

# THE BIG TAKEOVER

**t.s.o.l.**

**the early years live; from the vaults of flipside & the targetvideo77, 1983)**

**(TargetVideo77/Flipside/MVDVisual)**

Surprises all around. Despite the recycled cover from these L.A. legends' debut 1981 punk EP, this is T.S.O.L. in 1983 at their neo-psychedelic post-punk-pop apex: touring in support of their *astonishing* second LP *Beneath the Shadows*. And although *Flipside* was known for terrible camera work and laughable sound, this looks *great* thanks to its afternoon outdoor setting, and one camera tracking sharp close-ups alternated with wider pans. The sound is also *excellent*—from the board. New crossover member **Greg Kuehn**'s crucial busy keyboards are thus heard as prominently as **Ron Emory**'s intricate guitars and singer **Jack Grisham**'s yelping melodicism. It can't be stressed how rare this is: the quintet quit soon after, and has declined to play *Shadows* since returning except occasionally when Kuehn has appeared. (Fair enough; he's that important.) And if T.S.O.L. were America's Damned, this is their *Black Album/Strawberries*, with less clowning. (Initially dressed in thriftstore women's getup, Grisham looks more masculine than Henry Rollins.) The shock of transformation is vivid in the 1000 bewildered but attentive, immobile gawking college kids at a free show at what looks like Cal State Fullerton. A few punks slam to early EP songs, but otherwise appear as unsure on "what to do" as straights!! Ha! Finally, Grisham is *remarkable*, all loosey-goosy, wide-eyed insouciance, looks, charisma, and raffish charm. Despite zero energy from the audience, you can't take your eyes off him—or stop listening to this unforeseen document of an under-recognized watershed! (A bonus 2006 live clip shows they remain a wild time. A 1983 interview is outrageous, too. Grisham also reads from his new book) (mvdb2b.com)

- Jack Rabid