

AT LAST Depeche Mode are winning. After two and a half years of producing electronic pop songs which sound as good on headphones as they feel on the dancefloor, the unbelievers must realise that this is one band who won't be disappearing in a puff of fashionable smoke.

'Everything Counts' is not only preaching to the converted: too to the pessimists' surprise, their fans were right to stand by Depeche Mode when Vince left to form Yazoo, and 'A Broken Frame' received unsympathetic reviews.

It is those dedicated followers of Fast Fashion (the translation of Depeche Mode) who we have to thank for Martin, Dave, Alan and Andy still being together to create 'Construction Time Again'. And what an apt title! Depeche Mode are starting from scratch with many new fans converted by the power and sensitivity with which a chart band can open our eyes (and hearts) to a modern world steeped in greed, hatred and unforgivable stupidity.

I spoke to Depeche Mode on the eve of another British tour and found them happy and relaxed. They really are in fine form, and I'm not just talking about untans. Read on... Why did you go to Berlin to mix the new album?

Dave: "We've been working in The Garden Studios in Shoreditch, and we just wanted to go to Berlin to get a different atmosphere. If you work a lot in one place it gets quite boring and we were using so many channels, we couldn't possibly mix on a 24 track."

Andy: "The engineer knew Hansa Studios so we went over and had a look at it: we had a preview when we mixed the single, decided we liked it, and went

Enter the countdown Mode

over and mixed the who's album."

Did anything interesting or exciting happen to you in Berlin?

Alan: "We were working all the time so we only had time for a few drinks now and then. Sorry! The video was the most fun. We could work very closely with the director so it was a lot more enjoyable even though we did it in one day."

Did you visit the Berlin Wall?

Alan: "Well, we were recording right next to it. You look out of the studio window and there it is. If you went out on the balcony you could actually see right over it."

Dave: "When we were there it was really sunny — no bleak atmosphere at all. It was pretty dire seeing East Berlin from where we were."

Did you meet any German bands?

Dave: "Wolfgang, the old guitarist with DAF, popped up a couple of times, Chris from Liaison, Pete from UK Dub. Quite a few people."

Alan: "I think it's quite a hip thing to do if there's an English band there."

Brian: "We went to see Bowie while we were out there: that was quite a high, seeing him in a different place."

Did the Berlin atmosphere affect the album at all?

Andy: "I think Shoreditch, where we recorded the album, was gloomier than Berlin. I found a lot more tension there than in Berlin."

Dave: "Berlin was very relaxed. We'd been recording in The Garden for two months and so it was getting to the point where we were really looking forward to going somewhere else."

Martin: "The computer desk was one of the main reasons for going there: it had 56 channels. It was the only place that had the equipment we needed and here it would have been the same old seedy room. It was a really up atmosphere in Berlin."

The new album is very different from its predecessors...

Brian: "The whole album comes across as very positive — the whole sound. That's something that's just happened with our experience in studios with engineers."

Alan: "It's a culmination of a few

difficult things — it's not something we've really planned. It was also very exciting 'cos we used a new engineer, Gareth, who showed so much enthusiasm which was missing with the last album. If no-one's sharing any enthusiasm with you in the studio it's impossible to record a good album. We thought it was a good album then but this one's so much better."

Dave: "The whole album was written by Martin and it was his first opportunity to write a large amount of songs in a short period of time. There was so much pressure involved in that album whereas this album's a lot more relaxed."

'Construction Time Again' covers such a wide range of topics. Was that a deliberate move?

Martin: "Not really. They were all written over a period of about 6 months and you tend to write about things you're thinking about at the time. With the last album I wasn't really thinking about those sort of things."

Why are you thinking about them now?

Martin: "I don't know really. Maybe I'm a bit more worldly. I really don't know why."

You were badly slagged off by the Press last year. How do you feel about that now?

Alan: "Well, we expected it at the time really, simply because we'd seen it done to other bands."

Andy: "It seems to be a general thing. We would have got it again this time if the same people reviewed this album. We were just lucky this time and unlucky last time."

Do you think that your now stable membership is good for the band?

Dave: "I think we're becoming tighter as a unit. I think it's a bond really, we just get on very well together and we enjoy what we're doing at the moment. As long as we keep enjoying it we'll keep doing it. As soon as we stop enjoying it, we won't stay together. I mean, sometimes I argue with Fletch, but it's not anything to do with the music we're making or the songs. We're very happy with what we're doing at the moment."

And what do you think of your public image now?

Dave: "I think we're just known as Depeche Mode."

Alan: "We don't have any great strong image in any direction — dressing up or whatever."

Dave: "I think the image comes across in the good quality sound. Basically, we all like buying nice clothes but we don't really set out a style that we should all dress in. We all buy what we like in the way of clothes."

Alan: "Some people are a little bit more surprised by us these days. I think it's the music that's Depeche Mode rather than the way we look or an image."

You must be glad that at last you're being taken more seriously...

Dave: "We'd like to think that. That people wouldn't actually buy the record because it's Depeche Mode, but because they really enjoyed the song. Yes, that would be nice."



DEPECHE MODE: success in site



So, what are your long-term plans?

Martin: "We haven't really got any. We don't think too far ahead."

Dave: "We're touring right up 'til Christmas, then it's a few days off before we go to America,

coming back through Germany and a few other places."

Andy: "I expect we'll seriously start working on some new stuff after that."

With all this touring, do you still feel the same enthusiasm playing live?

Alan: "You can't go on playing places like Dingwalls."

Dave: "I get a big kick from the gig if the audience are really into what I'm doing, then I can really feel it. But if I don't get anything from the audience I just feel really down. I'm sure it's the

same for everybody."

Alan: "Don't forget we're just about to start this tour — you should ask the question afterwards, it could be totally different then!"