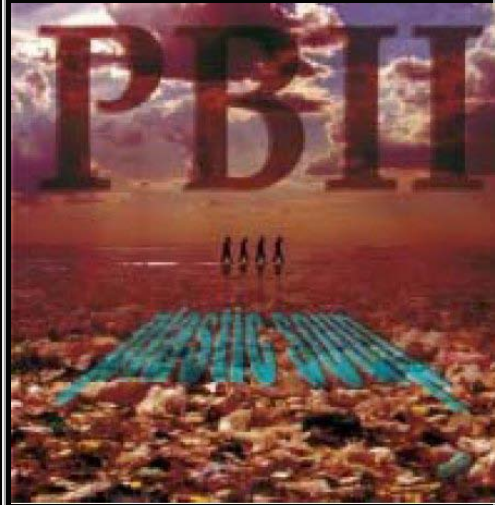


PBII - Plastic Soup

(CD 2010, 69:16, Private Release)

The tracks:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| 1- Book of Changes | (8:33) |
| 2- In the Arms of a Gemini | (7:02) |
| 3- Ladrillo | (2:18) |
| 4- Loneliness | (8:42) |
| 5- The Great Pacific Garbage Patch | (12:49) |
| 6- Criticize the Critics | (6:08) |
| 7- It's Your Life | (4:44) |
| 8- Fata Morgana | (3:57) |
| 9- Living by the Dice | (8:39) |
| 10- Cradle to Cradle | (6:21) |



'Maybe we will reach younger people too, but we also hope to please our longtime fans'. That was **PBII**'s wish while giving an interview to Background Magazine about their debut album *Plastic Soup* (see [specials](#) for the interview). And that's exactly what I thought after listening several times to this album. **Michel van Wasse**m (keyboards, vocals), **Ronald Brautigam** (guitars, vocals) and **Tom van der Meulen** (drums) were members of **Plackband**, also known as The Dutch **Genesis**. It was a big challenge for them to include more influences from bands that rule the prog waves nowadays. The music made by **Frost*** is a good example of how they would like to sound on their next recording by using more distorted guitar and special effects by keyboards and computers. On the other hand they wouldn't forget the music they played in the past and therefore you can still hear influences from Genesis, one of the best progressive rock bands of the seventies. Ronald's melodic guitar passages and the majestic keyboard parts played by Michel, still show that they love to play Genesis-inspired music.

Throughout the album they managed to find a balanced combination of old and new prog rock with the exception of the modern sounding second track *In The Arms Of A Gemini*. However, I discovered that the more I played this piece, the more I enjoyed it, but for me the songs they recorded in 2007 for a demo-CD, are the most enjoyable tracks, revealing their musical history the most. On *Book Of Changes*, *Loneliness* and *The Great Pacific Garbage Patch* they merged prog rock elements from the seventies like Mellotron-samples and awesome guitar and synthesizer solos. When I heard those tracks for the first time on the demo, I found Michel van Wasse's lead vocals the weakest parts. Despite the more professional recordings on *Plastic Soup* his vocals are still weak, but I have to realize that they're part of the style of music the musicians choose to play.

Mr. van Wasseem's more aggressive way of singing needs a different approach. The vocals come along with the distorted guitar sounds played by Ronald Brautigam and the new bassist **Harry den Hartog**. The latter certainly added a great deal to the new sound of PBII. Good examples of the way he influenced the music can be heard in *Ladrillo* and *Fata Morgana*. The first piece is a bass solo accompanied by some string synthesizers. Harry touches the strings as if he's playing a flamenco guitar. The second piece has an Arabian-like melody played by Harry on his Roland VB-99-synthesizer. This track has also a guest performance of the well-known bass player **John Jowitt (IQ, Arena)**, who needs no further introduction here. Other guest musicians on the album are **John Mitchell (Arena, It Bites)** and **Heidi Jo Heines**. John Mitchell plays some fine guitar parts on *Cradle To Cradle*. Heidi is the daughter of **Denny Laine** who played in **The Moody Blues** and in **Wings**. She did the lead vocals on the fine ballad *It's Your Life*. Another guest on the album is **Charles Moore**, who discovered the 'plastic soup' in the Pacific Ocean. He does some spoken words on the song that probably is the most important track of the album: *The Great Pacific Garbage Patch*. This piece deals with the pollution of our planet in general and the oceans in particular featuring all kinds of fantastic sound effects. You can get more detailed information about this subject in the interview with PBII.

Everyone who owns a surround system should play the DVD that comes along with this release. On this disc you can hear the entire album in 5.1 surround and that's the best way to enjoy this fine release. The disc also features a live clip from *It's Your Life* shot at the iO Pages Festival 2009 (see [live review](#)). Maybe it would be a good idea to release this song as a single, because it certainly has some hit potential. Another subject on this DVD is the recording of the church organ at the Johannes De Doper Church in Pijnacker. All this footage was very well filmed by **John Vis** who already made some name as a film maker in the music scene.

On ending this review I have to give a big compliment to the musicians who dared to change their musical course by coming up with a rather modern sounding album. *Plastic Soup* is a fabulous album that must have cost a lot of money, but it's all self-funded. Despite all the difficulties they had, the album is well worth listening. PBII can be very proud of this effort. King Plackband is dead, long live King PBII!

**** Henri Strik (edited by Peter Willemsen)