The album centers around side one's paired title cuts, "Synchronicity I and II," both investigations into Mr. King's "connecting principle" which links events in time but not in space. The short, choppy phrasing and percussive synth riff of "Synchronicity I" complements the long melodic line and power-trio drive of "Synchronicity II." Sandwiched between these cuts are the Police's first songs not penned by Sting: Summers' "Mother," a 7/8 Arabian raga raveup with Freudian lyrics ("Every girl that I go out with/Be-...""); "Walking in Your Footsteps," with its polyrhythmic drum patterns and African flute colorings; and "Tea in the Sahara," a bouncy tune of intrigue within the KGB. Although the tunes may at first seem to be simple concessions to Sting's compositional monopoly, they provide insights into the contributions made by the band's nonwriting members. The lion's share of the writing still belongs to Sting, however, and he outdoes himself by penning a set of Moody, emotive pieces. "King of Pain" and "O My God" deal with the personal anguish brought about by Sting's recent divorce (as does "Every Breath You Take") and both successfully evoke strong emotions — you can feel the anger in "O My God" and the sorrow in "King of Pain."

"Walking in Your Footsteps," with its polyrhythmic drum patterns and African flute colorings, and "Tea in the Sahara" with Summers' shimmering guitar synthesizer washes layered over a pulsing bass, burst into flame. The music is full of ac- cented squawking synths, tom-toms, shouted vocals — that act as mini-solos, personal comments that are not meant to disrupt the overall flow, a small departure from a pure African groove in which one can focus on one or all the instruments. The Afro-groove gives way to expertly played duet in "I Get Wild/ Wild Gravity," out-and-out gospel testifying in "Slippery People," and a true photo-blower bicep in "Pull Up the Roots," a tune destined to become a dance floor standard. "Roots" also provides the best indication of Byrne's current mindset: When he sings "I don't mind some slight disorder/No more time for talkin'/it over," he's obviously learned how to deal with the world, a far cry from the morose that characterized "I Can't Tell One from the Other" and "Don't Worry About the Government!"

An ability to believe in the healing power of good people seems to be the point of Speaking in Tongues. It's the only conclusion one can make in the face of lyrics like "God help us!/Help us lose our minds/And those slippery people/Help us understand," and "We are born without eyesight/We are born without sin/And our eyes prefix us From the cold and the rain." And if these homilies don't get the listener across well enough, Byrne winds up the album with his hardest-hitting — but softest played — stoke, "This Must Be the Place (Naive Melody)," a ballad about the joys of being able to come home. Home — is where I want to be but I know I'm already there. I come home — she lifted up her wings. Guess that must be the place.

How can I tell one from the other? Did you find me, or you find me? There was a time before we warn on/before anyone asks, this is where I'll be.

If Speaking in Tongues tells us anything about Byrne it's that he's found happiness. A contended band at the height of their career producing an album this innovative is a rarity, but we should hope the Heads do not remain in content for too long, because when they take risks, they remain pioneers. Let them forget, they didn't invent the funk, but they can sure bring it on home.

David Shaw