

Public Image Limited - Live At Rockpalast (1983)

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The latest Rockpalast Concert Series release is a Halloween 1983 concert of Public Image Limited. While not my type of music, I can still understand the importance of this concert as it was filmed at the height of PIL's songwriting history. Also with this release, for the first time I know of, are a couple of extras. They're not very long, but still give us some extra insight on the band, and I hope future releases will continue with more bonus features. So let's take a look back at PIL's formation, up to the date of this concert.


 Review by **Bill Wolford**

Added: March 17, 2012

[Wikipedia]

Public Image Ltd (PiL) are an English post-punk band formed by vocalist John Lydon (aka Johnny Rotten), guitarist Keith Levene and bassist Jah Wobble, with frequent subsequent personnel changes. Lydon is the sole constant member of the band.

Lydon emerged after the break-up of the Sex Pistols with PiL's First Issue (1978). His new band had a more experimental sound: Wobble's "droning, slow-tempo, bass-heavy noise rock, overlaid by Lydon's distinctive, vituperative rant." Their early work is often regarded as some of the most challenging and innovative music of the post-punk era. Their 1979 album Metal Box was ranked number 469 on Rolling Stone magazine's 2003 list of the 500 greatest albums of all time. The NME described PiL as "arguably the first post-rock group".

Following the Sex Pistols' break-up in 1978, Lydon spent three weeks in Jamaica with Virgin Records head Richard Branson, in which Lydon assisted Branson in scouting for emerging reggae musicians. Branson also flew American band Devo to Jamaica, aiming to install Lydon as lead singer in the band. Devo declined the offer.

Upon returning to England, Lydon approached Jah Wobble (né John Wardle) about forming a band together. The pair had been friends since the early 1970s when they attended the same school in Hackney (both belonged to a circle of friends Lydon informally dubbed "The Gang of Johns" - John Lydon, John Wardle, John Gray, and John Simon Ritchie, a.k.a. Sid Vicious). Lydon and Wobble had previously played some music together during the final days of the Sex Pistols. Both had similarly broad musical tastes, and were avid fans of reggae and world music. Lydon assumed, much as he had with Sid Vicious, that Wobble would learn to play bass guitar as he went. While that had proven a fatal assumption with Vicious (Lydon cites Sid's musical inability as a prime reason for the Pistols' break-up), Wobble would prove to be a natural talent. Lydon also approached guitarist Keith Levene, with whom he had toured in mid-1976, while Levene was a member of The Clash. Lydon and Levene had both considered themselves outsiders even within their own bands. Jim Walker, a Canadian student newly arrived in the UK, was recruited on drums, after answering an ad placed in Melody Maker.

PiL began rehearsing together in May 1978, although the band was still unnamed. In July 1978, Lydon officially named the band "Public Image" (the "Ltd" was not added until several months later), after the Muriel Spark novel The Public Image.

PiL debuted in October 1978 with "Public Image", a song written while Lydon was still a member of the Sex Pistols. The single was well received and reached number 9 on the UK charts, and it also performed well on import in the US.

Lydon has been quoted as saying that Public Image represented his more creative side, while the Sex Pistols were his more rebellious side. He had already expressed his admiration for more experimental music when he was interviewed by Tommy Vance on Capital Radio while still in the Sex Pistols. The bands he had played included Can, Third Ear Band, Augustus Pablo, Peter Hammill and Peter Tosh. Public Image were one of the first bands to successfully fuse the influences of krautrock and dub reggae.

[Wikipedia]

Their first three classic albums are all represented in this live show plus a few surprise bonus goodies. Here is the track listing.

- 1.Public Image
- 2.Annalisa
- 3.Religion
- 4.Memories
- 5.Flowers Of Romance
- 6.Solitaire
- 7.Chant
- 8.Anarchy In The U.K.
- 9.(This Is Not A) Love Song
- 10.Low Life
- 11.Under The House
- 12.Bad Life
- 13.Public Image

The concert is shot in full screen and there is a very nice stereo sound. This Rockpalast release doesn't seem to have as much digital banding on the screen as previous releases, which is a welcome relief. You do see some ghosting of the stage lights however, but this is typical of an older television broadcast. Also something nice I noticed was that there were no song titles listed at the bottom of the screen at the beginning of each song, a feature I found somewhat annoying with earlier releases. And lastly, bonus features are finally included with this release. There is a Seven minute rehearsal session from the band prior to the concert, and a six minute interview with Johnny Rotten. It seems as if the Rockpalast releases are getting better as they release more product, which is nice to see. If you are a fan of Public Image Limited, this is a must own concert for your collection.

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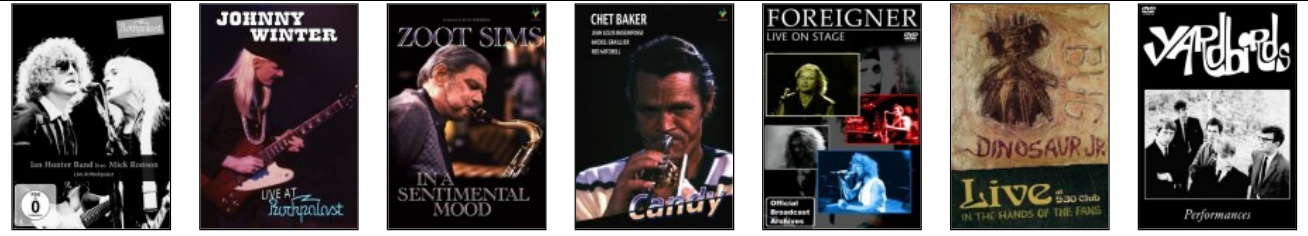
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7/10



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