The golden age of Dolby

Blinded By Science, Thomas Dolby EP
On Venice in Perfil/Harvest Records.

In 1979, Crepuscule Records of Belgian release with the complete transcriptions entitled From Brussels With Love. A song called "She Blinded Me With Science" stood out from the rest of the collection; its combination of sparse instrumentation and evocative lyrics hinted at prodigious talent. Dolby's name surfaced again when Lone Løvish had his hit "Here to the End" he had written for it. His cameo appearances became more frequent. He played synthesized vocals with Løvish's touring band, contributed keyboards to Foreigner's "Urgent" and "Waiting For A Girl Like You," and recorded with the Thompson Twins.

Last fall marked the release of his own solo album, The Golden Age of Wireless, which only now is beginning to receive any notice. The sudden attention is due to the burgeoning success of Dolby's latest single and the release of a new EP.

Blinded By Science contains extended versions of three songs from Wireless plus both sides of the new single, providing an excellent overview of Dolby's songwriting ability. Categorizing Dolby's sound as electronic would be a gross generalization, for, although he utilizes state-of-the-art electronics his music and lyrics convey a sense of nostalgia for an era of simpler technology, hence his reference to a "Golden age of wireless."

The EP leads with Dolby's current hit "She Blinded Me With Science," a humorous look at the cliché abhominied professor and beautiful assistant scenarios. Dolby makes excellent use of a ballad, funky rhythm,filling in the silences with interjections from "Professor Magnus Pyg." ("Is this the go now, she tiptoed up and now I can't find anything; all my test tubes and wires are missing!"). And if you can stop laughing long enough it's great for dancing.

A set of "nostalgic pieces" is featured on side two, all taken from the Wireless album, all providing a better representation of Dolby's ability to conjure up images through lyrics that never do more than hint at their meaning. "Flying North," with its spirited, bounding pulse brings to mind images of early air travel, contrasting them with the cold reality of a person daydreaming in a London laundromat. "Windpower" (yet another reference to simple technology) has an unתקahale melody, its persistence due in part to a catchy hook stated by a horns section. "Sea Anemone," a set of atonal music, contains an interesting piano solo by fellow synthesizers and muted trumpet features. He has also surfaced the track with tasteful hints of shortwave broadcasts and radio static, all of which emphasize the main theme:

Through the airwaves
People mutate into monsters
Do we only feel the airwaves
Or stomp them out at street level?

Dolby would like to see a collection of this in itself, should serve only as an introduction. The EP's description of his songwriting scope is better represented on The Golden Age of Wireless. Give them both a listen as a prelude to the golden age of Dolby.