

Plastic Soup was reviewed in issue 177 (April/May 2010) by David Pearson. Here's what he said:

PBII – Plastic Soup

"For us PBII is a new band, a new era and that's why 'Plastic Soup' is not a new Plackband album, but the debut album of PBII", Ronald Brautigam told backgroundmagazine.nl recently. Brautigam, key songwriter, together with keyboardist Michel van Wasseem (now lead vocalist), drummer Tom van der Meulen and new bassist Harry den Hartog, have released an album with a message. Brautigam again: "'Plastic Soup' appeared to be the name of two gigantic rubbish dumps floating in the Pacific Ocean consisting of plastic junk kept together by underwater currents. These two plastic isles measure twice the size of the United States! Because these plastics are translucent and floating just beneath the surface satellites cannot detect them. As we all know, these plastics remain in the environment and will eventually end up in our food chain. This information touched me deeply, so I convinced the others of the necessity to pay attention to this problem. Finally, we decided that 'Plastic Soup' should be the album title. Maybe it will help a bit in getting attention for this severe problem."

With so much thought in title, packaging and album marketing, it's no surprise the music is equally lovingly crafted and honed. Three burgeoning tracks were long trailed by the band, as those at the CRS gig remember. 'Book of Changes' (originally 'You Know') opens, with phrasing and delivery that has elements of Frost* (Milliontown). Banksian 'In the Arms of a Gemini' has van Wasseem's keyboards reminiscent of the Genesis keyboardist's solo efforts. There is instrumental virtuosity is throughout, for example in 'Ladrillo', where den Hartog leads with a brief skilled exploration of his bass fretboard, while the other instrumentals feature guests: 'Fata Morgana' (John Jowitt) and 'Cradle to Cradle' (John Mitchell). 'Loneliness', another of the three previewed, is one album highlight for me. The opening rhythm and riff grabs the attention with great progression from rocky start through attractive mid-tempo sections back to rocky close. 'It's your life' is a stunningly simple ballad, with excellent performance from guest vocalist Heidi Jo Hines. 'Criticise the Critics' is a barbed track, latter-day Genesis in parts, whilst 'Living by the Dice' is more understated but with trademark keyboard and guitar to the fore.

Key track 'The Great Pacific Garbage Patch' is the third previewed song, but developed somewhat since. Captain Charles Moore, sailing the north Pacific after a 1997 yacht race discovered the afore-mentioned 'plastic soup'. His words begin and echo through the lengthy track. Another catchy rhythm to open, lush keyboard sounds develop the themes.

Atmospheric instrumental sections intertwine with various song hooks and pointed vocals. Moore's final words lead to a slow, thoughtful acoustic close to reinforce a positive message to all.

Package-wise, the DVD is the album in 5.1 surround sound (static visuals) together with video of Heidi and band live performing 'It's your Life' and van Wasseem recording church organ (Wakeman & Parallels anyone?). For reference, comparisons are Shadowland, Landmarq, Ageness or Ines, but this is PB2 stamping their new identity and sound, together with a clear ecological message to all.

(David Pearson)