

Witter Gutter Trash

A psychotic candyland full of glam glitz, trashy pop, new wave, post-everything, retrofuturisms and distorted beauty.

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Depeche Mode
Playing the Angel
Mute/Reprise
Street: 10.18

Depeche Mode = Synth Kings - Vicious Bite + Revival of Misery & Discontent

Playing the Angel is the best album Depeche Mode has recorded since **Alan Wilder's** departure following the *Songs of Faith & Devotion* tour. While that might not seem an impossible task considering the here-and-there quality of *Ultra* and *Exciter*, it does silence doubts that the group was lost to mid-age mediocrity. From the opening track "A Pain I'm Used To" to the fifth track and lead single, "Precious," the album is solid. *Playing the Angel* is an updated twist on the *Some Great Reward* sound with a more dominant role for guitar (which has slowly become more and more prevalent since *Music for the Masses*). From there, things become less interesting as the ballads (minus that sort of grandeur and delicacy that they once had) dominate through to the end with the sharp turning of "Lilian" being the only major exception. The three songs written by **Dave Gahan** are lightweight, despite the strength of his recent solo release. I do highly recommend the limited edition version that contains a 5.1 surround mix of the album (boosts even the more meandering songs), the fantastic video for "Precious," a documentary, and a moody reworking of *Violator's* "Clean." There is also a re-recorded version of "Waiting for the Night" available on-line that is quite lovely. All in all, a rather good release from a band that once spilled out untouchable classics (**E Center: 11.12**).

Devo
Live 1980 (CD/DVD Dual Disc)
MVD
Street: 08.23

Devo = Ed Wood + Michael Moore

When a group of politically charged nerds in bad B-movie costumes take to the stage playing no-wave pop with **Kraftwerk** electronics thrown in for bad dance-floor antics, a disaster can't be far behind. Devo might be hard to pin down (not exactly men but definitely the anti-KISS), but they are certainly more than the plastic hats and contamination-spacesuit imagery that they've become notorious for. At the heart of it, Devo is a politically charged pop/punk act. If "Freedom of Choice" has been their mega-hit, you still might not confuse them with the **Dead Kennedys**, but you wouldn't lump them in with a lot of the senseless pop music that the 80s offered. The live show on this disc catches the group at the pinnacle of their artistic and commercial success and includes a fine balance of the early guitar-driven tracks as well as the analogue synth that flavored their later releases. It is also striking, as the intro suggests, that the political statements they made then are seemingly more relevant now (that is, if you are looking for a message, which

might be asking a bit much). Yes, the footage constantly reminds you it was shot in the 80s; the effects, film quality and even the stage show are dated but the sound is brilliant. Aesthetically, as a document, it might not equal the **Talking Heads' Stop Making Sense** but is equally important. Between the Heads and Devo, the old standard of lip-synched T.V. appearances are about to become taboo and a crutch for lesser bands who couldn't pull it off outside the studio. Believe me, you will like Devo a whole lot more than you think you do. Admit it; you've always been a spud.

The Mission UK
Lighting the Candles
SPV

Street: 10.25

The Mission UK = Led Zeppelin + T. Rex + David Bowie + Mormon upbringing

While the **Sisters of Mercy's** inactivity continues to steal press, **Wayne Hussey**, who spent his days in the Sisters as well as a brief stint in **Dead or Alive**, has been prolific through varied line-ups and record labels. *Lighting the Candles* is a celebration of the band's legacy and a reminder that goth isn't just about the drum machine and thundering bass lines. Old video clips, acoustic performances, a collection of tracks from various shows, as well as a full concert from last year's **Brethren** tour - while yet another live CD from the band might seem superfluous, considering it wasn't that long ago that *Ever After Live* was released, the track listing has very few overlapping tracks, including new material pulled from their celebrated *AurA* release. Besides Hussey, the entire band lineup has changed. Such changes are bittersweet, not because those who have replaced the empty roles as band members went one way or another, but because there is something about an original lineup, particularly when that lineup was together for the bulk of the band's success. After watching the old promo videos from the 80s when the band was playing to massive crowds, the recent concert footage seems tame. Lost is the unbalanced hysteria that passed between the crowds and the band. Nonetheless, the journey, which covers the entire history of Hussey's wanderings since leaving the Sisters, is an enjoyable one. The majority of the standards are covered from "Butterfly On A Wheel" to "Wasteland" with the occasional album track (the brilliant "Daddy's Going To Heaven Now" and "Hymn (For America)" both pop up in fine fashion) thrown in for the faithfully devoted. If there is any true criticism, beyond the uncontrollable lineup changes, it is that because the concert was originally recorded for television (the swaying out of the camera to catch the neon sign that reads "Rockpalast" won't let you forget it) in a rather intimate venue with a limited number of cameras the visuals leave you feeling a bit claustrophobic. The director's bag of tricks runs out long before the set ends, and having been fortunate enough to witness the band live, I



can't help but feel like the band deserved static representation. A second DVD is with acoustic along with a and discography, with commentary by Wayne. I just wish it was **Adams, Hinkler and Brown**, or even **Cousin and Thwaite**, because I'm nostalgic. Absolutely essential.

Richard Hawley
Coles Corner
Mute

Street: 09.06

Richard Hawley = Elvis + Sinatra @ Sun Studios

Having served his time in the **Longpigs** and as one of **Pulp's** live guitarists, Hawley returns with his third solo release, which just happens to be his finest yet. Caught somewhere between retro-chic and Las Vegas at 4 A.M. after you've lost everything, *Coles Corner* sighs along with a sincerity that **Chris Isaak** could only dream of. The sparse reverb of the guitar and the occasional use of orchestral arrangements hang on you, but it is the drawn-out vocal that makes the songs feel immense and carry that sort of wistful romanticism found in **Morricone's** best cinematic scores. Don't be surprised if **David Lynch** falls in love and has him co-team with **Badalamenti** for his next film. Perfect listening for the brokenhearted and bewildered.

Program the Dead
Program the Dead
Low Altitude

Street: 10.25

Program the Dead = Head Automatica - Brit-pop + a drop of The Used + 1" of Jimmy Eat World

This is one of those cases where the band I saw live a few days past doesn't seem to be the same group who recorded the album credited to them. Live, **Program the Dead** are bombastic, raw and swing around the **Black Crowes**, with screaming winning out over singing. They swagger, straight out tell you they're the best band you've never seen before, taunt you, drink the house dry, ask you to come around after the show if you're attractive, and do it again the next night. On plastic, they sound far more produced and packaged for a sensitive pop market that is generally unthreatening. While you could say "the album band" is more listenable, they are also more forgettable. This is completely opposite of their live performance, which sticks with you even if you're indifferent to the music. **STYL**