

Music Review

Title: *Wild Things: Sounds of the Disabled Underground Vol 1*

Artist: Compilation

Producer: Heavy Load (Mastered by Al Scott at Metway Studios, Brighton)

Label: Get in or Get Out Records

Website: <http://www.stayuplate.org/>; <http://heavyload.org/>;
<http://www.myspace.com/disabledunderground>

Price: £5.00 Available for purchase at: <http://heavyload.org/news.html#tshirt>

Reviewer: Kevin Dierks

Do you like to stay up late and party with your friends, or do you prefer to tuck in early and listen to a new CD and read the latest *Review of Disability Studies* journal? If you find yourself stopping and contemplating these two options this probably means you have a choice. Thousands of people do not have the opportunity to make this choice. One group of musicians has made this disparity their personal mission, and this mission has resulted in a compilation CD called *Wild Things: Sounds of the Disabled Underground Vol 1*.

This mission was bred in a United Kingdom (UK) culture of punk music, bar scenes, and learning disabilities fostered by the creative genius of a band called Heavy Load. This rag tag, beer drinking, band of hard rockers became frustrated watching their fans get up and walk out on them at 8:45 p.m., not because they did not like the show, but because they had to return home for their staff's shift change at 10:00 p. m. Heavy Load are apparently not the kind of guys to take things lying down, and as a response created a movement called the "Stay Up Late Campaign." Their message is direct and in your face, as any good punk rock song should be: "We want to stay up late - we want to have some fun." More information about this campaign can be found at <http://www.stayuplate.org>.

During an ensuing tour, Heavy Load met many more artists with learning disabilities and once again headed off on a campaign launching *Wild Things: Sounds of the Disabled Underground Vol 1*. *Wild Things*, the inspired brainchild of Heavy Load, is a compilation album featuring 16 songs by 16 different artists. It is the first of what is expected to be more volumes featuring artists with learning disabilities from the UK. The music on this CD is just as amazing and unique as the background story. In addition, all the proceeds from the sale of this album go to support the "Stay Up Late Campaign."

The style of music on this album is so diverse, everyone is bound to find something they like. Styles include techno, pop, rock, blues, reggae, and of course punk. Rhythmic dance beats sit next to screaming punk rock riffs. Some tunes sound slightly familiar, and others are probably unlike anything you have ever heard. All are 100% original and unique as the artists themselves. The music is so different that if not for the "Stay Up Late Campaign" it would most likely never be found on the same CD. The common thread is all the artists having learning disabilities. If you want to be inspired you are likely to find something here. If you want to be reminded of the range of creativity of the human spirit this album is for you.

Some of the song lyrics directly reflect the experience of living with a learning disability, such as “That’s a Beautiful Thing” by Vanessa Ryan and Kick Me Ugly: *“It might seem strange to you, but nobody needs to be tuned, and that’s a beautiful thing in this world”* or “Stand Up” by Beat Express: *“Stand up, stand up for yourself, speak up, speak up for yourself.”*

Other songs are remarkably simple in their approach yet have the ability to take a listener to deeper places, such as Heavy Load’s song “Farty Animals” with only one lyric repeatedly repeated: *“Ooooooo farty animals,”* or Dean Rawat’s rendition of the English alphabet in a way you’ve never experienced if you have not heard his song “Alphabet.”

I encourage everyone to buy this album to support a whole new range of talented artists and support a movement for freedom. Isn’t that what rock and roll was supposed to be all about anyway?

Kevin Dierks has worked for over 20 years with large and small non-profit organizations in Hawai‘i and State government, from the front lines of program delivery to program management and systems change to support people with developmental disabilities and the communities and systems that surround us. He has a M.A. in Community Psychology and is a graduate of the select leadership development and training program, The National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities, as well as a graduate of the Disability and Diversity Studies Certificate program at the University of Hawaii. He is also Certified Professional Coach, and a professional musician.