

Review: The Bangles, *Sweetheart of the Sun*

Posted by Driftwood Magazine on January 23, 2012 in CD Reviews, Reviews



The Bangles

Sweetheart of the Sun

[Model Music Group (2011)]

Surprise (probably): **The Bangles** are back! Well, technically, they were gone by the late 1980s, then came back for Doll Revolution in 2003 and stepped away for a bit. But now they've delivered *Sweetheart of the Sun*, and it is a sweetheart of a disk, steeped in 1960s vibes and sounding like a female Turtles or Association going psychedelic. No kidding.

Original bassist Michael Steele declined to reunite, reportedly because the other Bangles didn't want to tour as often as she did, but the remaining three originals (sisters Debbie and Vicki Peterson and Susanna Hoffs) rejoin their voices in stunning but slightly more mature harmonies. To fill the Steele-sized hole, they've drafted producer Matthew Sweet on keyboards and bassist Derrick Anderson.

"Anna Lee (Sweetheart of the Sun)" lifts the album off with just a touch of sitar-y reverb. That trippy vibe deepens with "Under a Cloud" next, featuring Pepperish string flourishes. Then the women shake off their haze with "Ball n Chain," which drives the comeback home with their signature powerfully perky pop sounds—1980s style. The middle of the disk even includes a few Americana-tinged ballads. There are two stunning covers, too: The rocking "Sweet and Tender Romance" was originally done by the McKinleys, a Scottish sisters duo, in 1964, and the Bangles' version features a fierce 14-second guitar solo. And the whole package is wrapped up in suitable style with an absolutely ripping cover of "Open My Eyes," Todd Rundgren's breakneck leap toward enlightenment from his Nazz days. With this final tune, the Bangles truly do reach Nirvana, and you will, too. Dig it.

—Jeff Lindholm (Montpelier, VT)