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Sons and Fascination is refreshing but not great

by Gisele Marie Baxter

Simple Minds, who allegedly took their ironic name from a David Bowie song, got their start in Glasgow, Scotland, around three years ago. Although yet to enjoy any noticeable success on this side of the Atlantic, their fourth album, **Sons and Fascination**, just might win them a greater following. It's not quite great, but there's something refreshing and listenable about it.

The record starts off promisingly with "Love Song", featuring Jim Kerr's voice at its vital, incantatory best over a compelling, danceable melange of synthesizers, percussion, tambourine and guitars. Kerr's voice is one of the best things about Simple Minds; it has rich qualities reminiscent of the late Ian Curtis of Joy Division. On a track like "This Earth That You Walk Upon", which is propelled by an excellent mix of percussion and echoed keyboard effects, Kerr conveys poignancy and awe.

Unfortunately, all the songs don't seem to live up to the same standards. The over-use of dance rhythms limits the general variance of the sound, or, to be more blunt, there is too much here that sounds like disco, and too many of those songs last for five minutes or more. "Theme for Great Cities", while suitably dramatic, is to Visage-ish, and the romantic/futurist numbers, "Sweat in Bullets" and "20th Century Promised Land" are given pedestrian production and so sound like predictable synthesizer music. Besides, Kerr seems lost singing disco-style.

Fortunately, there's enough of good quality to save this record and keep you intrigued. "The American" is a highly effective short dance number, full of power and defiance, with wonderful rhythmic and melodic variances in the mix. Kerr and the chorus sing it with style, and the instrumentation is electrifying.

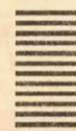
Also, Derek Forbes' moody bass line segueing into the percussion and keyboard arrangement indicates good things to come in the atmospheric epic "In Trance as Mission". Kerr is thoroughly in his element, here stretching his voice through the cleanly orchestral lines of the music with a sense of terror and wonder in a confusing world which seems to hover between dream and nightmare: "For just one moment in time/I want to walk where it is/Sustain a sta-

ture in life..."

Simple Minds also includes Charles Burchill on guitars, Brian McGee on drums (he does a great job; unfortunately he has left the band), and Michael MacNeil on keyboards. They're a good band; in spite of the shortcomings of this album, you should give them a listen. At its best, their music can give a very convincing sense of the fear we can feel amidst the trappings of the modern world.

SIMPLE MINDS

SONS AND FASCINATION



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