

The Essential Cruel Empowerment

Description: a collection of six LPs, eight cassette tapes, and one CD for a band called 'Cruel Empowerment.' There are UPC codes, but they are meaningless. The record label is Atlantic, but nobody there has ever heard of Cruel Empowerment, or even the people who supposedly worked on the music production. Note that the collection does NOT reek of extraplanar origin.

Powers: the various tracks seem to have a particular resonance that helps to unlock psionic potential, mostly involving mental domination. Adepts reported that regular exposure to Cruel Empowerment's music increased their expertise in psionic confusion, persuasion, mental domination, imposed hallucinations, and lucid dreaming. Psionic adepts also reported an increased tendency towards megalomania, and the occasional flash of low empathy.

According to the liner notes, Cruel Empowerment is a New Zealand folk-funk band that started touring in 1975 and continued on until at least 1989 (the CD is an anniversary collection of greatest hits, and is copyrighted 1999). The band is Billy Mate (lead guitar, backup vocals), Syndi Sibra

(lead vocals, keyboard), Yuri Newyn (backup guitar, and horns), and Oleg Krig (drums); their music is, well, an odd but not immediately terrifying mix of folk and funk music. It's actually pretty good. If you're mind-blind.

If you have psionic potential, on the other hand, Cruel Empowerment's stuff is more like a ticking time bomb. The harmonics in the vocals and electronic music directly stimulate certain parts of the brain, sure: they also subtly encourage the attitude that people who aren't psionic are more or less 'things' -- or at least that non-psions should get out of the way and let psions run things. People who are aware of and can control their powers will recognize the impulses as being imposed, and can block them. People who are merely latent psions will instead just feel increasingly tempted to use their burgeoning mental powers in a socially unacceptable fashion.

And *that's* why the music is now suppressed. Discreet research has revealed no evidence of the existence of Cruel Empowerment, but one of the fun things about even essentially benign international psionic conspiracies is that you're never quite sure if there's another, darker one out there. Maybe somebody suppressed memories of the band. Maybe somebody isn't suppressing memories of the band; they're just suppressing the memories of

anybody who might be inclined to effectively oppose the band. And maybe this is all a front for an insidious psionic llama conspiracy. When you start messing with people's perceptions, really: when do you stop?

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