



ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN

Dancing Horses; Live at Shepherds Bush Empire (dvd)
(Secret/MVDvisual)

Unlike most modern reunions of halcyon legends, Liverpool's Bunnymen have regrettably not been the astonishing greats they were on stage from 1980-1988. One badly misses the sadly deceased PETE DE FREITAS's neck-snapping drum destruction and the staccato, hefty basslines of the sadly fallen-out LES PATTINSON. As well, singer IAN MCCULLOCH should never have given up playing rhythm guitar: statuesque, and hiding behind shades and overcoat, big Mac appears sedate, lazy, and bored, whereas he once radiated mystery and sexuality. He's gone from the star who might steal your girlfriend to the guy who can't be bothered.

Nevertheless, *Dancing* reminds they are still well worth seeing. Filmed in London, November 1, 2005, of these 19 songs, 14 are oldies, which is crucial. (And four of the five others are from their only good comeback LP, 2005's *Siberia*.) And though they avoid their three '80s live zenith epics, the once frightening "Over the Wall" and the twin ten-minute extended punishments of "Crocodiles" and "Do it Clean" (all require De Freitas!), this vintage material is immediately reanimated by WILL SERGEANT's still-dazzling array of lead guitar sounds. Meanwhile, McCulloch's distinctive pipes (albeit with a slight rasp these days) sound great on 1980 *Crocodiles*' classics "Going Up," "All That Jazz," "Rescue," and "Villiers Terrace," or more complicated stompers like "Show of Strength" and "The Cutter." Like 2002's *Live in Liverpool* import DVD, their four contemporary bandmates can't collectively match the old rhythm section's dynamism, but all acquit themselves forcibly, nonetheless.

So if we'd trade *Dancing* for more vintage '80s footage a la *Shine So Hard*, the retrofitted dog still barks. (mvdvisual.com)

- Jack Rabid