

THE SPIN ON PLACEBO: FIVE ALBUMS, AND STILL GOING STRONG

By Danielle Kuehnel

MEDS (2006, ASTRALWERKS, \$17.98)

PLACEBO

[GENDER-BENDER BRITROCK] Having been likened to a “Neo-glam” Nirvana, it’s a surprise that Placebo hasn’t caught on to the mainstreamers yet.

But perhaps it’s the underground indie-punk sound that gives the British group its appeal.

While groups that have been around for 10 years oft fade into oblivion, Placebo (which has been around since before its first album—*Placebo*—in 1996) seems to be growing ever stronger with a rather impressive fifth album.

Meds, which was released in early April 2006, features not only the classic, broodingly cynical stylings so characteristic of the group, but exudes fresh experimental noise, making Placebo as appealing as ever. In an interview featured on a Placebo documentary, lead singer and guitarist Brian Molko—who is best known for not only his unique voice, but his knack for the androgynous—admits that the band has always been affectionate toward synthesizers, a motif most definitely continued in energy-loaded songs like the angry techno-rhythms of “Infra-Red” or the darkly out-of-this-world voices undermining the ballad “Space Monkey.”

Beside the unusual melodies featured in the glorious sound buffet that is *Meds*, Placebo also addresses issues often happily glossed-over by today’s society.

In the title track, “Meds,” Molko describes the dangers of being medicated. His whiny voice pleads, “I was alone, staring over the ledge / Trying my best not to forget / All manner of joy, all manner of glee,” while guest vocalist The Kills’ Alison Mosshart breathily asks, “Baby, did you forget to take your meds?” Moreover, the opening riffs showcase Placebo’s classic guitar, sounding suspiciously like *Without You I’m Nothing*’s (1998, Virgin) “Every Me Every You” (a track featured in teen cult-hit *Cruel Intentions*).

Another notable track is the heartbreakingly painful “Post Blue” rock ballad. Without losing a beat—or ever backing down from a danceable rhythm—Molko proclaims, quite poetically, “Bite the hand that feeds / Tap the vein that bleeds / Down on my bended knees / I break the back of love for you.”

“You know that a song is really good,” Molko said in the featured documentary, “if it can be played with just the piano or guitar and voice, and it still sounds great.”

For an extra treat, check out the rocking British glamsters’ limited-edition *Meds* CD with DVD (\$21.98); it features karaoke-styled lyrics for sing-along fun, a behind-the-scenes documentary, bonus tracks and live videos, including a duet with lovely, disheveled Robert Smith (The Cure).

Overall, Placebo exceeds expectations with *Meds*, and provides an exceptional record to help everyone transition to the summer months.

GRADE: A.