Call of the West. Wall of Voodoo on I.R.S. Records.

Wall of Voodoo observes the world from rented offices above the decay of Hollywood Boulevard. The non-stop freak show in that cesspool of excitement has necessarily jaundiced their point of view, but they still remain a bunch of nice guys. After their last Boston show (November '81), I had the opportunity to find out how weird these nice guys really were. In between sips of "attitude juice" (Perrier), vocalist/lyricist Stanard Ridgway talked about Wall of Voodoo and its place in the current music scene.

"The last time we played in Boston, people told us that we were more of an art band and that we should have played at the Underground. But when we went to England people thought we weren't slick enough, we were too harsh — I guess they were expecting OMD or the Human League. After the initial shock, though, they really liked us."

Once the initial shock wears off you'll probably like them, too. Not just another band from L.A., Voodoo play a unique music that draws equally from electronic experimentation, country and western music, and the classic spaghetti western soundtracks written by Ennio Morricone. They've gone as far as recording Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire," and they are fond of playing the theme from Hang 'Em High during their performances. Voodoo layers thick keyboard chords (played "claw method" style by Chas Gray) over Marc Moreland's twanging, choppy guitar; all to the accompaniment of rhythm machine Ace Kalamazoo and percussionist Joe Nanini. Ridgway acts as method front man, singing, adding additional keyboarding, and berating the audience.

"Call of the West" further explores the themes set out on Wall of Voodoo's earlier work (insecurity on the job, the inability to relate, and the harsh reality of the machine age) and adds a few new ones: gambling (Voodoo's greatest obsession), spy movies, and procrastination. Ridgway's best observations, however, are those that hit closest to home, as in "Factory":

I got another factory back home
Got a little backyard, pink mustang

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