



Courtesy of Reprise Records

Nick Cave, center, and the Bad Seeds blend jazz, goth rock and deep melodies to produce a haunting and breathless soundtrack.

Nick Cave's latest album shows brilliant brooding

■ Dark and unconventional, 'No More Shall We Part' is perfect for a night alone



Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds
'No More Shall We Part'

Reprise

★★★★★

By Dave Depper
Oregon Daily Emerald

Attention music enthusiasts: If you are in any way depressed, down on yourself, lacking faith in the world or just plain mopey, do not listen to the new album by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds. It will put you over the edge, and I cannot be held responsible for this.

For the rest of us, however, "No More Shall We Part" is nothing short of musical manna from heaven. Utterly bewitching, beguiling, confusing and contemplative, this album is the perfect companion to a night alone, eyes closed and candles lit.

The former leader of original goth rockers The Birthday Party, Australian native Nick Cave has released 11 studio albums with the Bad Seeds. Cave has long been known for his darkly observant and introspective lyrics, and he's

truly gifted at blending the humorous with the macabre. A few years back, Cave even released an album called "Murder Ballads," on which every song dealt with homicide — not exactly conventional songwriting.

For "No More Shall We Part," Cave has assembled his Bad Seeds into a beautifully understated ensemble of elegant piano, sighing drums, groaning organ, stately violin and muted guitars. The sound of the album flirts with jazz, but it is far more varied than just one genre. On the opening song, "As I Sat Sadly By Her Side," the musicians start out quietly, each verse growing in richness and complexity. By the end of the song, tension and dread are barely contained within the bolero-like gait of the violins and bass, and the listener is left breathless.

"Love Letter" is simply one of the most gorgeous songs I've ever heard. The Bad Seeds sound like a faraway soundtrack to a classic movie, and Cave's stately baritone weaves its way through verse after verse of naked emotion. On the horror story that is "Fifteen Feet of Pure White Snow," the Bad Seeds rock out with barely bridled conviction, evoking the necessary dread from the listener as Cave spins out of control.

And the lyrics — oh, the lyrics! Cave has long been known for his engaging stories of social disorders, heartbreak, madness and

murder, and he definitely does not disappoint on "No More Shall We Part."

"God Is In The House" is a scathing indictment of perfect picket-fenced Bible Belt communities: "homos roaming the streets in packs / queer bashers with tire-jacks / lesbian counter-attacks / that stuff is for the big cities / our town is very pretty."

In "Oh My Lord," Cave spends the verses working up a fever pitch as he describes an ordinary man who is very close to going absolutely mad before pleading in the chorus, "oh lord, oh my lord / how have I offended thee / wrap your tender arms around me."

And marvel at the imagery conjured up in "Gates To The Garden": "Past the ivy-covered windows of the Angel / Down Athenaeum Lane to the Cathedral / my back to the gates of the garden." Cave's smoky baritone is in fine form on "No More Shall We Part." Dripping with scorn, irony and regret, it is the perfect vehicle for such somber material.

Clocking in at more than 67 minutes, "No More Shall We Part" is a long album. It might be a bit much for the casual listener to digest in one sitting, but believe you me, it is well worth the effort. I cannot speak highly enough of this album. It may not be what you are used to, but it is a modern masterpiece that insists on being taken on its own terms.

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