

PET SHOP BOYS  
DISCOGRAPHY: The Complete Singles Collection  
EMI/Capitol/Parlophone

review by Beverley White

WARNING: Having a cow over a review could be hazardous to your reproductive and social health.

Now then:

It's been a fact of life that British technoband Pet Shop Boys have rarely been able to release their very best songs as "chart topper" singles over here. If anything, the songs have always been just too damn long for the average North American CHR radio listener to stay with, so what good singles have made it overseas have typically been butchered to accommodate the three and a half minute attention span of said North American.

Unfortunately, when PSB released their *Discography* a short while ago, they only included their butchered singles instead of their definitive parent pieces from *Please* (or *Disco*, depending on your tastes), *Actually*, *Introspective*, and *Behavior* (with the exception of the songs from *Actually*, which were fairly petite in length to begin with). While these eighteen remnants from the seven inch vinyl record era provide an intriguing if not relatively complete look at PSB's progression from monotonous to melodious/prosaic to poetic, a diehard fan should weep that this wasn't a "favorites" CD in place of an *Immaculate Collection* in the style of Ms. Madonna Ciccone. (One should also mourn the exclusion of Liza Minelli's "Losing My Mind," produced by the PSB themselves and sounding a great deal like a PSB song with a female vocal.)

The *Discography* begins with the four major songs from the PSB premiere *Please* (not their counterparts from the remix album *Disco* - do we read in potential coinkydink?). We all know two of them: "West End Girls" and "Suburbia;" the others are "Love Comes Quickly" ("Our favourite song until then and it flopped just about everywhere," say the liner notes) and "Opportunities (Let's Make Lots Of Money)." "West End Girls" there's no need to comment extensively on; suffice it to say that the rapping-after-thirty-two-consecutive-hours-awake style coupled with the excessive repetition of the song's title made the song's success in the U.K. inevitable. "Love Comes Quickly" I'm afraid I can't talk about (I fell asleep). "Opportunities" is a fairly straightforward fast-paced dance item with the trademark semi-sarcastic lyrics that keep PSB from tumbling into one of those artsy (Is that a word?) floral Prince-type poets. "Suburbia" I like; that falls into the same category as "Opportunities." "The Germans, in particular, loved it."

Then come the *Actually* singles. This album, though it stands up to repeated listenings, is one of those babies that you know could have ended up like the last Janet Jackson affair: what wasn't released as a single was a b-side. Luckily for us, PSB only set free "It's A Sin" (my personal love which I'll get to shortly); "Rent," a slow, biting, song about a man who is totally dependent upon his lover (well, woman upon hers: Liza Minelli does this song too); "What Have I Done To Deserve This," a Dusty Springfield springboard with a certain poppy flair to it; and "Heart," summarized in the liner notes: "We wanted to submit it to Madonna but didn't dare risk disappointment."

"It's A Sin," by the way, is the very best song on this CD. The tune is catchy. The electronics are superb. The lyrics, which epitomize the plight of the frustrated Christian whose eyes are centered on their wrongs instead of their future ("Everything I ever do.../It's a sin.../Father forgive me/I tried not to do it"), can affect any conscience-afflicted person who stops to listen, and makes them turn to the Metanoia column. You can read so much into this and get so much out of it, because it makes you stop and realize where you are, what you're doing to yourself, and what you should do upon realizing this. (So what if I'm a Baptist; it's true for just about anyone!) Continuing on...

Flipped haphazardly into the *Actually* singles are the *Introspective* fragments: "Always On My Mind," the little Elvis morsel that sounds nothing like the traditional renditions by the King and the Tax Evader (Willie Nelson) -- it's a kick-butt synth tour-de-force, but there's about five different mixes of this and the worst one ended up here, sadly; "Domino Dancing," an admitted attempt to sound like Exposé that came off sounding like Milli Vanilli doing Latin tunes; "Left To My Own Devices," effectively "Debussy to a disco beat" (it really does work); and "It's Alright," another song I found myself tuning out for. Please, get the original album if you are desperate to hear the songs. PLEASE. (It just hit me. I'm sorry, no pun intended.)

Finally come the *Behavior* misbehaviors. These are the most recent and, for the most part, the most consistent in quality. The technical work on these is on a par with the *Actually* singles, with the lyrics running fairly close to "It's A Sin" in shimmer and eloquence. Surprisingly, they fall out of the average PSB song style for the most part, with only "So Hard" (a common-law marriage story) and "Where The Streets Have No Name /I Can't Take My Eyes Off Of You" (uh huh -- they just naturally flow together) coming off as standard-style, albeit highest quality danceables. "Being Boring," an easygoing comment on nostalgia, "Jealousy," a shuffler that could have come off of one of those old movies where everyone went to the gala party in tuxes and Jessica Rabbit dresses, and "DJ Culture," a "response to both the conflict and public reactions to" Operation Desert Storm, all manage to answer the question asked by the title of the passable requisite bonus track, "Was it worth it?"

Yes it was. PSB have their flops and their gems just like the rest of the world, and even though we couldn't have every good piece in its original or remixed long form, we can have this and scan to our favorite radio items any time the local CHR channels won't play "It's A Sin" because, my gosh, it's so old!

CHSR-FM PLAYLIST TOP 40, WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 22ND

TW	LW	ARTIST: Title (Label)	WO	HP
1	1	NIRVANA: Nevermind (SubPop/MCA)	7	1
*2	2	SONS OF FREEDOM: Gump (Chrysalis)	6	2
3	5	MINISTRY: Jesus Built My Hotrod (Sire/Warner)	2	3
*4	11	VOIVOD: Angel Rat (Mechanic)	2	4
*5	7	DIGITAL POODLE: Soul Crush (DOVe)	4	5
6	6	THE LEGENDARY PINK DOTS: The Maria Dimension (Play It Again Sam)	6	1
7	29	MY BLOODY VALENTINE: Loveless (Sire/Warner)	2	7
8	9	DINOSAUR JR.: Whatever's Cool With Me (Sire/WB)	4	8
*9	3	BRUCE COCKBURN: Nothing But A Burning Light (True North)	5	3
10	18	MARC ALMOND: Tenement Symphony (Sire/Reprise)	2	10
*11	NE	MALHAVOC: Punishments (Epidemic)	1	11
12	NE	HIS NAME IS ALIVE: Help Is In Your Head (4AD/Polygram)	1	12
13	36	VARIOUS ARTISTS: 4x4 (Ladd-Frith)	2	13
14	NE	LUSH: Nothing Natural (4AD/Polygram)	1	14
15	12	CARTER THE UNSTOPPABLE SEX MACHINE: 30 Something (Chrysalis)	5	9
16	13	PUBLIC ENEMY: Apocalypse 91- The Enemy Strikes Back (Def Jam)	4	13
*17	10	HOLLY COLE TRIO: Blame It On My Youth (Alert)	6	6
18	8	SWERVEDRIVER: Raise (A&M)	6	7
*19	NE	POLKA DOGS: The Entertainers (Aural Tradition)	1	19
20	17	SLAYER: Live - Decade Of Aggression (Def American)	2	17
*21	4	LOOK PEOPLE: Boogazm (Hypnotic/A&M)	8	1
*22	NE	LONG JOHN BALDRY: It Still Ain't Easy (Stony Plain)	1	22
23	37	WIRE: The First Letter (Mute/Elektra)	2	23
24	13	THE PIXIES: Trompe Le Monde (4AD/Vertigo)	7	10
25	14	SOUNDGARDEN: Badmotorfinger (A&M)	7	8
26	15	THE ORB: Adventures Beyond The Ultraworld (Attic)	5	15
27	NE	SEVERED HEADS: Cuisine (with Piscatorial) (Nettwerk)	1	27
28	20	CURVE: Frozen -EP (Charisma)	6	14
29	38	PRONG: Prove You Wrong (Epic)	2	29
*30	NE	DIANA BRAITHWAITE: In This Time (Aural Tradition)	1	30
31	23	FUGAZI: Steady Diet Of Nothing (Dischord)	7	7
32	NE	BILLY BRAGG: Don't Try This At Home (Go Discs/Polygram)	1	32
33	33	THE JIGSAW SEEN: My Name Is Tom (Skyclad)	3	33
34	32	POSTER CHILDREN: Flower Power (Frontier)	3	32
35	NE	M.C. 900 FT JESUS: Welcome To My Dream (Nettwerk)	1	35
36	NE	X-TAL: Humboldt Desert - EP (Alias)	1	36
37	34	STRAWBERRY ZOTS: Love Operation (Continuum)	4	23
38	22	EINSTURZENDE NEUBAUTEN: Strategies Against Architecture II (Mute)	8	2
39	NE	THE FATIMA MANSIONS: Viva Dead Ponies (Radioactive/MCA)	1	39
40	25	RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS: Blood, Sugar, Sex, Magik (Warner)	8	10

\* = Includes Canadian Content  
TW = This Week, LW = Last Week, WO = Weeks On Chart, HP = Highest Position  
Chart compilation based on frequency of airplay. Music Director Dave Keighley

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