DEVO: Back on Track

New Traditionalists. Devo on Warner Brothers Record.

Warning: You are about to read a rave review of a record that you haven’t even heard. You may want to seek coverage elsewhere.

I approached this album with some skepticism because the packaging looked too slick. Freedom of Choice is commercial, but was a mistake from a stylistic standpoint. Red plastics do not a murky make. That album was not devo—it this is.

Simply put, this is Devo’s best work since Q: Are We Not Men? It is more polished than that essay and more adventuresome and original than Freedom of Choice. In fact, there’s not a single bad cut here. They all shine.

New Traditionalists examines parts of the devo world; the people, as well as the lifestyle, are subjected to close scrutiny. The first cut, “Through Being Cool,” is eerie. My fingers are getting sore from all the snapping. The harmonies are lovely and the lyrics are superb. Our heroes are sick and tired of dealing with the “ninnies and the twits,” and, as always, Devo has the answer.

The synthesizer riff punctuates the phrases perfectly and reinforces the pretentiousness of the piece.

“Beautiful World” is the hymn of the devo people. It’s sing-song, pleasant and the lyrics say how nice it is to live there. The vocalist is the Mongoloid who fit in perfectly because he “had a hat, and he had a job and he brought home the bacon.”

There is one line that I can’t quite make out that tells us a lot if my guess is right: it sounds like “Little girl with the new clothes on, you can shake it to me all night long.”

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So that’s what drives the populace!... I wasn’t sure.

The other six cuts are just as fine, I assure you. The group has recaptured their vision of the future/protest in fine form. This album is Devo’s equivalent of the Tube’s Remote Control, a near-flawless concept album. I pray the next one’s as good.

Editor’s note: devo (de ‘vo) adj. 1. de-evolved, de-evolved 2. pertaining to, or related to, the concepts, ramifications, and results of the de-evolutionary process.

Eric A. Sohn

official New Traditionalist

normal street clothes Suitable for mutation.

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