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Depeche Mode: The Dark Progression

Score: **89%**
 Rating: **Not Rated**
 Publisher: **MVD Entertainment Group**
 Region: **1**
 Media: **DVD/1**
 Running Time: **97 Mins.**
 Genre: **Documentary/Musical/Biographical**
 Audio: **Stereo Sound**
 Subtitles: **English**

Features:

Playing for the Masses Featurette
 Contributor Biographies

Talking about **Depeche Mode** from the perspective of a 30-something in 2009, it is hard not to be overly effusive or convey too much bias. After all, this was the music of my teenage years, the soundtrack of that tumultuous period between youth and adulthood. Many perspectives are brought to the table during this documentary, mostly from within the industry. It's great for fans, but it doesn't go far enough in conveying the raw emotion that was both channeled and created by the band's output in the '80s. The closest moment is Gary Numan's reaction to the *Violator* album, when he appears to be close to tears, speaking on film about the impact it made on him.

There's no need to treat **Depeche Mode** like a band of yesteryear, since they are still going strong. Even though **The Dark Progression** pays greatest tribute to a few albums from the '80s, it covers enough material to give a sense of how the band reached the super-stardom it still enjoys. It also captures **Depeche Mode** going through major stylistic changes, adding layer after layer on top of the simple, pop-kitsch that put them on the scene with their first album, *Speak and Spell*. Anyone skeptical about the impact of **Depeche Mode** as a pop-music force need only look at a song like "Just Can't Get Enough" that is still getting radio play decades later...


The "darkness" referenced in the title of this documentary really comes from the albums released in the latter half of the '80s, like *Some Great Reward*, *Black Celebration*, and *Music For The Masses*. If these films are the "dark progression," the documentary makes *Violator* (released in 1990) out to be the capstone album. The filmmakers appear to be suggesting that *Violator* was a definitive release for the band, an album with a strong concept, internal cohesion, and universal acclaim. Whether you happen to agree, the documentary does a nice job of showcasing each major release from the '80s through interviews with major industry peers like Thomas Dolby, Andy McCluskey of OMD, and behind-the-scenes workers like the engineers involved with these albums. Snippets from a few band members are mostly icing on the cake, since the focus here is on a calm, extended study of **Depeche Mode** during the rise and peak of their early career.

Core fans will recognize in **Depeche Mode: The Dark Progression** more than a few insights on the band that can be gleaned from independent research, but everything is made much more compelling here through great interviews. The production of the documentary is outstanding, and the only downer is that there aren't more complete videos or concert footage, either in the documentary or included on the extras. Don't watch this to get the definitive story behind **Depeche Mode**, but you won't find a better way to take a deep dive into their first 10 years.

-Fridtjof, GameVortex Communications AKA Matt Paddock

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