

SPOTLIGHT



Joshua Daltimer

DEVO

De-evolution is real and the future is now

Gerald Casale, Bob Casale, Mark Mothersbaugh, Josh Freese, Bob Mothersbaugh

DEVO'S MARK MOTHERSBAUGH used to be frustrated that the band was so frequently misunderstood. Today, many of the concepts the group put forth 30 years ago are all too familiar. "We talked about de-evolution, and people thought we were crazy," Mothersbaugh says. "We predicted one day there would be something called Music Television, and our record companies and our managers said, 'Why are you wasting money making films of your songs?' But those things happened. Now if you ask someone if they believe in de-evolution, a large percentage of people will agree with that possibility—or that reality."

Though two decades have passed since Devo last made an album, the band's new disc, *Something for Everybody*, sounds as if the group has never been away. Rife with robotic beats, brittle guitars and squiggly

synth lines, the songs are of a piece with the band's classic 1970s and '80s work. Yet the trademark Devo style remains just as contemporary as it was when "Whip It" first hit radio. "Each of us had different ideas about what a new Devo album should sound like," says Mothersbaugh, referring to fellow members Gerald Casale, Bob Casale, Josh Freese and Mothersbaugh's brother, Bob. "We ended up picking the best from both worlds—the old and the new."

Until now, Devo had been protective of its music to the point of straining its relationships with producers. "We felt like none of them understood what we were doing," says Mothersbaugh. "We were always reluctant to let them have their way with our music." For *Something for Everybody*, however, not only did the band let its fans choose the track listing, it also

turned the tracks over to several preeminent artists and producers for remixing. "That idea came from the song 'Watch Us Work It,' which we originally wrote for a Dell commercial," Mothersbaugh explains. "Dell's ad agency asked if we minded if [Swedish band] the Teddybears remixed it, and we told them to go ahead. When we heard the results, we thought, 'Wow, the Teddybears made the song sound better than we did!'"

Devo finally feels it is of its time rather than ahead of its time. Perhaps for that reason, the odds are good the group won't allow 20 years to elapse before the next release. "Making this album has been an enjoyable process, for the most part," he says. "I could see us repeating it soon."

—Russell Hall

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