



"Bedtime for Democracy"
The Dead Kennedys
Alternative Tentacles
Records
★★★★

For their final album, "Bedtime for Democracy," the Dead Kennedys have gone for an all-out attack on everything that's wrong with America today.

The Dead Kennedys rose out of the San Francisco punk scene in 1978, about the same time the punk movement in England had died out.

Drummer D.H. Peligro and bassist Klaus Fluoride made up the thrashing rhythm section. East Bay Ray played a guitar that sounded more like a chainsaw than an instrument. Vocalist Jello Biafra could out scream Johnny Rotten.

However, the strength of the band lay with Biafra's intelligent, sarcastic, scathing and witty lyrics.

"Bedtime for Democracy" contains 19 original songs and a thrashed-out cover version of David Allan Coe's "Take This Job and Shove It."

From Winston Smith's satirical cover art to the 12 page "newspaper" included with the album, to the scatological lyrics of

each song, every aspect of American life comes under fire.

"Hop with the Jet Set" attacks ugly American tourists and attitudes. "The Great Wall" attacks the new American isolationism. "Macho Insecurity" attacks the return of traditional sexual (sexist) ideas. "Dear Abby" attacks religious hypocrisy. "Cesspools in Eden" attacks pollution and toxic waste. "I Spy" and "Lie Detector" attack the right wing's newest methods of invading the privacy of every citizen.

"Rambozo the Clown" attacks mindless entertainment movies like "Top Gun" and "Iron Ego." "Triumph of the Swill" attacks the music industry. "Fleshdance" attacks the entertainment industry and commercialism.

"One-Way Ticket to Pluto" attacks Reagan's Star Wars plans. "Potshot Heard Round the World"

attacks Reagan's "attacks" on terrorism. "Dear Abby" attacks Reaganomics. "Gone with My Wind" attacks Reagan.

"Chickenshit Conformist" and "Anarchy for Sale" attack those who act and dress punk to be cool. "Do the Slag" attacks those who use punk as a social stance from which to persecute those who don't act or dress right. "Where Do You Draw the Line" asks if punk is all that good of an idea anyway.

"Bedtime for Democracy" marks the end of an era, but the Dead Kennedys' music was somewhat of an anachronism anyway. The '80s are not the time for social criticism in music, or so MTV and the radio would have you believe.

—Review by Karl Pallmeyer

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