

DVD Review: Depeche Mode - The Dark Progression

Posted by fitz in [Documentary](#), [Music](#) on Jun 29

Welcome back!

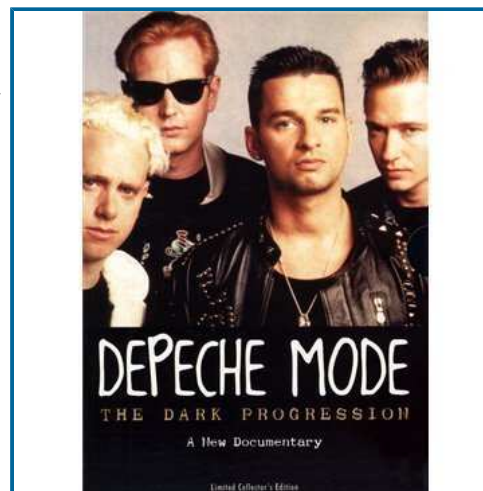
Hi all...

When I went to college in the late 1980s, I was introduced to the music [Depeche Mode](#) (DM). There was a guy on my dorm floor who listened to DM 24-7 at an earth-shaking volume. I didn't immediately take to their music. But after a couple of years, [Violator](#) was released and somehow the world changed. *Violator* connected with some dark part of my being I didn't really know I had up to that point.

Violator was the beginning of my love for DM. Though the media went crazy for "Personal Jesus," I was drawn to "Enjoy the Silence," "Policy of Truth," and "Clean". From then on, when a new DM album was released, I'd pick it up after a couple of months and digest it...

[Songs of Faith and Devotion](#) and *Ultra* also rang true with me with songs such as "Walking in My Shoes" and "Home". *Exciter* didn't do much for me and I think I purchased one track from [Playing the Angel](#), so my love for new DM music faded a bit early in this decade. However, the recent release of *Sounds of the Universe* has me flying high again with songs like "In Chains," "Wrong," and "Peace."

Suffice it to say, I'm a DM fan. Unfortunately, my knowledge of the band's history was nonexistent. I knew they'd been around for a while before *Violator*, but I knew little beyond that. So *Depeche Mode - The Dark Progression* was a gift from the heavens.



When I heard about the documentary, I knew I had to watch. And I now understand so much more about the genesis of the group and the ecosystem which spawned such groups as OMD, The Cars, Tears for Fears, and others. Though the band didn't directly contribute any interviews to this documentary, it included pictures, bits of earlier interviews and footage from concerts back to [Music for the Masses](#) when they started their rise to fame and fortune.

What's interesting about the documentary itself was the interviews with other people from the era that created DM. People like [Gary Numan](#) (The Cars), Thomas Dolby, and Andy McCluskey (OMD) who were part of the electronic and New Wave movement of the '80s and '90s had many things to say about how fickle American audiences were at the time and how grateful they were to ride on DM's coattails as they shot to stardom.

The documentary also includes interviews of some of the producers of DM records such as Gareth Jones, Dave Bascombe, Phil Legg, and Steve Lyon. Each saw different phases of DM's career as they worked on developing an identity and changed over the years.

The interviews, pictures, and footage from DM's early days on are mixed beautifully to provide a structure and timeline by which you can see and hear the progression from dance music to the socially questioning tracks later in their careers.

From my perspective, it was informative to see DM go from tracks like "Just Can't Get Enough" to "People are People," "Strangelove," "Personal Jesus," and beyond. What a transformation from those early days with Vince Clarke to [Alan Wilder's](#) keyboard influences and the post-Wilder era. If you listen to the Clarke-era of DM and then listen to Yaz or Erasure, it's very easy to hear what he contributed to those early days. But once Wilder was on board, I think a bit of the darkness that DM is known for became more prevalent and has continued.

In addition to the main documentary, there is an extra called "Playing for the Masses" that includes some additional bits of the interviews strung together. Thomas Dolby and Andy McCluskey chat about the DM concert at Rose Bowl Stadium for the *Music for the Masses* tour.

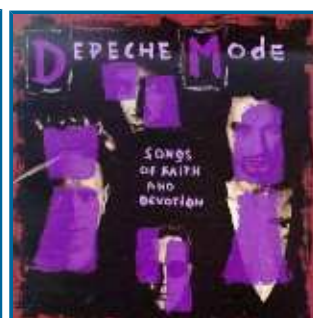
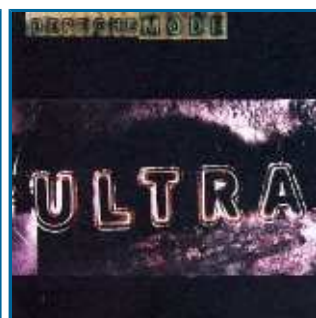
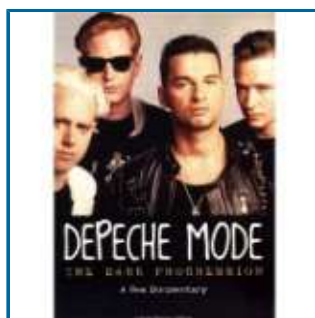
My only complaint with the DVD is that it doesn't include any new interview material from current band members Dave Gahan, [Martin Gore](#), [Andrew Fletcher](#), or ex-band members Vince Clarke or Alan Wilder. That would have turned this from a good documentary to a great one.

If you don't know much about DM's early days, *Depeche Mode - The Dark Progression* is a wonderful way to get your feet wet and see how DM rose over the last 30 years to become the iconic band they are today. Be sure to check it out when it is released on June 16, 2009!

(For another view of this documentary, be sure to check out Luigi Bastardo's article [here](#).)

-Fitz

p.s. Click below to pick up the documentary and other Depeche Mode albums at Amazon:



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