

Mode-rn love

On stage

DEPECHE MODE

Hammersmith Odeon

MATT FRETTON, bless his peroxide locks, can't dance. But it would be fair to assume that Dave Gahan has taught Matt all he knows about shaking it up. He grinned wildly, shook it all about, executed dangerous backwards shuffles and went down better than any support act I've ever seen. Dave Gahan's been at the reverse shuffling a big longer, but he's no less fresh and zestful.

Perhaps Depeche Mode have found the secret of eternal youth. They're no less bouncy now than three years ago at the Bridgehouse, no less able to convey their obvious enjoyment while playing expensive synths than when they rested their Wasps on cardboard boxes.

Their audience has grown up with them, and they've grown up with technology. They have it and know how to use it. All this means that a more mature person can enjoy the plethora of Mode mega melodies and newly denser-up electro-textures without risk of teenyboppered eardrums. Barring the odd squeal at the sight of DG's gyrating bum, of course.

'Everything Counts' was a good warm one to kick off with, its beefy dance rhythms setting the tone. It really didn't matter that there were three static keyboards and a grey slabby Habitat stageset — the tunes (just count 'em) kept everything well mobile. A great, chunky 'Love In Itself' and 'Two Minute Warning' saw the four lads reach Beach Boy standards in the harmony dept, but the sweetest moment was dear Martin coming stagefront to sing 'Pipeline', to rapturous applause.

The joint, not surprisingly, really started jumping during the updated, meatier versions of 'See You', 'New Life' and 'Photographic'. Just when you thought there couldn't possibly be another cracking uptempo stormer, along came another, right through to encores 'Just Can't Get Enough' and 'Boys Say Go'. Even the chaps on the monitor desk were clapping along.

Dep Mod don't distance themselves from their fans. There's no star trip, no contrived audience participation — the whole thing stood on the quality of the songs. I didn't look at my watch once and went home gaily humming that seemingly endless catalogue of reflective but infectious melodies. To say they had the balance right would be the understatement of the year.

Betty Page

