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**REVIEWS: JAH WOBBLE & KEITH LEVENE - [ALBUM]**

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**ARTIST:** Jah Wobble & Keith Levene - [Album]  
*with free mp3 download for 'Mississippi' from Yin & Yang by Jah Wobble & Keith Levene*  
**DATE:** 11-30-12

**REVIEW BY:** Bill Adams  
**ALBUM:** Yin & Yang  
**LABEL:** Cherry Red Records/30 Hertz Records

*Now Playing: 'Yin & Yang' from Yin & Yang by Jah Wobble & Keith Levene*

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As excited as some people were when Jah Wobble and Keith Levene announced that they were working on new music together, there's no way that supporters were expecting much from the duo. That statement isn't meant to sound as condemning as it probably does, but let's be honest – over-inflated expectations would have been unreasonable because both players have always been sidemen; their names are good, but each has always been reliant upon a larger star to help them really shine. In this case, because there is no larger name (or personality) associated with the project, getting excited was easy (almost like an involuntary reflex or instinct) – even if no one was really sure why.

The moment that the title track of *Yin & Yang* kicks over to open the record, listeners will be glad they followed their gut and trusted their instincts to check the record out. There, drums so thick and heavy they rival a military assault in their intensity lock in instantly with Levene's textural guitars and Wobble's bottomless bass to produce a sound that is both instantly confrontational and absorbing; it is, simply said, a perfect punk backdrop and listeners will feel a sneer creep across their faces sympathetically. That start immediately commands attention, but those who are a little slow in forming ranks will pick up their feet when, showing all of his fifty-four years in his throat, Wobble spits and sneers, "Fucking Yin and fuckin' yang! Soft fuckin' w hisper, big fucking bang! Soft and hard and dark and light! Midday sun, impenetrable night" into the microphone.

The miserable, "lunatic screaming on a street corner" impression left by Wobble is a potent, beautiful image and, fleshed out by the mosaic wall of sounds behind the singer in that title track, listeners will almost be able to taste the mania in it. It's the sort of introduction which will have listeners sitting down en masse and buckling in to see what else this duo has in store for them.

While there's no question that Wobble and Levene don't make it easy on listeners during all ten tracks which populate this album, the great moments are landmark and are more than striking enough to ensure that listeners will still sit bedazzled through the weaker moments (read: those which rely more on dub than punk) through this run-time.

After "Yin & Yang" sets the tone of the album, "Strut" coasts in the best possible way with an uplifting instrumental track which answers the eternal question of whether or not dub and Pro-Tools can exist on the same plain. With Wobble's bass as well as the drums supplied by Marc Layton-Bennett holding down the low end, Levene multi-tracks a maelstrom of instruments on top to produce a tuneful but rugged soundscape (which seems to enjoy tantalizing listeners with a vamp on Johnny Winter's "Secret Agent Man" guitar licks) before sliding easily into Wobble's spoken word exercise "Flags & Staffs." From there (and still growing with every step), "Mississippi" takes a decent try at a sort of rhythm & blues-y, punk/dub hybrid the likes of which have never been heard until now before crashing headlong into the group's first real fumble, a cover of The Beatles' "Within You, Without You." In that cover's three minutes and twenty-six seconds lies the first inkling of where this entire creative endeavor could really go wrong, and it really only has to do with the fact that both Levene and Wobble seem intent on playing against their own established strengths (previously expressed beautifully on this very record!). In this cover, the instruments meander along in a pretty unguided manner while Wobble gives up a surprisingly beleaguered vocal – it's exactly the wrong kind of surprise which helps to set the precedent for any and all of the weaker moments on the second half of this record. One track might be seen as a fluke, but many of the problems which dog "Within You, Without You" also hold up songs like "Back On The Block" (which is seething, but aimless) as well as on the bustling but boring "Fluid" and the two tracks to which Sex Pistols Experience poseur Nathan Maverick contributed vocals, "Understand" and "Understand Dub" – they're all just a little too flimsy for anyone's comfort and really threaten to call the record's quality into question. Happily, the record does manage to not become too tarnished but, in the end, those few songs whereupon everything falters stand as

excellent proof of why Jah Wobble and Keith Levene would be well-advised to stick closer to a fine if peevish pop song format.

Such problems as those from which the late-playing of *Yin & Yang* suffers are troublesome, but they prove not to be any good reason not to check this record out. Simply said, this album is the best thing to which Jah Wobble's and Keith Levene's names have been attached in years. True, there are rough spots in it but, after listening to *Yin & Yang*, listeners will have no problem looking on those gaffes as places where the band will be able to grow and improve on future records. Here's hoping they do make more, these ideas (and those who hear them) beg refining.

**Artist:**

[www.30hertzrecords.com/](http://www.30hertzrecords.com/)

[www.facebook.com/JahWobbleAndKeithLevene](http://www.facebook.com/JahWobbleAndKeithLevene)

**Download:**

[Jah Wobble & Keith Levene – Yin & Yang – “Mississippi” – \[mp3\]](#)

**Album:**

*Yin & Yang* is out now, available both as a digital download and as an import CD. Buy it here on [Amazon](#).

