



## Erasure Unplugged US Tour Hits Chicago in May

By [ChicagoPride.com](http://ChicagoPride.com) News Staff

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Tour Kicks Off May 6th, Arrives in Chicago May 18th

Chicago, IL - Erasure have always been full of surprises. In two decades of plugging in and wiggling out, Vince Clarke and Andy Bell have sold millions of albums around the world, staged Broadway-style live spectaculars, influenced countless dance, techno and alternative rock acts, and topped the charts with outlandish cover versions. The latest *Book of British Hit Singles* ranks the duo among the "Top 100 Most Successful Acts of All Time" and in 2005 The Times Of London proclaimed them more important than Kraftwerk in the great history book of rock. Their record-breaking ten-night stand in New York City last year, in support of the critically-acclaimed *Nightbird* album, find the duo as relevant and beloved as ever by longtime fans and a whole new generation as well.

On their brand new album *Union Street*, Vince and Andy have delivered their biggest surprise yet. In a boldly experimental step for an electronic band, they have unplugged themselves, bringing new soulful new depths and acoustic, maybe even a touch of country-western, textures to 11 songs spanning their entire career.

*Union Street* was recorded in the Brooklyn studio of the same name, which is owned by guitarist Steve Walsh, who previously played on Erasure's 2003 covers collection *Other People's Songs* and produced *Nightbird*. Walsh is currently assembling musicians for Erasure's first ever live-band tour. "We found this cool guitarist with a cool studio and decided to use both," says Vince.

The album is dominated by revamped album tracks and born-again B-sides that the band felt best suited an extreme makeover. All sound refreshingly different to their original blueprints. "It was great going back through those songs, some of which I hadn't listened to properly since we made them," Vince recalls. "Suddenly you heard some of the naivety that was in there in the first place."

The Erasure story began in 1985, when former Depeche Mode and Yaz founder member Vince advertised to find a singer for his new project. Then just 21, ex-butcher Andy was the 41st candidate that Vince auditioned, but their creative chemistry clicked instantly. Before long the pair were scoring the first of five number one albums and started racking up an incredible 32 consecutive singles in the UK Top 40 and became instant alternative favorites on the burgeoning electronic music scene in America.

Despite their cult status, Erasure have always been proudly, defiantly, shamelessly pop - they even named their chart-topping greatest hits collection *Pop!* in 1992. But behind their impressive sales figures (14 million albums sold to date), pop and dance chart successes and kitsch stage costumes, it has sometimes been overlooked just what consistently great songwriters Vince and Andy have been throughout their career.

Indeed, Andy insists one motivating factor behind *Union Street* was to "show the songs in a different light, and show that they could work on whatever instrument, synthesizers or guitars. Vince agrees: "We just felt there were songs on our albums that had been missed as songs."

And what fine songs they are. Originally recorded for the *Cowboy* album in 1997, "**Boy**," the first single from the *Union Street* set, and "**Love Affair**" are both bittersweet farewells sung from the aftermath of ruined relationships. The former now packs an extra emotional punch from Andy's vaulting falsetto harmonies and generous dollops of Walsh's honeyed slide guitar, while the latter becomes a more graceful chamber music affair swept along by exquisite string arrangements. Erasure have explored the country-western aspects of the newly arranged "Boy" even further by commissioning single mixes from veteran alt-country engineer /mixer Brian Scheuble (Train, Wallflowers, Sheryl Crow, Fiona Apple, Liz Phair) as well as ex-Dwight Yoakam producer and maverick country-blues multi-instrumentalist Pete Anderson.

Some tracks on *Union Street* have been completely transformed by their radical new arrangements. "Spiralling," which started life

on *The Circus* in 1987, is now a crisp marriage of finger-picking guitar and melancholy introspection. And "Blues Away," taken from the 1994 album *I Say, I Say I Say*, is a rich, warm, sleepy-eyed strum about yearning for that elusive perfect lover. "It's nearly bedtime, and I'm getting lonely..."

There is more heart-tugging slide guitar woven into "Home" and "The Tenderest Moment," both first heard in their electronic versions on the 1991 album *Chorus*. The latter tune twinkles and shimmers like a desert sunset, overlaid with Andy's sublime harmonies as he follows the angels on a celestial mystery tour across the starry night sky.

The pared-down, organic textures of *Union Street* also create enough space for Andy to showcase the richer, more soulful depths of his vocal range. "It makes such a different singing with acoustic instruments," Andy says. "There's more space, it seems. When you're using electronics they soak up part of the voice. Whereas with strings, the voice seems to vibrate off of them."

Andy's mournful timbre on the languid, heartbroken "Piano Song" and the strikingly stark, regretful ballad "How Many Times" are pure Nashville Noir. "We're going to be the first band ever to cross over from pop to country," Andy jokes. "We want to play the Grand Old Opry." Not exactly, but Andy will nearly get his wish as the *Union Street Tour*, a once-in-a-lifetime, production-less, acoustic band performance of selections from *Union Street* and many Erasure classic hits kicks off at the Ryman Auditorium - original home of the Grand Ole Opry -- in Nashville, TN on May 6, 2006.

First heard on the 1995 album Erasure, "Stay With Me" has been transformed into a sun-kissed serenade with a lively Spanish feel and a bubbling undertow of rapturous desire. Another former single from the same album, "Rock Me Gently" is reborn as the shiny celestial lullaby that closes *Union Street*. "There's more to life than thrills and spills and dollar bills", Andy swoons as a velvet chorus of gospel voices lulls him softly to sleep.

*Union Street* proves there has always been much more to Vince and Andy than shiny pop thrills. Unplugged, both musically and emotionally, they have never before sounded so graceful or so heartfelt. This is an album full of pleasant surprises. But coming from Erasure, that is no surprise at all.

#### **UNION STREET TRACKLISTING**

BOY (from the album *Cowboy*)  
PIANO SONG (from the album *Wild!*)  
STAY WITH ME (from the album *Erasure*)  
SPIRALLING (from the album *The Circus*)  
HOME (from the album *Chorus*)  
TENDEREST MOMENTS (Run To The Sun B Side)  
ALIEN (from the album *Loveboat*)  
BLUES AWAY (from the album *I Say I Say I Say*)  
HOW MANY TIMES? (from the album *Wild!*)  
LOVE AFFAIR (from the album *Cowboy*)  
ROCK ME GENTLY (from the album *Erasure*)

#### **ERASURE ACOUSTIC DATES**

5/6 Nashville, TN @ Ryman Auditorium  
5/7 Dallas, TX @ Lakewood Theatre  
5/8 Houston, TX @ Cullen Theater at Wortham Center  
5/10 Los Angeles, CA @ Ford Amphitheatre  
5/11 San Francisco, CA @ Herbst Theatre  
5/13 Seattle, WA @ Showbox Theater  
5/15 Salt Lake City, UT @ Jeanne Wagner Theatre  
5/16 Denver, CO @ Boulder Theater  
5/18 Chicago, IL @ Park West  
5/19 New York, NY @ New York Society For Ethical Culture