



ALTERNATIVE

OMD "History of Modern" (Bright Antenna Records)

Liverpool's OMD (aka Or-

chestral Manoeuvres in the Dark) has maneuvered back into the light with "History of Modern," the pioneering electro-pop band's first album in 14 years, and the first time the core duo of Andy McCluskey and Paul Humphreys has recorded together since Humphreys left the fold in 1989. And when the first synthesized strains begin to flow over a throaty bass and propulsive drums (real ones, not machines) on the album opener "New Babies: New Toys," the listener is swept back to the days when he used to lust for MTV's Martha Quinn as she introduced videos by this band and others of its ilk, such as Depeche Mode and Soft Cell.

McCluskey and Humphreys have done little to update their signature sound of programmed keyboard hooks and danceable rhythms, but their knack for distinctive melody and thoughtful lyrics — the key elements that set them apart from their contemporaries — is still intact on the sleek, locomotive "The Future, the Past and Forever" and the glistening, addictively telegraphic, lyrically hopeful anthem "If You Want It," the album's first U.K. single and video.

The big bonus here is the U.S.-only inclusion of the bubbling and soulful "Save Me," with none other than Aretha Franklin belting a wronged woman's plea to be delivered from the temptation of making the same mistake twice.

So don your parachute pants and your Wayfarer sunglasses, roll back the rug and dance like it's 1982 to an album full of unabashed retro fun.

— Gene Triplett

Sound Bets

Synthesized Past

Most think of OMD as an '80s synth-pop band with several solid hits ("If You Leave," "Secret," "Dreaming"). But OMD started in 1978 as electronic experimentalists inspired by German progressive artists. Traces of OMD's avant roots can be heard in the band's first four albums and on 1984's "Junk



By Christopher Porter

Culture," the ensemble's first step toward mainstream success, which it capitalized on with 1985's "Crush."

There are tributes to OMD's heroes

— Kraftwerk, Neu,

Cluster — throughout the group's discography, from the B-side of "Genetic Engineering" ("4-NEU") to naming its second album "Organisation" (the precursor group to Kraftwerk). Those homages continue on "History of Modern," OMD's first album with all its core members since 1986.

The title "RFWK" is made up of the forename initials of Kraftwerk's members, and "The Right Side?" sounds like a remake of that band's "Europe Endless." There are also plenty of pop pieces on "History of Modern," including the single "If You Want It," but OMD's at its best when referencing its own history.

Now it's time for Hot Chip, Cut Copy and Neon Indian to compose odes to OMD.

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Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, "History of Modern"

Who needs synth-pop revival acts when the originals are rebounding decades after their heyday? The core members of the '80s U.K. hitmakers are back together after nearly 25 years, and the chemistry is still there. Whereas much of today's synth-based music gazes meekly inward, O.M.D.'s best new songs surge with arena-rocking purpose. — DM