Thank you for the future

*Reformer*, V-Sor, X (CD, Dox Music)

*Reformer*, the brand new CD from V-Sor, X, is full of big pop songs with subtle nuances and memorable hooks, intelligent lyrics, careful and clever guitar, as well as Ian 'Rolls' Rowland's fluid and expressive bass playing, which underpins the music alongside the keyboard rhythms.

Rooted in the post-punk sound of the likes of Wire along with poppier influences from the bands such as Gary Numan and Blancmange, V-Sor, X have perfected their propulsive sound over many years, keeping their music warm and approachable rather than turning to abstract electronics or icy hysterics. Texture and effect are *applied* rather than featured here, contributing to the songs rather than distracting or alienating the listener.

If some songs seem rooted in loss and despair, others such as 'getting back' offer social comment and advice, or celebrate a sense of release (see 'that's quiet enough' and the lively instrumental 'jumping & jigging & energised'). Overall, there is a sense resistance to a contemporary dystopia, of people sidelined and despairing, lost in the world, but truly alive and celebrating that; musically, this is underpinned by the synthesizers which dominate and feature throughout the music.

Yes, there's musical depth and optimism here. Relistening reveals new layers and hidden depths, careful texturing, tonal light and shade, musical change and variation at work as the songs progress. I started by wishing for more separation and foregrounding of the music, perhaps even some more obviously disruptive guitar and synthesizer sounds, but paying attention reveals a subtlety behind the initial soundscape. Centred around Morgan Bryan's dynamic and powerful voice (he also writes the songs) this is music for the 21st Century: let yourself be reformed and engaged.

Rupert Loydell

You can order the CD at https://vsorx.bandcamp.com/album/reformer