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WORDS ON MUSIC

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DEVO - Live 1980 (DualDisc/Target Video)

In the 25 years since this concert was recorded (August 17, 1980 at the Phoenix Theatre in Petaluma), Devo frontman Mark Mothersbaugh has gone on to formidable critical and commercial success. In addition to scoring the music for Pee Wee's Playhouse, Mothersbaugh has also worked on the music for the past three Wes Anderson films. For those who might have missed it (or simply didn't get it) the first time around, the point is long overdue for a re-appreciation of the work of Devo. Certainly, their intriguing visual approach to New Wave (in full display on the DVD side of this disc) contributed as much to the development of MTV as did Michael Nesmith—though both would be rightfully horrified by the cultural form's decline. In fact, Devo's name (short for de-evolution, the direction in which these spuds from O-hi-o saw the political economy heading under the Reagan regime) is more than a bit prophetic in terms of anticipating such a development. Don't ask why Mark Mothersbaugh is doing jumping jacks throughout "Be Stiff," just enjoy this amazing document from the archives. Then dig out your old Devo records and ask yourself if you are not men, if freedom of choice is what you got, if the so-called rising tide really lifted all boats (or is some were left to drown). —EDWARD BURCH