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ASUN Student Government Elections
March 1, 2000.

Pumpkins resurrect rock

By Josh Krauter

Staff writer

It's not easy to be a Smashing Pumpkins fan.

In the early 1990s, the four-piece Chicago band released two soaring rock epics ("Gish" and "Siamese Dream") that proved there were still new possibilities for guitar-based, noisy rock.

Then things got rough. The Pumpkins put out a double album with an incredibly stupid name, "Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness," that sounded half-finished. It contained some good ideas and a handful of great songs, but was largely a collection of weak, under-developed tunes marred by muddy production.

Shortly after this disappointing, but financially successful album, singer-guitarist Billy Corgan started making grandiose, pretentious statements in the press proclaiming the death of rock. He also shaved his head and became the owner of the silliest chrome dome in music, which resembled either an albino bowling ball or a dimwitted Nosferatu, depending on the lighting.

The band fired drummer Jimmy Chamberlin shortly thereafter for his role in the heroin-related death of touring keyboardist Jonathan Melvoin. It was tragic, but utterly too predictable. The heroin-in-rock story is one that has been told too many times.

What made this tragedy even worse was Chamberlin's skill as a drummer. He was an integral part of the band's sound, and his rolls, fills, crashes and booms supplied much of the music's charm.

The Pumpkins' post-Chamberlin album, "Adore," was a subtle, melancholy collection of pop songs that sounded boring and slight the first several listens, but accomplished the near-impossible feat of growing better with time. Still, it was missing something, and it looked like the band was never going to get it back.

When the first track off "MACHINA/The Machines of God,"

REVIEW The Smashing Pumpkins

TITLE: Machina/The Machines of God
LABEL: Virgin Records
GRADE: B-
FIVE WORDS: The old sound's almost back.



the Pumpkins' new album, kicks in, it's obvious that Corgan and Co. have been rejuvenated, thanks to its old drummer. Chamberlin wrested himself from the smack and is back in the fold, giving the band a bigger, meatier sound that has been missing of late.

The first track, "The Everlasting Gaze," is a fuzzed-out, drum-heavy scorcher of a rock song that sounds like the natural follow-up to "Siamese Dream." The second song, "Raindrops + Sunshowers," is a successful synthesis of '70s classic rock, '80s new wave and early-'90s alternative rock that the band has been fudging with for a few years now, but this time it works completely.

These two songs are the album's best, and the rest of "MACHINA" is lesser. But Chamberlin's powerful drumming and the strongest singing and playing from Corgan since "Siamese Dream" keeps the album from sagging.

The record is definitely not without its problems, though. The band has drifted too far out to sea since "Siamese Dream" to ever completely return, and Corgan still has a fondness for electronic noises and programmed drums that he really needs to shake, though he fortunately keeps it to a minimum. The band is at its best playing loud guitar rock, but Corgan still wants to be The Prodigy sometimes.

A few tracks have processed drum sounds that nearly overpower the song, which is incomprehensible and foolish, considering the Pumpkins have one of the best drummers in rock.

The Pumpkins also seem to share the same misguided belief as the

committee that picks the Academy Award nominations, namely, that length equals depth. "MACHINA's" 70-minute-plus running time could have been trimmed to less than an hour without damaging the better songs or album continuity.

And Corgan is still pretentious and full of ego, in love with the artifice of rock maybe even more than the sound. This is evident in the silly album title, some faux-meaningful lyrics and a telling moment on "Heavy Metal Machine" in which Corgan sings the words "rock and roll." When Corgan wraps his strangely feline voice around the phrase, it sounds hollow. It's rock and roll as performed by Las Vegas Elvis, not Sun Studios Elvis.

But that's OK. Corgan has always made it clear he wants to be a big rock star, and he is one. While the rest of his friends were at Black Flag concerts, searching for sellouts to berate, he was in front of his mirror, playing air guitar to a Boston album, imagining a stadium full of teen-agers hanging on his every word.

"MACHINA" is a big rock album, louder and beefier than the two albums preceding it. Corgan and Chamberlin are rumored to have played nearly every instrument, leaving bassist D'Arcy (who has since left the group) and guitarist James Iha only a few parts to play, and the two work well together.

It's not a classic by any means, but it's a nice surprise.

Not bad for an egomaniac, a drug casualty and a couple of non-entities.

The A-TEAM Voters' Guide

THE A-TEAM

All other parties

On the abolition of credit-card solicitation on campus.	The A-Team is the only party that supports abolishing credit-card solicitation on campus.	No position.
On the use of pictographic symbols to communicate with aliens.	♠♣♦♠ ♠♣♦♠ ♠♣♦♠ ♠♣♦♠ ♠♣♠(We love you alien brothers and sisters!) ♠♣♠♦ ♠♣♠♦ ♠♣♠♦ ♠♣♠♦ ♠♣♠♦ ♠♣♠♦ (And we enthusiastically surrender to your army of cannibalistic androids.)	Are unable to communicate.
On the establishment of On-line voting for student elections.	The A-Team is the only party that supports the creation of an On-line voting process for ASUN elections.	No position.
On the environment.	The A-Team is the only party with a plan to implement ecological cost-saving measures that will protect the environment and lower student fees.	No position.
On Ricky Martin's decision to leave Menudo.	The A-Team is the only party that has registered its disapproval of Mr. Martin's solo career. The A-Team casts a suspicious eye towards any entertainer that regards himself as being "too good" for Menudo.	No position.

This is a paid advertisement of the A-Team Party. ASUN Student Government Elections March 1, 2000.

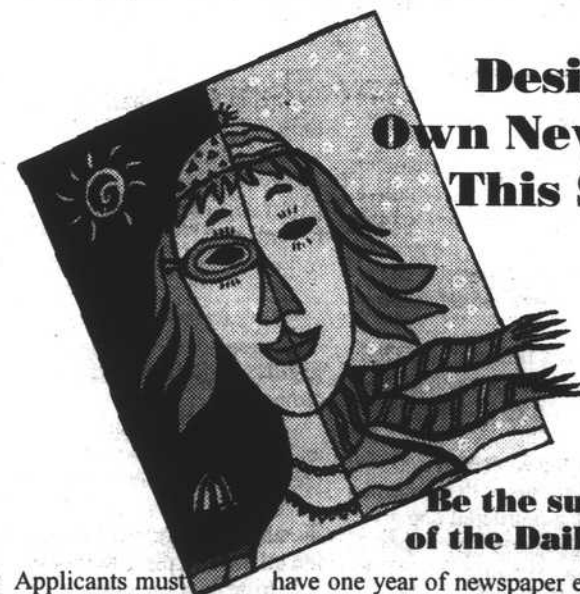
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