

Latest British techno band throws a 'curve'

Curve

Doppelganger

Anxious/Charisma

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How can one possibly have a hit record when the catchiest song's main refrain consists of an ethereal female voice emanating a slow, sensuous string of "heeyyy, heeyyy, heeyyy, heeyyy's?"

Curve, the latest sheep in the magical, swirly, gloriously pretentious British flock of "Shoegazers," have certainly figured out how to alter the guitar-oriented, heavy-on-the-effects formula just enough to be fairly original and capture the hearts of us swirl-deprived Americans. The tune in question, "Horror Head," perfectly exhibits the band's consolidation of unexceptional song structure and sensational wall-of-sound effects that are all the rage in Britain right here, right now (see My Bloody Valentine, Slowdive, Swervedriver, etc. etc. etc.)

Curve was born when vocalist Toni Halliday and guitarist Dean Garcia reconciled a long and bitter feud. See, after Halliday paid her dues in multiple bands since age 16, she was introduced to Garcia by Dave Stewart from the Eurythmics and they promptly formed a funk-pop band called State of Play. Signed to Virgin Records, the band wasted loads of

SUMMER BURKES

Album

company money and ended up in debt. Halliday and Garcia sued each other, Halliday won, and Garcia married State of Play's guitarist and fled to Spain for four years. In Christmas 1989, they bumped into each other and decided, along with their good friend Jack Daniels, to forgive, forget, and form Curve. Presto.

So why do you, the listener, need to know this? So you'll have proof that they aren't your usual spoiled, scrubbed, cocky 19-year-olds that pervade the sub-genre. Perhaps that's why their music is more cultivated and less self-indulgent than "the others."

Perhaps that's why, along with Toni's troubled childhood as a drunken hippie yacht-pirate's daughter in the Mediterranean (no, it's true), their lyrics contain more angst than, say, "He's gonna step on you again." Check the song titles: "Wish You Dead," "Clipped," the aforementioned "Horror Head." Or the lyrics from the title cut: "Ohh, the devil is in me... ohh, the spirit is in me... just keep me from being me... just keep me from knowing you." Even the vocals, though characteristically floaty, have more pent-up rage than any other non-hardcore girl singer with hair I can think of.

Since Curve formed in 1989, they

have released four EPs in Britain — *Blindfold*, *Frozen*, *Cherry*, and *Fait Accompli* on the Anxious Records label. (Surprise! Not Food or Creation!) Besides Halliday and Garcia, the band is composed of drummer Steve Monti and guitarists Alex Mitchell, Debbie Smith, and Alan Moulder (Toni's boyfriend and producer of Ride, My Bloody Valentine, the Jesus and Mary Chain, and, naturally, Curve). The band finally signed with Charisma Records here in the States and released *Doppelganger* this month, once again reminding the Colonies that we are indeed sitting in the back seat of the musical clue bus.

If one needs a reference point, and even though I hate to compare bands to other bands, Curve is vaguely like My Bloody Valentine in terms of typical lofty British production and the fiddling with of guitar knobs, but Curve is less muddy, less pretentious, more bouncy, more industrial, and more accessible. Seems to me that Curve is the perfect mulatto child of the dance-techno-rave movement and the shoegazing movement.

Before I explain this band to death, let me sum up by saying even though the trend is well established and one may be tired of the sound, Curve deserves as much (if not more) acclaim than most of their British counterparts. (Chapel Hill's own Brit-influenced band, The Veldt, voted Curve one of the top ten bands of all time in *Spin* magazine.) And, if all else fails, you can just fall in love with the lead singer.



Why are you looking here? Read the damn article!

Shiny happy music springs from new Seeds album

the Lightning Seeds

Sense

MCA Records

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I can't help believin' in this perfect feelin'/Like a dizzy fairground ride/senses come alive/And I'm happy!"

Whee! The Lightning Seeds are back with an album of shiny happy music... fahrvegnugen for the Senses.

Actually, there's a bit more to it than that. *Sense*, the second album by singer/songwriter/producer/multi-instrumentalist Ian Broudie (the Lightning Seeds incarnate) is somewhat of a departure from the 1990 debut al-

LINDSDAY LOWRY

Album

bum *Cloudcuckooland*, which, with hits like "Pure," bounced through the pop-music charts with such success.

Cloudcuckooland was the epitome of happy music, with lilting, bouncy vocals and lyrics, dizzy keyboards and guitar. The lyrics were somewhat naive, but it was the kind of music that you could take on a Thanksgiving weekend road trip, when the rain is coming down so hard you can't see the steering wheel in front of you, and you still find yourself tapping the brakes to the beat and do-do-do-ing all the way down I-95. Trust me. That's happy music.

"I don't think that this album's a massive departure from the first one, but it's definitely a progression," says Broudie of *Sense*. "The basic values are the same, but it's a wider view and some of the colors are different."

The album's first song and title track is pure Seeds. It'll make you feel all butterfly-smiley inside, with a mix of shimmering keyboard runs, guitar, and lilting vocals (with a healthy sprinkling of peppy do-do-do's), and lyrics like "I'm standing high on tip-toes looking over fences/Waiting for somebody like you to kiss me Senseless..."

"The Life of Riley," song number two, like its predecessor, defies the listener to keep from bouncing their head from side to side with a goofy grin about the lips. It starts out with a lone accordion and quickly gains momentum and vitality with drums

and spiraling keyboard runs. Pretty soon you're running along at lightning speed (pardon the pun) on a roller-coaster ride through the Milky Way as Broudie sings "Although this World is a crazy ride/You just take your seat and you hold on tight."

In nature and sound at least, *Sense* retains the innocence of the first album, but, as Broudie says, "the lyrics are a bit more grown-up and intense; they're about being born and dying, basically." (I'd say that's a bit more intense...) More than once this reviewer found herself bopping along cheerfully to one of the tracks, just as warm and fuzzy as could be, until I stopped to hear the lyrics.

"A Cool Place" sounds optimistic, with strong up-beats and an almost Beach Boys-esque back-up vocal, but the lyrics add a different color to the palette. "I'm not seeing very clearly/ Because I'm lost in my depression/ And I'm running after something/ But it's in the wrong direction."

In "Where Flowers Fade," Broudie croons "I feel like the poor relation/ Passing through an empty station/ On this empty track/ I'm half poverty/ Half oysters/ No morals/ Tarnished laurels/ Going nowhere fast," while around him background vocals spiral and drift in harmony, and horns slide rhythmically over the danceable beat.

"Happy" is early '80s OMD meets the Open House Party. The heavy backbeat and bass seem almost incongruous with the innocent and rather high voice of Broudie and the breathy ba-ba-ba's dancing in the background, as he sings "I can't help believin' in this perfect feelin'/ Like a dizzy fairground ride/senses come alive/ And I'm Happy!"

Sense is the incarnation of those very words. Don't expect too much to stimulate the intellect, but do expect a fairly light and spirited album with spunk. The more you listen, the more Lightning Seeds will (wince!) "grow" on you.

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