



NKOTB Face the Music

COLUMBIA CK 52969 • 1994, 67:07

Performance ★ ★
Sound Quality ★ ★ ★ ★

The cover is a stern black and white photo and the very first word on the CD is "respect." Clearly, after massive commercial success, that's the only thing left for NKOTB to achieve. The group goes after it by moving beyond the light pop ditties that were NKOTB's forte and concentrating solely on hip-hop and R&B, with more and more raps from Donnie Walberg.

The opening track is an atmospheric mood piece in which the five guys talk about being

M A Y 1 9 9 4

pop/rock

away for a long time and all the "bullshit" they've had to put up with. It's a mellow, confident, and engaging bit of work that, unfortunately, raises expectations the rest of the album can't fulfill.

Face the Music was produced in bulk by Walberg and Jordan Knight, but a gang of producers, including Teddy Riley, take part on individual cuts. The result is rather bloodless, with only a few memorable tunes on hand. Riley's "You Got the Flavor" is the strongest, but Narada Michael Walden's pop gloss on three songs is best suited to NKOTB's strengths, with "Keep on Smilin'" a particular standout.

Walberg is a better Svengali than rapper, but guests Nice & Smooth deliver the worst rap of all on the first single, "Dirty Dawg." ("Yo! Why you wanna act like a tramp? A wet food stamp?") Snoop Doggy Dogg won't be losing any sleep, but that's the point: NKOTB would rather be compared unfavorably to Dogg than favorably to Shaun Cassidy. —*Michael Giltz*