Smashing Pumpkins – Adore (1998)

1. To Sheila 2. Ava Adore 3. Perfect 4. Daphne Descends 5. Once Upon A Time 6. Tear 7. Crestfallen 8. Appels + Oranjes play 9. Pug 10. The Tale of Dusty And Pistol Pete 11. Annie-Dog play 12. Shame 13. Behold ! The Night Mare 14. For Martha 15. Blank Page 16. 17
Musicians: Billy Corgan – vocals, guitar, piano, keyboards, James Iha – guitar, vocals D'arcy Wretzky – bass guitar

Left without a drummer after Jimmy Chamberlin's dismissal, the Smashing Pumpkins took the opportunity to revamp their sound slightly -- which is what Billy Corgan claimed they were going to do on their fourth album anyway. Adore, however, isn't a drastic departure. Using dream pop ballads and the synthetic pulse of "1979" as starting point, the Pumpkins have created a hushed, elegiac album that sounds curiously out of time -- it's certainly an outgrowth of their previous work, but the differences aren't entirely modern. Whenever synthesizers are added to the mix, the results make the band sound like a contemporary of the Cure or Depeche Mode, not Aphex Twin. That's not necessarily a problem, since Adore creates its own world with layered keyboards, acoustic guitars, and a rotating selection of drummers and machines. There's none of the distorted bluster that cluttered Mellon Collie and none of the grand sonic technicolor of Siamese Dream. Adore recasts the calmer moments of those albums in a sepia tone, in an attempt to be modest and intimate. Only Billy Corgan would consider a 74-minute, 16-track album a modest effort, but compared to its widescreen predecessors, it does feel a bit scaled down. Still, Corgan's ambitions reign supreme. This is no mere acoustic album, nor is it electronica -- it is quiet contemporary art rock, playing like a concept album without any real concept. Its very length and portentousness tend to obscure some lovely songs, since all the muted production tends to blend all the songs together. But even with its flaws, Adore is an admirable record that illustrates the depth of the Pumpkins' sound, even if it ultimately isn't a brave step forward. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine, All Music Guide

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