

## Depeche Mode - Delta Machine (2013)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Welcome to My World* 2. *Angel* 3. *Heaven* 4. *Secret to the End* 5. *My Little Universe* 6. *Slow* 7. *Broken* 8. *The Child Inside (feat. Martin Gore)* 9. *Soft Touch/Raw Nerve* 10. *Should Be Higher* 11. *Alone* 12. *Soothe My Soul* 13. *Goodbye*

Musicians: Dave Gahan – vocals Martin Gore – guitar, synth, vocals Andy Fletcher – bass, keyboards

In the middle of the weave and weft of throbbing synthesisers and galloping drum loops on *Secret to the End*, there is a 16-bar drop that splits the sound into its stereo components, with a fat electro hook coming from the left side, and a chugging, electric guitar emerging from the right. That, in a sonic nutshell, is the *Delta Machine*, Depeche Mode's familiar mix of synthetic (machine made) sound with bluesy rock (referring back to roots in the Mississippi Delta).

After 33 years and 13 albums, the pioneering Basildon electro trio are absolute masters of this sci-fi synth rock blend. The swells and shudders may be closer at times to techno but this is not dance music, unless you favour fist pumping and robot boxing. There is little swing or groove to a rhythm section where minimalist drum samples click and hammer with a relentless, quantised pulse. Principle writer Martin Gore has an interesting approach to minor key melodies, wandering into almost jazzy territory of odd modulations, but he's always ready with a highly charged singalong burst when it is required. Depeche are adept at delivering the kind of chunky choruses and macho bluster of stadium anthems.

Last year, Gore collaborated with former band mate Vince Clarke on an electronic instrumental album, *Ssss*, under the name VCMG. It was full of interesting sounds but lacked the human focus you find in Depeche, where the ear-catching noises are perfectly matched by the melodramatic swagger of rock attitude. On *My Little Universe*, Depeche concoct the kind of offbeat wonky minimalism you might expect from an electro experimentalist like Four Tet but

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actually marry it to a tune you can hum.

It is Gore's lyrics that usually spoil things, for me. He tends to tackle the same themes (desire, dysfunction, sin and redemption) with obvious imagery, peppered with the teenage Goth staples of angels and devils, and the poetic phrasing of an office clerk. Lines like "I'm making progress in a non-specific way", would be hard for any singer to lend emotion or nuance to, and only encourage Gahan's most bombastic tendencies. Amid the subsonic bass rumbles, gritty noise distortion, sawing strings and choral harmonies of Welcome to My World, when Gahan groans "I'll penetrate your soul, I'll bleed into your dreams", it makes me want to get a cloth and wipe up.

Yet these are quibbles. When they formed in 1980, electronica was just beginning to provide an alternate musical palette to the bass, drums and guitar of rock. In 2013, if rock is going to survive, it surely has to encompass the bleeps and beats of electro veterans who sound like the future is still catching up with them.

Martin Gore o albumie: *„Tworzenie tego albumu było trudne, ponieważ chciałem osiągnąć na nim możliwie najbardziej nowoczesne brzmienie. Pragnę, aby ludzie słuchając tego albumu odnajdywali wewnętrzny spokój. Jest w nim coś magicznego.”* Dave

Gahan dodaje:

*“Praca nad tym krążkiem całkowicie zmieniła nasze podejście do sposobu tworzenia. Gdy dochodzimy do punktu, w którym nasza muzyka zaczyna brzmieć zbyt normalnie, mieszamy wszystko, aż otrzymujemy typowe brzmienie Depeche Mode. W przypadku Delta Machine było tak samo i nie mogę się doczekać kiedy nasi fani usłyszą efekt końcowy.”*

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