

CULTURE

ness to give their music the imprimatur of the *shtetl*. The band mines the lode rediscovered by John Zorn, but with even less concern for the sanctity of tradition. At times *Sludge Test* sounds like the work of a punk band playing the wedding and Bar Mitzvah circuit. And those times are the record's best. For Gutbucket, fusion ends up signaling not a desire to produce music that is sophisticated or mature, but rather music that is open to the layering of selves that makes history personal. Proficiency in playing jazz doesn't require turning one's back on the Deep Purple riffs of one's adolescence. Nor does it demand the washing away of one's ethnic heritage. Sometimes the whole *is* greater than the sum of its parts. —Charlie Bertsch



NEW HEAVY, by Dub Trio. ROIR, 2006

THE CROSS-FERTILIZATION of punk and dub reggae is nothing new. As far

back as the late 1970s, British artists such as the Ruts, the Clash, and PiL found ways to incorporate dub-style sound design and remixes in their work, giving punk its first multicultural and experimental artistic sensibilities. Since then, with certain profound exceptions like first-generation hardcore band the Bad Brains and Washington, D.C. indie icons Fugazi, dub has largely taken an aesthetic backseat to modern punk's preferences for appropriating motifs from hip-hop and heavy metal. If dub has reappeared at all over punk's last sixteen years, it is usually in the midst of a hip-hop style breakdown, with the application of a delay or spring reverb to a snare drum.

Enter the world of New York's Dub Trio, and their second full-length album, the appropriately titled *New Heavy*. As much an artistic break from their more experimental-sounding first album as it is from a heavy metal-obsessed contemporary punk scene, *New Heavy* is both an ironic comment on the increasing aes-

thetic conservatism of punk and an accurate description of how Dub Trio is inventing their own brand of in-your-face dub reggae. Laying down power chords to the tune of an at times almost martial sounding rhythm section, alternating between extremely loud traditional reggae arrangements and flat-out hardcore, *New Heavy* is like a nostalgia trip back to the early eighties without being annoyingly retro. If the band simply aimed to resurrect a forgotten subgenre of punk, it most certainly succeeded.

What the *New Heavy* lacks is an identifiable position—not necessarily a defined political one, but some kind of social narrative other than its intuitive ability to reproduce the profound feelings of alienation and urban decay that made classic dub, at its most noir, so endearing to first generation punk rockers. It's not enough just to conjure up the vibe. The music still has to go somewhere. If *New Heavy* is any indication, Dub Trio's next full length album just might arrive at that destination. —Joel Schalit

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