


## REPRISE

The image shows the album cover for Smashing Pumpkins' 'Zeitgeist'. It features a silhouette of the Statue of Liberty against a dark, moody sky with a hint of light on the horizon. The text 'SMASHING PUMPKINS' is at the top and 'ZEITGEIST' is at the bottom.

Billy Corgan loves the number seven to a ridiculous degree. On the Smashing Pumpkins' debut, *Gish*, "Snail" (the seventh track!) opens with the couplet, "All your seven dreams/Look close, son, and you'll believe," and on the *MACHINA*-era rarity "Here's the Atom Bomb" he declares, "Seven is all you seek." Finally, on Zwan's under-appreciated *Mary Star of the Sea*, he portentously proclaimed, "For seven years, seven days and seven hours/I took my chances." And now—seven years since the last Smashing Pumpkins album—the Smashing Pumpkins return on 07.07.07 with the smugly-titled *Zeitgeist*. Coincidence, or some grand conspiracy? You be the judge.

Beyond hypothetical questions of *Matrix*-like proportions, one has to ask if this is even really the return of the Pumpkins. Version 3.0 is merely Billy and drummer Jimmy Chamberlin, because, sadly, original guitarist James Iha and bassist D'Arcy Wretzky are nowhere to be found (replacement bassist Melissa Auf der Maur is AWOL, too). Also gone are the dreamy, stoner landscapes of *Gish*, the fine-tuned extravagance of *Siamese Dream* and the sprawling ambition of *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, replaced by the simple, bludgeoning sound of a megalomaniac, his guitar and his drummer. This is Smashing Pumpkins in name alone.

Opening with the pounding gloom of "Doomsday Clock," *Zeitgeist* sets its dulled and repetitive tone from the get-go. Sure, it rocks, but it's Big Dumb Rock in the worst possible way. The lead single, "Tarantula," courts modern rock radio on such a base level that it's hard to believe that this is the same group that once opened the MTV Music Awards by performing "Tonight, Tonight" with a symphony orchestra. Corgan's deft ear for a melody has slithered off into the ether (there's nothing as catchy as "Cherub Rock" or "Bullet With Butterfly Wings" here) and the choruses wouldn't be worthy of a My Chemical Romance B-side. Though there are a few bright moments here—the jubilant, Zwan-esque "That's the Way" and the anthemic mantra "Bring the Light"—*Zeitgeist* is mostly a grinding, straightforward affair that demonstrates none of the innovation and vision of the band's previous efforts. Though it was produced by both Roy Thomas Baker (Queen, the Cars) and Terry Date (Pantera, Rob Zombie), it would seem that Date's sonic aesthetic won over for the most part, though the appropriately-titled parting shot, "Pomp and Circumstance," harkens back to the *Mellon Collie* glory days of strings and things.

Ultimately, *Zeitgeist* just sounds like a man trying to cash in on a legacy, because this LP would tank if it was merely Billy's second solo outing (remember how well his first one did?). It's just sad that we waited this long for something this disappointing. We'd gladly wait another seven years, seven days and seven hours for an album that lived up to the true potential of the Smashing Pumpkins. NEVIN MARTELL