Depeche Mode’s Violator Turns 20

March 19, 2010 By Shawn Decker

Today marks the 20-year anniversary of the release (UK) of Depeche Mode’s career-defining album, Violator**. It’s safe to say that no other album has had quite the same impact on my life as this one.**

I discovered Depeche Mode a year or so before this album's release. I was 13, and two years before I'd tested positive for HIV. After finding out about Depeche Mode through the tape deck of a friend's older brother, who was giving me a ride home, I was hooked: I mail-ordered buttons, purchased their entire catalogue up to that point, and had pretty much determined- without a shadow of a doubt- that Depeche Mode were the greatest band to ever walk the Earth.

So when *Violator* came out and Depeche Mode were everywhere- MTV, mainstream news due to a riotous album signing at Tower Records in Los Angeles- that made sense to me. Anything less would have been odd.

The same year that Violator came out, I was nearing the end of my freshman year in high school. One day my mother asked me if there was anything I'd like to do... before I died. I didn't view

myself as sick, or nearing *the end*, but I did understand that my days were more likely to be numbered than those of my peers.

For me, the answer was simple: I wanted to meet Depeche Mode.

In those days, I never wanted to think about HIV- there were no Labtest Contests or self-deprecating jokes about my HIV status. In fact my mother had to lie to me to get me in the car so she could take me to the hospital to get those tests done. I hated them. Because *those* were really the days when I felt my days were numbered. One of the ways I chose to escape my reality was through music: headphones, a synthesizer, and a steady diet of Depeche Mode, the Cure, Public Image Ltd.,They Might Be Giants, New Order, the Smiths... before conventional HIV meds my alternative "medication" was, well, *alternative* music.

And I won't lie, it really hit the spot. Or, as Morrissey sang in "Interesting Drug": "Interesting drug, the one that you took, God, it really really helped you."

Today, my love for music is still strong, and it includes making it under the name Synthetic Division. Admittedly, this often takes the backseat to HIV education, writing, blogging- pretty much everything else in my life. But this year, I've decided to commemorate my survival and, in a way, honor Depeche Mode's, too, by releasing some new music that combines all of these areas of my life. You only get one shot to celebrate the 20-year anniversary of your dying wish, they say.

I'll be posting more soon about that project soon.

But right now it's about honoring Depeche Mode's survival. They continue to tour and make solid albums. But it's always *Violator* that finds its way into my car's CD player when Gwenn and I are

taking a long road trip somewhere to talk about HIV. And those long journeys always seem a little shorter with “Policy of Truth” and “Personal Jesus” blasting from the speakers. In the grandest journey of all- life - I’m happy that Depeche Mode has provided the soundtrack to some of the most confusing and joyous moments.

God, they’ve really, really helped me.

Plus- *how fucking cool is it that I got to meet Depeche Mode through the Make-A-Wish Foundation*? That’s a story I’ll get to tell for the rest of my hopefully long life. So thanks Depeche Mode, and thanks 14-year old Shawn for that wise-beyond-your-years choice which, like *Violator* itself, has stood the test of time.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/depeche-modes-violat