

SPOTLIGHT



Casey Rodgers

THE BANGLES

Learning to love the '80s, with some help from a real-life revolution

Susanna Hoffs, Debbi Peterson, Vicki Peterson

WITH LYRICS ABOUT HATING SCHOOL, liking donuts and striking silly poses, the Bangles' 1986 hit "Walk Like an Egyptian" would have hardly been pegged as a political anthem at the time. Yet when protestors took to the streets of Cairo earlier this year to demand the ouster of Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak, many there adopted the song (penned by Liam Sternberg) as a rallying cry. "That just shows you how music can still resonate many years later," says Bangles singer and guitarist Susanna Hoffs, who formed the group with sisters Vicki Peterson (guitars, vocals) and Debbi Peterson (drums, vocals) 30 years ago.

The song's unexpected revival came as the group readied their first studio album in eight years, the new *Sweetheart of the Sun*. After finding fame with '80s smashes like

"Manic Monday," "Hazy Shade of Winter" and "Eternal Flame," the Bangles broke up for more than a decade before returning with 2003's *Doll Revolution*. The long layoff between projects is owed in part to the members' lives being very different today than when the band first formed in Los Angeles. "It's a juggling act these days with families, kids and the amount of touring we've been doing," Hoffs says. "Making an album was on the agenda, but it was one of those things you put off like cleaning out your closet."

She means that quite literally. All three Bangles sing and write, and beginning work on *Sweetheart*—produced by Hoffs' frequent duet partner, singer and songwriter Matthew Sweet—required them to sift through piles of demos they'd amassed over the years. "We all started by digging through old boxes of

tapes—literally tapes in some cases," Hoffs says. "That's how far the technology has come." That retro approach is nothing new for the Bangles—the group first emerged from the "paisley underground" scene, a haven for young bands with '60s leanings. On *Sweetheart* the trio once again pairs jangling, Byrds-style guitars with the sun-dappled three-part harmonies popular in that era.

Still, Hoffs today acknowledges a newfound appreciation for the 1980s—a decade in which she and her bandmates felt out of place in at the time. "I run into so many people who are younger than I am but who have such good feelings about it as a musical era," says Hoffs. "There was a lot of joy and fun. I can see why people have a connection to it"

—Kenneth Partridge

