

# Music Review: Bell Biv Devoe- Three Stripes



by Uther Blakwhel

It's been 16 years since Bell Biv Devoe's last CD. The release of *Three Stripes* coincides with the New Edition biopic mini-series that debuted on the B.E.T network this year. Upon looking at the *Three Stripes* cover art it shows three of the co-founding members of New Edition looking more suave and seasoned on this album cover versus the street look from their previous CD *BBD*. Bell Biv Devoe also lets you know that they are ready to pick up where they left off from their *Poison* debut which is evident when you see the return of their sound description quote re-appear on the new record. "Our music is mentally hip-hop smoothed out on the R & B tip with a pop feel appeal to it!" We haven't seen this quote since *Poison*. When I saw the return of this accurate description of their sound I was expecting the return of *Poison* pound for pound. Once I started listening to the new album I was originally disappointed. But after listening to *Three Stripes* in more detail, I realized that my expectations were too nostalgic and unrealistic. I was too busy focusing on who Bell Biv Devoe was and not who they are now! The new record opens up with a surprising and energetic intro from hip-hop legend Doug E. Fresh with "Ready." It then smoothly glides into "Find A Way" which is a song about making it right with the woman you love and pleading your case for her to give you one more chance.

Ricky sings, "Girl I've got a find a way despite all these people" through auto tune which makes his signature vocal sound unrecognizable at first. Ronnie and Mike rap clever and smooth rhymes about their plans to get their queens back in

their arms again. The song is catchy and sneaks up on you by the time itâ€™s over.

â€œIâ€™m Bettaâ€ is about how the girl you want is with the wrong guy because he doesnâ€™t treat her right but you will. Ricky steals the show in this song when he sings, â€œYou never got to worry about the inconsistency to getting all the love you need. You donâ€™t got to cry no more. You donâ€™t got to hurt no more, Iâ€™m Betta.”

â€œHot Damnâ€ is about the fine girl at the club twerking and dancing. â€œNova and Ocean produced “Hot Damn’s” great pop production. Bell Biv Devoe’s lyrics seemed strained when they said, â€œCold as Ben and Jerry let me put you on top you the perfect cherry. You know my back so legendary Iâ€™ve been doing this since Moe, Curly and Larry. Hot Damn, Oooh I love it when you twerk that. Hot Damn Oooh girl you do it perfect.â€

â€œAll Dat Thereâ€ is a guilty pleasure about a woman. â€œGirl Iâ€™m about to lose my mind. What you doing with All Dat There. Wonâ€™t you break me off sometime. Let me sample some of that good. What you doing with All Dat There?â€ The song sounds like it should be on a Ro James record and not Bell Biv Devoe. But you canâ€™t help but sing along even when you realize this!

The songs that stick out the most on *Three Stripes* areâ€œDonâ€™t Go,” â€œFinally (featuring SWV),” â€œOne More Try (featuring Boyz II Men),â€ â€œIncredible” and theâ€œErick Sermon of EPMD fame-produced â€œRun.â€

â€œRunâ€ shows the tables turn in regards to a man that gets close to the woman he loves just to have her get scared and run away because he is getting too close to her heart. Ronnie, Ricky and Mike remind you of why you missed Bell Biv Devoe when you hear â€œRun.”

*â€œSo tell me why you playin’ games I’m a man, what you say?*

*Speak up, 'cause girl I can't hear you  
Tired of gettin' 50 percent when I'm near you  
Every time I buy you things, you play the game  
You run-run-run and you run-run  
Can't you see my heart's in pain when you run away?  
You run-run-run and you run-run  
I'm so so sick of this Â give me kiss Â then you split  
Tell me you care, but you keep me time limited  
Girl, when you run (you run-run-run, you run-run) æ*

æOne More Tryæ has another memorable introduction of Bell Biv Devoe by the legendary Don Cornelius from *Soul Train*. æOne More Tryæ has a great 70s soul production feel that leaves you looking for the *Soul Train* line so that you can jump in and dance.

æIncredibleæ closes the record with a tribute to that lady in your life that is æIncredibleæ in every way. It sounds and feels like a cool and smooth sequel to William De Vaughn's soul classic æBe Thankful for What You Got."

Bell Biv Devoe's Â *Three Stripes* differs from their previous record Â *BBD* which seemed to focus more on hip-hop without the smoothed out R &B. Â *Three Stripes* gives you a Bell Biv Devoe focused back on hip-hop, pop and soul. The new record does sound a little too modern at times, (Ricky Bell's auto-tuned voice) but still delivers just enough of their original style when you need it.