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Movie/DVD Review

Echo & The Bunnymen

Dancing Horses

By Tim Newby

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Echo & The Bunnymen rose to prominence at the end of the punk era, leaving a lasting impact on the New Wave movement that followed. But they always seemed a step ahead of other bands from that time because Echo and the Bunnymen were never really punk enough and always had more soul than other New Wave bands as they liberally dipped a toe into the pool of classic British blues bands. That has always been their secret, and what allows them, unlike so many of their fellow New Wave brethren, to still be a viable band whose past catalog never sounds dated.

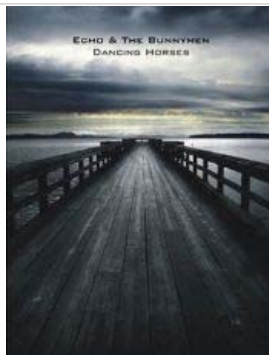
Dancing Horses features a complete show, filmed at the historic Shepherds Bush Empire in London England, of the reformed Bunnymen, with only Ian McCulloch and Will Sergeant still around from the original line-up that was formed in 1978 with a drum machine. The band got back together in 1997, after breaking up for almost a decade, and since then have been recording and touring steadily.

The new DVD captures the band in all their moody glory. With a darkened stage to set the mood, and simple lighting that highlights the smoke that slowly drifts across it, *Dancing Horses* is filmed with subtle unobtrusive shots of the band at work that eschews quick cuts and fancy camera work that instead allows the band and their songs to be showcased. The nineteen-song set runs the gamut from longtime favorites ("Lips Like Sugar", "The Cutter") to old rarities ("Rescue", "The Disease") to brand new songs off of their most recent album ("Stormy Weather", "Scissors in the Sand", "Of a Life") that are all delivered with a soulful intensity that belies their post-punk roots. The set draws equally from all parts of their long career. Sergeant explains the band's theory in putting together a complete show like this, "I am a music fan and I go see lots of shows, and if I go see a show and the band plays all the new album and nothing else I get a bit cheesed off. So we try and fit in new songs and play them as if they have been around for years."

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