

Stockholm Syndrome

✖ By Derek Webb | INO Records

Derek Webb's new album hasn't been without controversy. His record company removed a song because of strong language. As a result, Webb directed listeners to a Web site where they could get the missing song. This created quite a buzz, and now fans can finally hear the rest of the album, *Stockholm Syndrome*, which addresses such topics as race, sexuality and prejudice.

"Freddie, Please" is a response to Fred Phelps, the Kansas pastor who believes war and terrorism are God's punishment for a society that tolerates homosexuality.

"I hesitated writing the song," Webb says, "since I didn't want to direct any more attention to Mr. Phelps. But because he's become the very public face of so-called Christianity, I felt compelled to draw a line in the sand and say that he's on one side and I'm on the other. His message is so anti-Christian—so anti-Jesus in every way—that if you call him a Christian, you'd better call me something else, because we're not the same."

"The Spirit vs. The Kick Drum," which opens with a clip from *Sesame Street* duo Bert and Ernie playing the drums, is "a simple song that tries to address ways I constantly catch myself wanting something easy and fun—something I can understand and manage—rather than engaging in the spiritual mystery of a connection to God—and the unpredictable reality of Christian spirituality."

Webb offers a sound that sometimes has a bit of a retro feel but steers clear of feeling old-fashioned. I enjoy the melodies a bit more than the lyrics, which causes me to wonder if Webb is too smart of a songwriter for me. I appreciate his intellectual and gutsy approach about pertinent and sometimes

difficult topics, but at times the message is a bit too vague. If his point is partly to get listeners to think—for themselves—then he accomplishes that. But some songs left me hanging and trying to decipher the meaning. However, Webb has created an album worth listening to—and perhaps the more I listen the smarter I'll become.

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