

Simple Plan - Taking One for the Team (2016)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Opinion Overload* 2 *Boom!* 3 *Kiss Me Like Nobody's Watching* 4 *Farewell* (Featuring – Jordan Pundik) 5 *Singing in the Rain* (Featuring – Rock City) 6 *Everything Sucks* 7 *I Refuse* 8 *I Don't Wanna Go to Bed* (Featuring – Nelly) 9 *Nostalgic* 10 *Perfectly Perfect* 11 *I Don't Wanna Be Sad* 12 *P.S. I Hate You* 13 *Problem Child* 14 *I Dream About You* (Featuring – Juliet Simms) Pierre Bouvier - vocals David Desrosiers - bass guitar, vocals Sébastien Lefebvre - guitar, vocals Chuck Comeau - drums, vocals Jess Stinco - lead guitar, vocals + Howard Benson - Hammond B3 Lenny Skolnik - keyboards, vocals

It has been argued, with varying levels of success, that Simple Plan deviated too far over the past couple of albums. Truth be told, they've always clung to the pop flank of pop-punk. Yet when irreverent lyrics and copious amounts of tomfoolery were replaced with love songs and seriousness, punk purists abandoned ship.

But Simple Plan knew the score. They knew that by the time their fifth studio album was released in 2016, few people would care about genre. They predicted the genre-less revolution of today's youth – a time when fans would listen to Taylor Swift on CD, stream Blink 182 and spin Abbey Road on vinyl all in one day.

Whether consciously or not, Simple Plan have joined the genre-benders generation. Certain Taking One For The Team tracks are a definitely satiating for their punk fans. Opening tracks "Opinion Overload", "Boom!" and "Kiss Me Like Nobody's Watching" put you in the mood to pull out your old Greenday albums. Then comes "Farewell", featuring the unmistakeable vocal talents of Jordan Pundik from New Found Glory. You just start to feel confident about Simple Plan's return to punk when 10 seconds later you're listening to reggae in the form of "Singing In The Rain", which features chart toppers R City.

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By the time you make it to “I Don’t Wanna Go To Bed”, featuring Nelly, you’ve conceded that this truly is a pop album. And really, despite what punk purists and general haters will say, it’s a damn good pop album. My head literally did not stop bopping from start to finish.

Musically there is something distinct about this album. There’s barely a minor chord to be found in any of the first eleven tracks. Formulaic pop music evangelists would say that this is a recipe for disaster. Yet Bouvier and Comeau, whilst announcing themselves as pop writers here, are in no way conformists to the insta-hit school of song writing just yet.

Furthermore, they’ve managed to create exactly what they were looking for – happiness and positivity. Ever since the announcement of this album and the release of “I Don’t Wanna Be Sad” as a single, I knew what the band were aiming for on this album. They’ve grouped the slower, more introspective tracks together at the end of the album, rather than interspersing them, and it doesn’t affect overall balance and coherence as much as you’d imagine.

What Simple Plan have done here is breathe some diversity into the genre on which they were raised. Their first two albums were pop-punk conformist and reasonably predictable. Their self-titled release of 2008, whilst still featuring extremely good song writing, was a turn for the dark side. 2011’s Get Your Heart On brought them back into the popular consciousness with a vengeance. Now, Taking One For The Team solidifies them as a pop powerhouse. And though the album runs high to songs about relationships, if you want a rocking and rolling feel-good album to kick off 2016 with, then this one is for you. ---Josh Champion, theaureview.com

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