



**“CYNICS WHO HAD ASSESSED MODERN ENGLISH AS A ONE-HIT WONDER HAD A REAL AWAKENING COMING. DESPITE THEIR MATURE, UNKEMPT APPEARANCE, THESE SENIOR CITIZENS OF ROCK PUT ON A BRILLIANT, TREMENDOUSLY ENTERTAINING PERFORMANCE, DRAWING FROM THEIR RELATIVELY VAST REPERTOIRE OF SEVEN STUDIO ALBUMS SPANNING 1981 TO 2010!”**

#### **Modern English/Disorder**

##### ***The Saint***

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—by Doktor John

ASBURY PARK, NJ—Two bands could not have less in common and yet at the same time sound as near to each other as blood relatives. Disorder, a Joy Division tribute band, is comprised of members way too young to have first-hand familiarity with the music they resurrect. The group which they are covering has a repertoire built mainly from two studio albums with about a dozen songs on each, its full development having been cut short by the untimely suicide of lead singer Ian Curtis in 1980, a mere two years after having gotten started. At least 10 of their songs are widely recognized and popular.

By contrast, the headliners, Modern English, are comprised of mainly original band members except for the drummer, who is new and, by appearances, young enough to be the son or grandson of the originals. Harkening from the same era as Joy Division and the same Brit punk/new wave scene, Modern English have reformed several times, put out seven studio albums, and wound up credited and renowned for one of the most recognized and beloved songs of a generation, “I Melt With You.”

The Saint, a classic Jersey Shore dive bar, provides a gritty, highly conducive environment for live punk music. Besides the garish Xmas lighted walls and spacious, elevated stage, it boasts a superb sound system and sound engineer who delivered feedback-free audio which was clear and loud, but bearable.

Disorder opened with fast-paced “Shadowplay,” one of the darker entries of Joy Division’s notably dark body of work, then proceeded into “Disorder,” the emotionally charged, repetitious piece after which the band takes its name. It was increasingly apparent that these boys had succeeded in capturing every musical nuance of the originals as they proceeded with such perfectly executed songs as “She’s Lost Control,” the morose

“Atmosphere,” and “Isolation,” from which a riff was taken as the basis for sequel band, New Order’s famous “Blue Monday.”

A particularly superb job was done with the unmistakable and widely covered “Dead Souls,” a mesmerizing and demented anthem that, perhaps more than any other piece, represents the mystique of the parent band. Lead vocalist Michael not only captures the vocal qualities of the late Ian Curtis, but his agitated and sometimes spastic gestures as well. Better than any grainy, antique film footage from 1979-80, Disorder delivers the most credible, if vicarious, experience of Joy Division that can be imagined.

Cynics who had assessed Modern English as a one-hit wonder had a real awakening coming. Despite their mature, unkempt appearance, these senior citizens of rock put on a brilliant, tremendously entertaining performance, drawing from their relatively vast repertoire of seven studio albums spanning 1981 to 2010! White-haired, unshaven vocalist Robbie Grey was charismatic and interactive with both the crowd and the band as he led them through a wide spectrum of new and old classics. Included, of course, was a moving, sing-along version of “I Melt With You.”

Here’s a comparison I can’t prove, but I believe to be true: Joy Division, an iconic band of great notoriety and with a cult following, existed for about two years, have two albums, and not more than 10 songs that can be recognized as hits. Modern English, still immensely entertaining and prolific after 30-plus years, have one hit that is probably essential to more record collections, iTunes libraries, on more iPods, iPads, and MP3 players than everything by Joy Division combined.

In any event, Disorder’s revival of Joy Division’s body of work and Modern English’s ongoing greatness combined to provide a uniquely entertaining and satisfying treat for rock music fans who have a love for the genre as well as a historical perspective.