

## **SNEAKER PIMPS**

Becoming X (Virgin)

Rating: \*\*\*\*

By *Tristram Lozaw*

The Sneaker Pimps like to think of themselves as a Brit trip-hop band with a difference: songs. The kind of songs "that can be sung with a guitar, on the toilet." Not sure how they fit on there with the drum machine, but the Sneaker Pimps' boast is basically on target. Stoked with themes of modern culture's manipulations, the Pimps' crafty dub-hop tunes become tag-team matches featuring the stark box beats of Tricky, creepy sweetness of the Cranes and bad-girl appeal of Garbage.

The Sneaker Pimps' name, lifted from the Beastie Boys' term for guys hired to buy them hard-to-find high-tops, suggests some sophomoric hi-jinks, but the *mysterioso* sophistication of the CD's title, and its possible meanings, fits the band's music better.

As a reference to rave-style highs, *Becoming X* reflects the lysergic dream of dance floor funk threading through the spooky grooves of "Low Place Like Home," "Walking Zero" and the title cut. As a sexy come-on, the deep-bottom roll of "Spin Spin Sugar" and the Flood (U2, Depeche Mode) mix of "Wasted Early Sunday Morning" become calls to sleaziness, with singer Kelli Dayton starring as the wet dream. Meanwhile, "Post Modern Sleaze" sounds eerily down-home in its bluesy acoustic grit, adding earthiness to Dayton's allure.

The pounding edginess of "Tesko Suicide," the single that created a blitz of worship in the British press last year, makes it a standout here as well. While balancing grim humor with emotional reaffirmation, the song weaves a fantasy about being able to buy suicide kits at the supermarket: "You've got nothing to shout about, you're over and out."

The heavy reliance on pedestrian trip-hop beats gets a bit unnerving after repeat listens, and too much has been made of the Pimps' supposed "postmodern" eclectic appeal. But in *Becoming X* we have what could be a leap forward in the melding of song and dance in a decade that could use more of both.