

The Cure answers fans' wishes with a more well-rounded album

Reviews



"Wish"
The Cure
Elektra/Fiction Records

Even casual fans of those gloom-rock titans The Cure will find the newest album pretty hard to resist.

Those who follow the band's chronology remember that it started out as a group of strutting little punks making edgy pop tunes about eternally moody subjects. Ringleader Robert Smith, in particular, became a sort of patron saint for all those black-clad poetic types with chips on their shoulders and a fetish for being miserable.

"Wish," the band's latest release, comes as a bit more sunny venture than The Cure's last one — 1989's swirling, dense, thunderstorm of an

album, "Disintegration." Smith followed that disc up with a bunch of cheesy dance remixes of his mojiest tunes ("Mixed Up") and got whatever frivolity was left out of his system. Sort of.

On "Wish," the group balances its copyright disillusionment with its more poppy, tongue-in-cheek side that got it on the alt-rock map in the first place. Be alerted if you are a fan: The successful combination may well give The Cure its best album yet.

Starting things off with the double shot of "Open" and "High," we find the band in trademark gloominess but chugging down the track a bit to a more peppy rhythm section. Drummer Boris Williams is much more light on his sticks this time out, and consequently gives the up-tempo tracks added heft.

Then things take an effectively drastic turn with "Apart," a brooding fable straight out of the sessions for "Disintegration." You can almost hear the rainstorm rush of tears erupting out of the song's two protagonists over lines like, "She just drops her pearl-black eyes/And prays to hear

him say.../I love you/But he tells no more lies." Bring a hankie to the wake.

Thankfully, the mood picks up with potential single material like "Friday I'm In Love," a song with very silly lyrics but an infectious melody, and "Wendy Time," a pouting strut of a song that puts Smith's wounded puppy voice back in its original nasal growl.

"Wish" cannot really be swallowed whole at one sitting, like The Cure's last two albums, because the tracks are not too similar in any particular sound. That's a good thing. The Cure often has stood to become a parody of itself if it didn't lighten up a bit. The band's saving grace comes in the form of its musical talent and the real connection it makes with its legions of fans.

It's a jumbled affair this time out, but it still sounds much like the old Cure, or the new Cure, or whichever. The only classification for "Wish" is under the heading "Cure Album."

And that's a fairly great place to be.

— Paul Winner

Musicians

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are more subtle."

"I think you gain confidence playing solos on the spot," Doering said. Performing with big bands at dances and conventions also improves sight reading, Doering said, since they never rehearse with the band before they play.

Doering said that though he had performed with many bands and jazz groups before, "Hornithology" had given him one of his best settings for improvisation.

Doering said Hornithology was the only group he had played in that kept the same musicians from one gig to another — which is important, he said.

"There's more to it than just playing arrangements and then playing a good solo. There's got to be a group sound."

When this happens, the level of communication within a group is raised, he said.

Like Doering, Vogt said he played in a lot of "dance bands" along with the occasional small group. Gigs come in spurts, he said,

but he's had about nine or 10 within the five last weeks.

And while the money they make at these gigs is nice, both Vogt and Doering said their motivation was the love of playing.

"I'd play for free if that's all it was," Doering said.

"If our point was money, we wouldn't be in music," Vogt said.

Another thing these two guys have in common is a strong sense of where they are as musicians and how much more they will need to learn to be considered real jazz players.

"The more I play and experiment with things the more I realize I know nothing at all," said Doering.

Although he feigns arrogance from time to time, Vogt, when talking seriously, immediately admits to a certain inadequacy as a jazz musician.

"It can be a real subtle art that I can't do, but it's exciting to at least for a split second in time to have a slight feeling that maybe you resemble in some really pathetic way this wonderful art that we have on recordings of great musicians over time."

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