

ALT-ROCK REUNION

The Smashing Pumpkins Are Back, Angst and All

In his semi-autobiographical rant "Bullet With Butterfly Wings," The Smashing Pumpkins' front man, Billy Corgan, screamed that despite all his rage he was still just a rat in a cage. Considering that as of 2006 his band had sold upwards of 18 million albums domestically, that's one gilded friggin' cage built on the angst of the biggest rock band to come out of the '90s post-grunge music scene. And while the group disbanded in 2000, Corgan has reunited with original Pumpkins drummer Jimmy Chamberlin and has brought aboard Lisa Harriton on keyboards, Jeff Schroeder on guitar, and Ginger Reyes on bass (all of whom will be joining Corgan on vocals).

Throughout its nearly 20-year existence, the band has been plagued by infighting, drug abuse and bitterly ended relationships, all of which virtually guaranteed the Pumpkins a place in the rock 'n' roll pantheon. The resulting anguish and torment that producer Butch Vig (Garbage) was able to imbue their first two albums with—*Gish* (1991) and *Siamese Dream* (1993)—were entirely genuine, albeit of their own making.

The mid '90s saw the group continuing its incessant touring schedule; but whereas the beginning of the decade found the Pumpkins opening for groups including Jane's Addiction, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Guns N' Roses, now they were headlining tours such as Lollapalooza and the Reading Festival (1994 and 1995, respectively). 1995 was also the year that the band entered the studio under the guidance of Flood and Alan Moulder (perhaps best known to Las Vegans as producers of The Killers' *Sam's Town* album) to put together the magnum opus *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, described by Corgan as "The Wall for Generation X" and by *Time* as "the group's most accomplished work yet." The double album debuted at number one on the *Billboard* charts, went platinum nine times in the U.S. alone, and was nominated for seven Grammys in '97, based on singles including the New Order-esque "1979," "Tonight, Tonight" (the video—an homage to the 1902 French film *Le Voyage Dans la Lune*—won Video of the Year at the MTV VMAs in 1996) and "Bullet With Butterfly Wings." The album became the best-

selling double album of the '90s.

After splitting up in 2000 and performing in many different incarnations (including as the superband Zwan and with Hole bassist Melissa Auf der Maur), the band reunited in 2006 with the latest line-up and released a new album, *Zeitgeist*, produced by Roy Thomas Baker (best known for Queen's epic 1975 album, *A Night at the Opera*, which gave the world "Bohemian Rhapsody"). *Zeitgeist* has garnered four out of a possible five stars from *Rolling Stone*, and finds Corgan et al. at the top of their games in tracks such as "Starz" (think Black Sabbath meets Iron Butterfly) and "For God and Country" (The Cure meets Psychedelic Furs).

The Smashing Pumpkins are appearing at The Pearl Concert Theatre at Palms Casino Resort on Thursday, September 13th, at 8 p.m. For fans of '90s alt-rock, that might very well be the greatest day you'll ever know. —Michael Shulman



Known as much for their turbulent history as for their music, The Smashing Pumpkins just released a new album, *Zeitgeist*. The band will be playing at the Pearl Concert Theatre at the Palms on September 13th. Here, front man Billy Corgan and Jimmy Chamberlin backstage at Live Earth New York in July.

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