

May 1982

THE CURE

Of the many changes brought about in the wake of the punk/New Wave revolt of the past five years, one of the better has been a more healthy respect for experimentation in pop. While the musical landscape is littered with failed attempts at achieving new sounds and structure, since 1979, that same landscape has provided fertile ground for the brave adventures of the Cure. As one band whose experiments have led them to the creation of an entire new music vocabulary, the Cure prove convincingly that the revolution was worth it.

Pornography, the British trio's second A&M release (and their fourth album overall), insures their pre-eminence in the international progressive music scene with a program of devastatingly original tracks. It's a pattern of excellence that's been repeated since 1978 when the original group (guitarist Robert Smith; drummer Laurence Tolhurst and since replaced bassist Michael Dempsey) signed with independent Fiction Records.

The Cure's first single, "Killing An Arab," was released in January 1979. It made a sizeable impact within Britain's alternative music scene, curried plenty of critical favor and set up eager fans for *Three Imaginary Boys*, the Cure's debut LP which was released in May 1979. The band toured with Siouxsie and the Banshees, replaced bassist Dempsey with Simon Gallup, added keyboard player Matthieu Hartley and started moving in a new direction.

Their second LP, *Seventeen Seconds* (released April 1980) offered superb driving soundtracks accompanying Robert Smith's highly personalized lyrics — the music intense and evocative; the vocals haunting and compelling. The album made it into the English Top 20 and a single, "A Forest," climbed the charts as well. The remainder of the year was spent consolidating the victories won by *Seventeen Seconds* — touring the US, Europe, and Australia. That fall, the band performed for the first time in its current incarnation: keyboarder Hartley had left, and the group was now Smith, Gallup and Tolhurst.

1981 brought a third LP, *Faith*, and further experimentation into film music. In an attempt to control the concert environment, the Cure commissioned Rick Gallup to produce an animated film, "Carnage Visors," which became part of a complete Cure performance presentation. In September of '81, A&M released *Happily Ever After*, a compilation of *Seventeen Seconds* and *Faith*. Its mood-shifting music and provocative lyrics (titles: "The Holy Hour," "Secrets," "Other Voices," "The Funeral Party") introduced American audiences to the Cure's unique approach, an approach that *Pornography* refines and extends.

"One Hundred Years" starts the LP with an insistent electronic pulse and Smith's haunting vocal. "A Short Term Effect" widens the field again, incorporating taped electronic elements to heighten the irony of Smith's lyric delivery. "Strange Day" unwinds to a hypnotic guitar figure, floating airily; while "Figure Head" matches a stark, almost martial percussion pattern to a captivating dark melody. Chilling "gothic" organ and an echoey arrangement reminiscent of P.I.L.'s more innovative experiments match words and music to maximum effect in "Cold."

The title track, which closes side two, is a huge slab of barbaric sound revolving continually around a descending drum figure, "treated" vocals and a compulsive synthesizer line.

Pornography is at times unsettling. It is also uncompromising, genuinely original music of a type being offered by less than a handful of pioneering bands. As the creation of Smith, Gallup and Tolhurst, it is 100% unique and uses its distinctiveness to fashion a sound that is altogether appropriate, and maybe even necessary, to the times in which the Cure (and the rest of us) find ourselves living.