

**OMD**

HISTORY OF MODERN  
(Bright Antenna/ILG)

Yes, it's been 14 years since OMD released an album, but many would argue it's been at least 25 since they put one out that was really worth listening to. So, with that in the back of our minds, where does *History of Modern* land? Somewhere between ear candy for the faithful and blatant, not-always-successful attempts at capturing a new set of ears. Paul Humphreys and Andy McCluskey are virtually unrivaled when it comes to squeezing emotion out of the combination of beautiful melodies, synthesizer twiddling and catchy guitar riffs. There's plenty of that equation throughout their latest, with the barnstorming pop of "New Babies: New Toys" and the fast/slow two-part title track reminiscent of the best of their early-'80s output polished for the new millennium. Yet for every song like the elegiac "New Holy Ground" (another in a long line of gorgeous OMD ballads), there's a syrupy "Sometimes," which employs diva vocals that make it sound, ironically, like a Moby rip-off. Let's face it: No band in OMD's position can please its hardcore fans 100 percent. Thankfully, with some judicious skipping or edited playlists, *History of Modern* is a superb synth-pop confection. As for those other four or so songs—let the new listeners decide.

—Mikel Wadewitz