



Peter Murphy @ Irving Plaza

The frontman for the legendary Goth group Bauhaus, Peter Murphy, recently wrapped up "Resurrection," an international reunion tour 15 years in the making, and Gotham, both a double-disc live album and a live video recorded over two unforgettable nights at Hammerstein Ballroom. As a solo artist, however, it's been five years since Murphy has set foot onstage. And he hasn't missed a step. On the wings of Wild Birds (Beggars Banquet), a retrospective compilation of album versions and edits highlighting his solo career from 1985 to 1995, the distinctive singer returns to touring alone, working only from his history of independent work.

Hardly an indulgence in nostalgia, these songs, like their singer, possess extraordinary agelessness. Wild Birds achieves an unusual cohesion for a collection, flowing naturally from one another as if taken from one work. (The exception is a raw version of Pere Ubu's "Final Solution.") Over the course of his albums, Murphy's music has certainly evolved, but the differences have been subtle. He doesn't rely on time-trapping musical or technical fads, and therefore is not betrayed by them.

Count on the same "here and now-ness" from the live show, though he's more likely to draw from Deep, Holy Smoke and Cascade than from the earlier material. Bauhaus tunes are simply out of the question. Distinguished from his group work, the solo stuff is a lighter, sweeter pop—not innocent necessarily, more like reveling in the exotic and beautiful side of darkness. Not that the man can't rock; Murphy has always been a performance artist at heart, armed with a truly mesmerizing stage presence, fluid body movement and a deep, chillingly smooth voice. Accompanied by Bauhaus drummer Kevin Haskins, former Jane's Addiction bassist Eric Avery, Porno for Pyros guitarist Peter DiStefano, and Love and Rockets' producer Doug DeAngelis on keyboards, the master showman can't (and won't) fail to please.

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