

KA-BOOM!BOX
Pop!
2006 Boat Records
www.ka-boombox.com
Style: Dub-tronica

Ka-boom!Box is a "before-and-after" puzzle I'm pretty sure Wheel of Fortune hasn't thought of yet, and their debut, the appropriately exclamatory Pop!, is a danceable electronic delight. Five songs and eighteen minutes long, the disc blends turntables and electronic drums with a live rhythm section, guitar and vocals, and the resulting songs contain elements of reggae and Caribbean-steel-drum-style funk. The disc opens with the irresistible "Let It Drop," and I challenge anyone to sit still during it. Laura Miller provides the vocals over a head-nodding bass line and too many bleeps and bleeps to name. Though lyrically inconsequential ("Let it drop let it drop now/ Let it pop let it pop now/ Take it to the top to the top now/ Don't let it stop don't let it stop"), its appeal is undeniable.

On "Show Me the Way," Rodney Anderson's blazing electric guitar blends seamlessly with synth and samples as Miller provides sweet backing vocals to Adam Powell's understated lead. Powell, who also plays keyboards and occasionally mans the turntables, was the one responsible for bringing together the various members of the band. He connected the rhythm section of Madison punk-funk legends the Tar Babies (Robin Davies on bass and Dan Bitney on drums/percussion) with Miller and J-Dub, a turntablist and electronic drummer. On "Strange Girl" the steel-drum and reggae influences come to the forefront, and appropriately so, since the title character is a dreadlocked girl who also wears sequins and silk. Okay, so the line about taking "a bite out of the music apple" is a little hard to let pass without a huh?, but it still makes you want to dance.

Opening with the distinctive crackle of vinyl and the chirping of birds, standout track "Coming in Threes" stands in contrast to the rest of the songs. A much slower groove than the majority of the record, it uses the sample, "Would the correct number by any chance be three?" in the same ridiculously effective way that one-hit wonder Primitive Radio Gods used the now-ubiquitous sample of BB King's "How Blue Can You Get" in their mega-hit "Standing Outside a Broken Phonebooth With Money in My Hand." Propelled by Powell's super-smooth vocals and Miller's melodica, it's the track I keep coming back to even though it elicits no more than a sway. The disc closes with the low-key instrumental "When the Stars Threw Down Their Spears," as if they don't want to break the mood cast by "Coming in Threes." Very thoughtful, indeed.

Kiki Schueler