

New Order Revitalizes '80s Synth-Pop Groove

By MICHELLE JARBOE
Staff Writer

New Order's new album is like a very comfortable piece of clothing that you bought in the '80s but are not embarrassed to wear out in public today.

Get Ready showcases New Order's impressive ability to preserve the past without reliving it. Although the album has sounds like your cookie-cutter '80s synth-pop band, it lacks the repackaged feeling too common with established bands who have found their style and refuse to change.

The edgy punk-inspired riffs and electronica-esque drum beats recall the discotheque sensation conveyed by the band's previous singles such as "Blue Monday." Even *Get Ready's* "60 Miles an Hour" borrows from the old hit, concretely linking the album to the past but revolutionizing it at the same time.

The familiar sound of New Order has not mellowed at all from its '80s underground beginnings - if anything, the album is more aggressive. The formula of more assertion, less dance yields an extreme effect that prefers punk to synth-pop and new wave. "Rock the Shack" continually pumps the adrenaline that vocalist Bernard Sumner mentions in the song's lyrics.

Both lyrically and musically, there is no question that the band recalls and appreciates its roots. The band greatly retains the flavor common to its contemporaries, musical icons such as

Depeche Mode, The Cure and Duran Duran.

But the David Bowie-inspired Brit band seems to favor a current spirit of experimentalism and collaboration with icons of the present. "Turn My Way" features striking vocals by former Smashing Pumpkin Billy Corgan. And the song encompasses the essence of the past-to-present nature of the album by blending a Pumpkins sound with quintessential '80s melancholic lyrics and new wave music.

All of this extremism in the blending of the styles of different musical eras leads to a similarly extremist quality of fluctuation between joy and longing for things lost. The "Blue Monday"-esque abused sensation intrinsic to tracks such as "Primitive Notion" juxtaposes itself with the idyllic, reveling sensation conveyed by "Someone Like You."

There is a comfortable balance to this album, both in theming and in genre, that presents an end product without a displeasing track. Every song on the album is appealing, whether one focuses on lyrics or on sound. And there is just enough variation between tracks that a differentiation can be made without any detriment to the continuity of *Get Ready*.

New Order has, after a long absence from the LP scene, re-emerged with an album that, out of a perfect nostalgia, is a perfect mix of the band's past and present. This album fits just right on the first try and won't be out of style any time soon.

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Strokes Have Solid Debut; Bush Matures

Bush
Golden State
★★★★

Raw and powerful, Bush's fourth album, *Golden State*, makes great strides while thankfully digressing to real rock.

Returning to the classic grunge style reminiscent of Nirvana and its own *Sixteen Stone*, Bush has matured quite a bit. The result is an aggressive mix that makes you feel pumped yet complacent. Gavin Rossdale's plaintive voice now boost lyrics confronting more mature issues like love and personal growth. The band has moved past its youthful angst to find a beautiful yet energetic voice.

No longer a mass of screeching boys, Bush's members have embarked on a search for themselves, and *Golden State* is their inspirational journey. The album is powerful, leading with grinding cuts that make you pump your fist and sing along and finishing with soothing melodic interludes, creating a cool calm like the famous "Glycerine."

At the peak of their musical talents, the members each contribute a powerful pulse which thump together in a raucous throb. Dave Parsons, several times recognized as one of the best bassists in the world, creates a rhythmic roar that drummer Robin Goodridge complements with frantic solos and cymbal crashes.

Screeching above the rhythmic backgrounds are the wailing guitars of Nigel Pulsford and Rossdale, weaving their sounds together like lovers. The distortion individualizes the guitars while the melodies unify them in one single cry.

Rising above all the wild instruments is Rossdale, who aggressively shouts and seductively sings with equal parts bursting energy and introspection. With age, Rossdale's voice and writing ability have evolved, capturing every emotion from

anger to love.

Rossdale's roar shines as the band returns to its rock roots in high-octave, pumping cuts like "Speed Kills" and the driving "My Engine Is With You."

On the other hand, the album is balanced with several atmospheric tracks that still sport a rock attitude, like "Out Of This World" and the liquid "Inflatable."

With a smooth mix of rock tones and hypnotic guitar cords, several tracks stand out as balanced between rock and emotion. "Head Full of Ghost" displays Rossdale's increasing abilities as a writer while pouring out soothing instrumentals.

Greatly matured both in talent and personality, Bush has returned to its characteristic rock while representing the wisdom of its age. The product is a driving album, veins coursing with volatile energy yet still on the verge of tears.

By Nick Parker

The Strokes
Is This It
★★★★

New York's the Strokes are facing a dilemma - the hype surrounding them is louder than their music.

The group's debut album *Is This It*, garnered media attention for its track "NYC Cops," a song deemed too sensitive for post-Sept. 11 audiences. The track was consequently pulled from the album and replaced with "When It Started."

Perhaps the politically correct thing to do, the absence of the original track leaves one wondering exactly what the Strokes had up their sleeves.

All of that being said, the Strokes are worthy of attention for more than one reason. It's too early to tell whether the Strokes are capable of living up to their

sensationalized reputation, but they shouldn't worry too much about the future. *Is This It* is more than adequate for the present.

Similarly, the band members wrote the album about the here and now - their lyrics deal with disaffected youth, cynicism and imperfect love. The band's sound draws upon the hip dirtiness of the Velvet Underground, the weird pop of early Talking Heads and the guitar fuzz of the most accessible Sonic Youth.

Unlike those New York bands, the Strokes weren't too ambitious in producing their debut. *Is This It* works because it's short and sweet - the 11 songs clock in at just under 36 minutes - and because the band has developed a unique way of structuring its tunes.

The drums set a punchy tempo that rarely wavers. The guitars enter with particularly catchy riffs. The bass keeps the rhythm going while adding some melody of its own.

And rather than merely singing over the instrumentation, lead singer Julian Casablancas' distorted vocals strut alongside the music - his weary-beyond-his-years voice drips over and coats the music.

Is This It is a great album even though the Strokes' style becomes predictable. It's full of youthful energy and passion mixed with the focus of musicians who know exactly what they're doing.

Sure, the Strokes might not be able to match their effort here with their future releases. In the long run, they might end up disappointing the super-hopeful.

But for a debut, *Is This It* provides the life of the confused, jaded and horny New York boy with a terrific soundtrack. The potential is certainly there - these new kids just might become distinguished gentlemen in the always-changing world of rock.

By Elliott Dube

dive
:
: recommends
By Brian Millikin

■ **Guided by Voices** I don't think a much better or tighter rock band is out there today. Front man Robert Pollard used to teach fourth-grade English, and now he drinks himself off the stage every night. They have it all in spades: the lo-fi indie stage and the Cheap Trick-Weezer-Beatles phase.

■ **In the Aeroplane Over the Sea, Neutral Milk Hotel** One of the very best albums of the last few years and definitely the best psych-folk record ever produced. It's twisted and seductive. There's just no beating fuzzy bass and theremin.

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go to dailytarheel.com

■ **Kojak Struggles Through Monotony** ■
By Brooks Firth

■ **Nectarine Gets Lost In Maelstrom of Sound** ■
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■ **Redford Climbs 'Castle' Walls** ■
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