his craft as a writer, and his role as a singer, incredibly seriously. Though his words are presented without music, they never come across as poetry. That’s partly because, I think, it’s impossible to read the words without hearing the atmospheric austerity or driving motorik laid down by Barney, Hooky, and Stephen. But it’s also because, by having the scans from Ian Curtis’s notebooks, you can see — and feel — the urgency of his writing, and can imagine him pacing in his Macclesfield flat searching for the right word, or weaving disparate phrases together to fit a song taking shape during rehearsals. An appendix of fragments, early drafts, and lyrics for songs never composed, offers even more insight into Curtis’s process. A second appendix — a hodgepodge of fanzines, show bills, fan letters, and the covers of books from which Curtis drew inspiration — rounds out a book that is both lovely and lovingly assembled.

I'm no longer a teenager moping in darkened rooms. I've outgrown countless bands since those days. Joy Division will never be one of them, and "So This is Permanence" reminds us — often painfully so — of just how vulnerable and ageless Ian Curtis's lyrics are, and just how vital and timeless the music is. It turns the obligatory question "What if?" into a savage punch to the gut. This book is an essential read for fans of Joy Division, but it's also for anyone who ever wrote anything in an attempt to understand his place in the world. Our abilities may not be as great, but, in the attempt, we share something just as powerful.

Simon Sweetman says

Beautifully compiled, all the lyrics, notebook selections, journals, diaries, rough drafts, letters...it's all a bit creepy really to sift through and obsess over but the best of the work stands up and this is thoughtfully compiled with a strong intro by Jon Savage.

Adam Carrington says

An astonishing document of Ian Curtis' professional life, featuring his hand-written notes and lyrics; letters he kept from fans; artwork he selected; books he was reading; a foreword from the press; a foreword from his wife. It's all packaged in this ghost-grey monolith of a hardback.

I'm not even a big Joy Division fan, I don't find Curtis' lyrics all that compelling, but he was only 23 when he died. This was a very intense young man and this is a portrait of such a personality. A suicide before his prime, and god, these are like the pieces that are left: memories, notes, and journalistic references. Things that have survived the 40 years since.

It seems cliché to say that this collection is haunting - but there is no adjective more accurate.

Neph says

"His lyrics tell much more about him than a conversation with him ever could," writes Deborah Curtis of her late husband Ian in this book's foreword. Sourced by the Joy Division frontman's notebooks, the clothbound hardcover spans the British quartet's brief career, reproducing handwritten and previously unseen song drafts spanning 1977 until the singer's suicide in 1980 at 23. Two appendices expand upon *Touching From a Distance* (1995) and box set *Heart and Soul* (1997), one section containing unreleased works, while appendix two reprints handbills, fanzine pages, and fan mail – a delight for Joy Division devotees. Eerie intimacy ensues in Curtis' scratch-outs and amendments, swapping titles or modifying phrasing in hit "Love Will Tear Us Apart," among others. Like Kurt Cobain's posthumous *Journals* (2002), *Permanence* offers rare personal insight on an artist otherwise basked in mystique. His poetic brilliance, ominous and beautiful, remains startling even when stripped of its aural component and regardless of a familiarity with the group's chilling post-punk.

vi macdonald says

If I'd read this when I was 14 this would've got a 5.

Ian Curtis and Joy Division meant a lot to me then -- still does, really, I guess. But here's the thing: I'm not 14 anymore. And as such, this doesn't read like the hallowed scripture it would have at that age. It's good, that's for sure - but a lot of my love for these words came from the music that accompanied them, and reading it more objectively now, it just doesn't quite hit on it's own.

Still good stuff though, would never want to try and detract from the legacy of Mr. Curtis.

Jim says

A very nice hard bound book on quality paper. I find reading the words scratched out as interesting as the words left into his journals.

James says

'So This is Permanence' is a collection of handwritten song lyrics (various versions) and excerpts from notebooks by the enigmatic, charismatic, hugely influential and immensely gifted Ian Curtis of Joy Division. Curtis suffered from both depression and epilepsy, and tragically (as I am sure readers of this collection will be well aware) took his own life in 1980 at the shockingly young age of 23.

The book contains a foreword by Ian's widow Deborah Curtis (author of 'Touching from a Distance') as well as an introduction by Jon Savage (social commentator and author of the excellent 'England's Dreaming'). Whilst Deborah Curtis focusses on what little knowledge she has of Ian's song lyrics and song writing process; Savage concentrates on the literary influences that Curtis was exposed to and which undoubtedly left an imprint on at least some of his lyrics.

It is fascinating to read Curtis' song lyrics in their original hand written versions with visible deletions, corrections, changes and additions – it gives us at least a little insight into the mind of Ian Curtis and the process of his song writing. Clear also is the development and progression in Curtis' song writing abilities over the short course of time they were written (1977-80).

Also included in the book as an appendix are artwork, gig posters, book covers, fan letters and other ephemera - kept by Curtis along with his hand written lyrics, prose and other writings, reportedly in various plastic bags.

As with all artists (and there are many) taken away from us at a very young age and in their creative prime, there are three things which must always be born in mind, namely:

- Primarily the tragic loss to the deceased's immediate family and friends
- The waste of a huge and unfulfilled talent, the loss and absence of works unfulfilled
- The media amplification, deification and santification of a lost artist as something far greater than they ever were, or ever could be

However, in the case of Ian Curtis – the last point is a moot one; the overwhelming majority of everything said and written about Curtis since his death has (for the most part) not been media fuelled ghoulish sanctification or hyperbole. Ian Curtis really was as gifted and talented a writer and performer as is written.

The lyrics reproduced here, for the most part, do stand alone as pieces of poetry (all the best song lyrics do).

However, anyone familiar with the music of Joy Division, as I am (and was lucky enough to have seen them perform live in 1980) may struggle to read the lyrics without internally hearing the wonderful music of Joy Division at the same time – not that this detracts.

For anyone who appreciates the dark, brooding and intense music of Joy Division and the lyrics of Ian Curtis, this is the definitive, must have publication, well edited, beautifully presented – it forms an important part of the powerful, affecting and hugely influential legacy that Ian Curtis left us.

Peter Korsman says

The book feels a bit 'blown up' in a way that it could have been smaller and more compact, since Joy division only published 45 songs. Still it's a great monument for Curtis' singular lyrics, that very much deserve this concentration of attention and detail.

Aaron Peterson says

Ian wrote a prolific amount of material within the span of his short life, and more specifically within the span of an even shorter career. The early versions and notes included within this volume, provide insight into the creative process of a life that was ended all too quickly and abruptly.

Katey Lovell says

I loved this. So interesting to look at Ian's writing process critically, seeing how his lyrics developed. I also loved the letters received from fans that were included - and it seems he valued contact with fans as they refer to him replying and helping them with lyrics and memorabilia. This book made me want to start writing poetry again for the first time in years.

Austin Gaines says

If you dig joy division lyrics then this is probably the best way to read them. Nice big hard bound book with occasional photos of his illegible hand written lyrics.

Karl says

The book "So This is Permanence: Joy Division Lyrics and Notebooks" provides, just as the title implies,

plus much more. If you were a fan of Joy Division or not, it must be admitted that the band had a major impact on music at the time. I myself was a great fan of the band, so this book is an incredible treat to own.

Although this particular book is nothing near a biography of Ian Curtis or the band, there is a brief history of Ian in the forward written by his widowed wife Deborah, also a bit of band history in the introduction by Jon Savage.

For those who don't know the story of Ian, he was the lyricist, songwriter and front man of the band Joy Division. He suffered from seizures which grew considerably worse as the bands fame increased. Curtis was born in 1956 and committed suicide on 18 May 1980. His wife has written a biography of his life, which was published 1995 titled "Touching from a Distance: Ian Curtis and Joy Division".

Both the complete albums of Joy Division, plus more can be found on Youtube.

However, this marvelous book mainly deals with his writings and influences. The first hundred pages or so shows photocopies of the lyrics to most of the songs he wrote for Joy Division, then they are mirrored by printed lyrics of how the songs were sung in their recorded capacity.

The next section contains alternative lyrics, some unrecorded songs, and a bit of prose. And the final section of the book contains artwork, photo's of some of the books in Ian's library that were important to him and also some fan letters to him.

Some of the most famous songs of the band include "Love Will Tear Us Apart" , "She's Lost Control", "Transmission" , and "Dead Souls".

This is a must have for any fan.

I want to thank Thomas Strömquist for making me aware of this book.

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Michael says

Expensive but, on reflection, fascinating.

Patrick says

Fantastic read though I wish they'd transcribed his notes/prose/poetry into text as opposed to just slapping the journal screens in and calling it a day.

James says

Love live Ian!
