

MUSIC SPOTLIGHT: Pet Shop Boys

In 1986, a new U.K. duo took the American airwaves by storm with two brilliantly crafted, inescapably danceable hits, — *West End Girls* and *Opportunities (Let's Make Lots Of Money)*. These tunes, together with their platinum debut LP *Please*, established the Pet Shop Boys in a big way. Their success in the States continued a wave of popularity which had already made them stars in Britain and across Europe.

Singer Neil Tennant and keyboardist Chris Lowe comprise this innovative duo. Combining sophisticated melodies with unrelenting grooves (not to mention witty, socially conscious lyrics), the Pet Shop Boys make music for the body and the mind. They've just released their second LP, *Actually*.

We wanted to make all the dance tracks quite hard this time, says Tennant. *The sound is bigger on this album, but in some ways a bit simpler as well.* Cuts such as *One More Chance*, *Heart*, and *Shopping* are some of the funkier works by the Boys to date. As usual, though, the duo give their grooves a twist, overlaying bittersweet melodies on top of throbbing tracks. A fine example here is *It's A Sin*, already a Number One single in Britain and seven other European countries. *We tried to make that one as outrageous and over-the-top a production as we could*, says Tennant—and

the results are stunning. Beyond the rhythms and instrumental textures, there's a great deal going on lyrically throughout *Actually*. *Shopping is about how England is selling off the nationalized industries*, Tennant explains. *It's part of a political trend towards selfishness in Britain and, perhaps, in the U.S. as well. The song is an ironic look at this, where I'm singing as if I were a stockbroker buying and selling.*

Another track, *King's Cross*, deals with London's darker side: *King's Cross is a railway station where all the trains from the northeast of England come. Around there you find a lot of down and out people, drug addicts, prostitutes. I'm using the place as a metaphor for all the people in our society who get kicked aside.*

It Couldn't Happen Here also echoes these warnings of social callousness. Tennant and Lowe collaborated with a diverse and impressive list of talents for the LP. *It Couldn't Happen Here* was co-written with renowned Italian film composer Ennio (The Mission) Morricone. The song was arranged by Angelo Badalamenti, whose credits include the score for the acclaimed film *Blue Velvet*.

Award-winning L.A.-based songwriter Allee Willis co-wrote *What Have I Done To Deserve This?* with the duo (we knew she'd co-written *Boogie*

Wonderland by Earth, Wind & Fire—that impressed us, Tennant says).

Newcastle-born Tennant and Blackpool-born

released in Britain on Epic in 1984. The tune gained the newly-launched Pet Shop Boys some attention, but legal hassles

studio to cut *Opportunities (Let's Make Lots Of Money)*.

Opportunities was released in July '85. It was produced by Nicholas Froome and JJ Jeczalik from the Art Of Noise. Even as the tune was being promoted, it became apparent around London that *West End Girls* remained a club favorite. The Pet Shop Boys recut the tune with Stephen Hague producing, releasing it on Oct. 28.

It climbed the U.K. charts to become the first Number One of 1986 there, eventually selling 700,000 copies in Britain. *West End Girls* went on to repeat this chart-topping feat in the United States and six other countries, as well as entering the Top

Five in 13 additional countries.

March '86 saw the release of the *Please* LP. By the end of the year it had gone platinum in the U.K. and the States yielding hits with a re-recorded *Opportunities*, *Suburbia* and *Love Comes Quickly*.

The Pet Shop Boys have received award honors as well. *West End Girls* won a B.P.I. Award (comparable to the U.S.'s Grammys) for *Single of the Year*.

With the Boys' enormous international success have come pleas for a concert tour. *We're going to do one, but not a conventional rock tour*, Tennant explains, *We hope to do it in the next year or so.*



Lowe began their musical partnership after meeting in a King's Road music shop six years ago. A year later Tennant became a journalist; from 1982 through '85, he was on the staff of *Smash Hits*, Britain's most successful pop music magazine.

Lowe was a student architect with a yen to make music. The pair shared an enthusiasm for high-energy Euro-disco (particularly obscure Italian dance records).

After some initial collaborations by the duo, Tennant hunted down dance-record producer Bobby O Orlando while on a magazine assignment in New York. Orlando produced the first version of *West End Girls*, which was

slowed progress for a time.

Extricating themselves from their contract with Orlando, the Boys signed with Parlophone in '85 and hastened back into the

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