

# Techno-industrial KMFDM bids farewell with mediocre album

THE PIONEER BAND EXITS THE MUSIC SCENE QUIETLY

By Bryan Petersen  
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Over the last decade, we have seen more than one era come to a close: The Soviet Union ceased to exist. The Berlin Wall came down, and East Germany followed the Soviet Union off into the sunset. Grunge came and went. Ditto for the Macarona.

Through all of this, the pioneering German industrial group KMFDM has been generating its own brand of techno-industrial, club-friendly beats, which have helped open the door for such acts as Nine Inch Nails, Marilyn Manson, Stabbing Westward, Gravity Kills and many others.

However, all eras must come to an end. And after 15 years, more than a dozen albums and nearly twice that number of E.P.s and sound-track performances, KMFDM is calling it quits.

KMFDM began in 1984, when founders Sascha Konietzko and En Esch were hired to make "music" for a Paris art exhibit utilizing industrial components. Afterward, the duo recruited a rotating family of musicians and became a real band, which combined heavy guitars with pulsing, bass-heavy rhythms and moody synthesizers. In 1989, the band relocated to Chicago, where it became heavily influenced by the local house/techno scene.

Throughout the '90s, KMFDM has been consistent with its sounds, sticking with layered synths, chunky riffs and angry vocals in both German and English. While KMFDM has not been strikingly original as far as the evolution of its music is concerned, opting to keep creating "club music to mosh to," the band has been interesting as far as its image goes.

The grimly intense, hyperactive, psychedelic animation which appears on all of the band's album covers, most of its t-shirts and several of

its videos, is often more fun than the music.

And the group's name has been a bit of an enigma: For years, the prevailing rumor among fans was that it stood for "Kill Mother Fu--ing Depeche Mode," although that has never been verified.

Although KMFDM has called it quits, the band has left us with a farewell album, aptly titled "Adios." No subtlety there.

"Adios" doesn't rank very high on the all time list of swan song releases.

The soul of KMFDM remains intact: Konietzko's programming and vocals are solid, and longtime guitar player Gunter Schulz's heavy riffs remain over the top.

And the special guests who contribute to the release are from the upper-echelon of industrial/avant-weird musicians, with Ministry's William Reiflin, Skinny Puppy's Ogre and legendary art-punk diva Nina Hagen all contributing their respective talents to the mix.

With all of this going on, the album seems like it should be better than it actually is.

The beats are there, that's for sure. But the band's method of throwing together heavy industrial music with acid-house-influenced techno seems to merely detract from both genres. KMFDM has the ability to go all the way and make a great acid-house album, with revved-up diva vocals and in-your-face-keyboards. Or the band could go the other way and put out really heavy, dark industrial music. But the attempt to combine the two falls a bit flat.

That's not to say there is nothing good about the release. On tracks where the gritty vocals are moved back and the music comes through, like the ethereal "Today" or the drum-and-bass-meets-dub "Sycophant," KMFDM's potential for excellence shines forth.

Indeed, it is often the lyrics and vocals that take the cool right out of some of the tracks. "Witness" should be cool because Nina Hagen helped write it, but instead it is a bunch of drivel about alien abductions: "They are



The German band KMFDM has made it through 15 years and more than a dozen albums before bowing out. *Courtesy photo*


visiting us for their genetic testing / I don't think it's such a blessing / but then again how can I know / I must not judge too much / You know." This might have been cool a few years ago, but now comes across as jumping on the alien bandwagon.

All in all, KMFDM has not made a bad album as far as "Adios" goes. It's great party

music, great for getting the mood a bit more aggro when that's the prescription. But in the end, it's simply another KMFDM album — one that does not stand apart from any previous release.


The band would have been better off taking a more challenging way to exit the music scene, leaving it the way they entered it: as pioneers.

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