PRETTY THINGS

Title: Live In Europe 1966-67

Label: 1960s Records Company LTD

Release Date: 2018

Medium: EP

Availability: Good

Venue: Bremen, Germany
Paris, France

Recording Date: Bremen - April, 1966
Paris - June, 1967

Lineup: Dick Taylor - Guitar, vocals
Phil May - Vocals
John Stax - Bass, vocals (1966)
Brian Pendleton - Guitar
Skip Alan - Drums
Wally Waller - Bass, vocals (1967)

Set List: Roadrunner
Midnight To Six Men
Rainin' In My Heart
Reincarnation
Children

The Pretty Things occupy an important spot in early sixties British rock and roll history. They were one of the first British r&b based bands, along with the Rolling Stones and the Yardbirds. While not as popular as either of those iconic groups, they had a strong fan base of their own and placed seven singles on the British pop singles charts between 1964 and 1966, with two of them reaching the top fifteen. Their first two EPs reached the British top twelve, and their debut album hit number six. At this point, they were known for their wild stage shows and raucous covers of American blues and r&b artists, particularly Bo Diddley. They set themselves apart by the sheer intensity of their music, incorporating feedback and extreme volume, which directly influenced the Kinks, Pink Floyd, and David Bowie.

As the r&b scene wound down, the band turned to psychedelia and released one of the first concept rock albums, *P.F. Sorrow*, in 1968. While that album did not chart, they were more successful with their next studio album, *Parachute*, which hit the bottom levels of the British pop albums chart. With the exception of two mid-seventies albums that found their way to the bottom half of the American pop album chart, they had no other success on the pop charts. However, they remained a working band up through 2018, when they finally retired. Their last studio album was released two years later, after the death of lead singer Phil May, who had been the one constant member through all their iterations.

As the years have passed, the legacy of The Pretty Things has grown. They are now cited as influences by a number of bands. David Bowie modeled his look and stage craft after Phil May and Steven Tyler was May's a lifelong friend.. Many British and American punk bands, including the Sex Pistols, the Ramones, and the Clash, were also influenced by them, particularly in regard to their unpolished sound. They also had a direct influence on the mis sixties American garage rock scene.

The band was formed by guitarist Dick Taylor (born Richard Clifford Taylor on January 28, 1943 in Dartford, England) and singer Phil May (born Philip Dennis Arthur Wadley on November 9, 1944 in Dartford, England). However, before the two even met, Taylor had a significant connection to the most successful British r&b band of all-time, the Rolling Stones.

While there is a significant amount of misinformation about Taylor's brief time with the Rolling Stones, history makes it clear how important he was. Taylor first met Jagger when both attended the Dartford Grammar School. Taylor had gotten his first acoustic guitar as a teen and loved American rock and roll, r&b, and blues music, just like Jagger. The two became friends and played together informally. At one point, they may have even formed a school band together.

When both passed their exams, Taylor enrolled at Sidcup Art College, where he met Keith Richards. Richards also played guitar, liked the same kind of music, and was an expert regarding Chuck Berry, having learned how to play nearly all his solos. The two often jammed together between classes, teaching each other new licks they had learned from their respective record collections.

On October 17, 1961, Jagger and Richards, who had briefly known each other when both attended Wentworth Primary School in Dartford, ran into each other at the Dartford train station. Richards noticed that Jagger was carrying a stack of records from American artists like Chuck Berry and Muddy Waters and introduced himself. The two quickly remembered their earlier school connection and renewed their friendship. Once Jagger was reintroduced to Taylor, the three decided to put together a trio which they named Little Boy Blue and the Blues Boys.

They quickly added Alan Etherington (drums) and Bob Beckwith (bass) on drums and bass and began to play the London blues circuit in late 1961 and early 1962. Remarkably, a school friend recorded one of their rehearsals on his parent's reel to reel tape recorder, and the tapes survived until 1995, when Jagger bought them at an auction.

Wanting to take the next step forward, the new band sent a rehearsal tape to Alexis Korner in March 1962. At the time, Korner was fronting the first version of Blues Incorporated and had a flexible residency at the Ealing Jazz Club. The eclectic musician would allow nearly anyone who could play to join his band on stage. One of them was Brian Jones, who had already established himself in London as a premier blues guitarist.

On April 7, 1962, Jagger and Richards went to the Ealing Jazz Club in hopes of jamming with Blues Incorporated. They met Jones and the four quickly decided to form a new band with Taylor. Now with three guitarists, Taylor volunteered to switch to bass. They began rehearsing in the upstairs room of a Soho pub called the Bricklayer's Arms. Some other musicians who attended these early rehearsals were guitarist Geoff Bradford and singer Brian Knight. The two left quickly when the other band members made it clear that were only going to play covers by Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley.

Needing more band members, Jones ran an ad in the May 2, 1962 edition of Jazz News, which covered the Soho club scene. The first person to answer the ad was Ian Stewart (born Ian Andrew Robert Stewart on July 18, 1938 in Pittenweem, Scotland). Stewart was raised in Surrey, England and first learned to play the piano at the age of six. He later learned how to play the banjo and was proficient in r&b, boogie-woogie, and big band jazz genres. Jones was impressed with his versatility and skill, and the other members welcomed him aboard..

Still without a drummer, the band invited any drummer who wanted to rehearse with them to show up an play. Two drummers who did just that were Mick Avory and Tony Chapman. With both available to play gigs, Jones began to work the local clubs and newspapers to try to land shows. While meeting with a journalist, Jones was asked what the name of his band was. Needing something much better than Little

Boy Blue and the Blues Boys, he noticed a cover of a Muddy Waters album that was lying on the floor. He picked it up, saw the song title "Rollin' Stone" and the rest is rock and roll history.

The new band made their professional debut on July 12, 1962 at the Marquee Club. While there remains some debate as to whom played drums that night, the consensus seems to be that Chapman was behind the kit. The show went well, and the band began to land other gigs. Between July 28 and November 27, they played twenty shows, with most of them taking place at the Ealing Jazz Club.

Sometime during November, Taylor left the band to enroll at the London Central School of Art. He was temporarily replaced by Ricky Fenson, who was subsequently replaced by Bill Wyman. Wyman played his first live show with the band on December 15 and would remain their bassist into the nineties.

Now at art school, Taylor had no interest in forming another band until the met May, who wore his hair extremely long and was a true individual. He was also interested in music but was committed to the fine arts, particularly painting. When he first met Taylor, May was one of the most notable painters in the art school and was seemingly destined for a long career as a fine artist. However, the lure of music was strong and the two decided to form a new band in September 1963. They were named after a reference in a Bo Diddley song.

The two founders quickly recruited guitarist Brian Pendleton (born April 13, 1944 in Durham, England), bassist/harmonica player John Stax (born April 6, 1944), and drummer Pete Kitley. They were initially managed by a fellow student named Bryan Morrison and played their first professional show at the Ealing Club in December 1963. Shortly after, Kitley left and was replaced by Viv Andrews (born Viv Broughton on May 24, 1943) who in turn was replaced by Viv Prince (born Vivian Martin Prince on August 9, 1941 in Loughborough, England).

The new lineup quickly made their mark with their live shows. May had shoulder length hair at a time when no one in England dared to go there and was confrontational, unconventional, and defiant about any social norms. He would stare down audiences and challenge them with aggressive body language, which created a palatable air of tension and even danger at their shows. He would writhe around on the stage floor, smash microphones, tear his own clothes off, and act so manic that he always seemed to be on verge of collapsing. However, he was also a powerful and surprisingly soulful singer. His vocal work was gritty and powerful, which worked perfectly with Taylor's traditional blues based guitar work.

While Taylor's guitar work was rooted in the blues/r&b, it also included loads of feedback, discordant riffs, and unhinged solos that made his contemporaries look tame in comparison.. His calm stage demeanor offered a contrast to the mania caused by May and Prince and his early shows were known for their energy and volume.

Meanwhile, Prince was Keith Moon before the Who drummer became famous. He was out of control both on and off the stage and was known to stop drumming in the middle of a song to leave the drum kit mid-song and wander or crawl around beating on anything he could find. He would set his cymbals on fire, smash microphone stands and physically attack his drums so violently that he often broke sticks and parts of his drum kit. No one in the band knew what he was going to do at any point in the show and had to be on high alert to keep up with him.

Off stage, Prince was a mess. He drank a bottle of whiskey a day, carried a tear-gas gun, got into fights, and was arrested several times. In a group that was appropriately labeled "the wildest band in Britain", even his bandmates could not deal with him, and he was booted after only eighteen months.

One of the smartest moves the band made in the early days was to sign a management contract with Bryan Morrison. He worked as a music publisher with Marquee Music and had extensive connections. He had a particularly strong relationship with the UK division of Fontana Records, who were a subsidiary of Philips Records. On the basis of a strong demo and his own reputation, Fontana signed them in early 1964 and teamed them with producer James Duncan.

Morrison had come up with a plan to expose The Pretty Things to as many people as he could before the release of their debut single. Instead of only playing live shows in their hometown of Dartford or in London, he had them visit as many towns as he could. Their first tour included two hometown shows but then visited London, Windsor, Plymouth, Reading, Kingston upon Thames, Edmonton, Nottingham, and Northampton through May 1964.

Their debut single, "Rosalyn" (1964), was then released on May 8, 1964. It was written by May and Taylor and based on a Bo Diddley beat. The song was loud, raw, and abrasive, way more intense and unpolished than anything being released in England at the time. Surprisingly, it entered the British pop singles chart the week of June 24 and rose to number 41 during a five week chart run. It also was a minor hit in Australia, where it hit number 67. While these sales figures were modest, the song's impact on the music industry was far more significant.

This was not another Rolling Stones or Yardbirds, this was the most intense and explosive group in England at the time. The song virtually defined British garage rock, with a proto-punk sound that would later influence an entire generation of punk rockers.

After the release of the single, the Pretty Things played thirty more shows in England through June and July, then slowed down to write and record some new material. One of the new songs was their second single, "Don't Bring Me Down" (1964), which was released on October 16. It was a cover of a song written by Johnny Dee, who would later become the road manager for the Fairies

The song was a furious harmonica driven blues rock sound that once again pushed the envelope. It entered the British pop singles chart the week of October 28, debuting at number 49. With the help of a BBC appearance on *The Saturday Club* that same month, it peaked at number 10 four weeks later and remained on the chart for eleven weeks. The song also charted in Australia and Canada, peaking at numbers 65 and 34.

After releasing the single, the band hit the road again and played around twenty more shows to close out the year. To capitalize on their momentum, Fontana combined their first two singles with "Big Boss Man" and "We'll Be Together" on a new EP called *The Pretty Things*. It was released in December and reached number 6 on the UK EP chart, which was an independent chart up to 1967, when EPs were then tracked on the pop singles chart. To support it, the band appeared on BBC2's *The Beat Room* on Christmas Eve. After another series of live shows in January 1965, the group released their third single.

"Honey I Need" (1965) was written by Taylor and was released on February 12, 1965. It entered the British Pop singles chart the week of March 3 and rose to number 13 during a ten week chart run. It also peaked at number 54 in Australia. The single was included on the band's debut studio album, *The Pretty*

Things (1965), which was released in March 1965. Just three weeks later, their album entered the British pop albums chart at number 17 and rose all the way to number 6 during a ten week chart stay.

The group completed a seventy date tour in support of the album and released two more singles during that same time period. The first, "Roadrunner" (1965) was released concurrent with the album and did not chart in England, but reached number 11 in New Zealand. The second, "Cry To Me" (1965), hit the stores in late June and peaked at number 28 in England during a seven week chart run and number 13 in New Zealand. Both were covers.

While the next logical step was to mount a tour in the United States, where they were relative unknowns, the band and their management team decided to tour New Zealand and Australia instead. The plan seemed sound. Play two shows a day in ten different cities in New Zealand, then fly to Australia for a much longer stand of shows. They had charted a single in both countries and radio was playing them. It should have been easy money but things went wrong right from the start.

From the moment they first stepped off the plane in New Zealand, things started to go bad. Prince had apparently conspired with the tour's promoter, Jim Haddleton, to do whatever he could to generate publicity. May was such a rebel that there was no way anyone was going to tell him what he could or could not say and do and the combined actions of the two turned the tour into a media disaster.

Right after embarking from the plane, the band told the assembled journalists that the country was twenty five years behind the times and it went down from there. For the next several days, they generated negative headlines with their drunken antics, leaving behind smashed hotel rooms and trashed restaurants. They openly mocked the conservative attitudes of the country and at one point, even questioned their treatment of their indigenous people. The local newspapers had a field day, attacking everything from their long hair, clothing, and their disrespectful actions as the tour progressed.

As you would expect, Prince took things to an entirely different level. He wandered around the country in a drug and alcohol induced haze, wearing a leopard skin pillbox hat and pulling a crayfish behind him on a string. He generated headlines everywhere he went and was acting so strange that officials considered him to be a public menace. Things went from bad to worse and the New Zealand Parliament actually met to consider kicking them out of the country before the tour ended. Fortunately, they decided against taking that drastic step but did consider banning them for life. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed, and they were allowed to finish the tour.

The only thing that went well for the band were the shows themselves. They played twice in a day in halls and theaters across ten cities in New Zealand, spreading their music literally across the entire country. This was the first time that a British band had toured in New Zealand, and the tour captured the imagination of an entire generation of people.. New bands like the Chants R&B and The Breakaways were heavily influenced by The Pretty Things' raw, high energy music and anti-establishment values. They began to question the country's conservative attitudes, resulting in the beginning of a cultural shift regarding youth/adult dynamics within the country.

The band had planned an extensive tour of Australia right after New Zealand tour ended but those plans were derailed before the New Zealand leg even ended. All of the negative publicity had gotten back to the promoters in Australia, and no one wanted to work with them, fearing violence and property damages. When they finally played their last show in Newland, the band had no choice but to return to England. True to form, even that did not go smoothly.

The pilot of their outbound flight had told the band's representatives that no alcohol was allowed on his plane and when a bottle of whiskey fell out of Prince's pants as he sat down after boarding the plane, he was immediately kicked off. By this point, the other band members had had enough of their drummer and took off without him, leaving him on his own to find his way back to England.

The band needed to recover the losses from the tour and started playing live shows immediately upon their return. They also recorded some new material but once again, Prince was a problem. He was a no show at some sessions, which forced the band to hire session drummers like Bobby Graham, Mitch Mitchell, and John Charles Edward Alder (Twink) to get the records finished. Prince was still drinking heavily and getting into high profile fights on the streets. When he refused to take the stage at a show in Stockport in mid-November, the band finally booted him out for good.

After returning from New Zealand, the band had recorded enough new songs to release a new EP called *Rainin' In My Heart* (1965) in October. It included four tracks, including three originals, and peaked at number 12 on the British EP chart. Prince did not appear on any of the tracks, with two recorded with Graham and the other two recorded with their new drummer, Skip Alan.

In mid-December, the band released their second studio album, *Get The Picture?* (1965), on December 17, 1965. Prince apparently played on some of the tracks, but no one could figure out which ones. Given that, Graham and Alder are generally credited with doing most of the drum work. The album did include "Cry To Me" but still did not chart, an indication that the British music scene had passed them by..

However, the album did not include their most recent new single, "Midnight To Six Man" (1966), which was released concurrent with the album. It did manage to chart, peaking at number 46 during its one and only week on the chart. It also hit number 62 in Australia and number 19 in New Zealand and featured recorded with Alan on drums.

In January, 1966, the band filmed a 14 minute black and white movie. It had no dialog and included scenes of them playing three studio songs. There are also some Beatles' like slap stick comedy bits that included their manager, Bryan Morrison. The film ended with live footage of the band playing "L.S.D." Through the performance of the song was dubbed for the film, the live footage was real and captured the raucous nature of their live shows at the time.

In late January 1966, the band headed out on the road again for a short British tour. It included ten shows in two weeks. They started another minitour in July that included twenty three shows throughout August. During these live shows, they also released two minor British pop chart singles.

The first was a *Get The Picture?* album track called "Come See Me" (1966). It was a cover song and was their first song produced by Glyn Johns, who had started working with them. It entered the British pop singles chart on May 11, 1966 and reached number 43 during a five week chart run. It also reached number 92 in Australia and number 36 in New Zealand. The b side was "L.S.D." from the earlier movie. In order to avoid censorship from the British press, Fontana changed the L to a pound symbol.

The group's last British pop chart single was "A House In The Country" (1966), which was released on July 1, 1966. It entered the chart on July 27 and debuted at number 50 during its only week on the chart. It also hit number 63 in Australia and number 31 in New Zealand. In April, 1966, the group filmed a live televised performance in Bremen, Germany. Taylor, May, Pendleton, Stax and Alan performed three songs, including "Roadrunner", "Midnight To Six Man", and "Rainin' In My Heart".

Seemingly having played out the r&b angle, May and Alan began to push the group into a different direction. This caused friction with Pendleton and Stax, both of who were committed to r&b. Taylor was more neutral and May, who was writing most of the songs, won out.

During recording sessions for what would become *Emotions* (1967) Pendleton and Stax left, not happy with the hybrid hard rock and psychedelic direction May and Alan were heading towards. When producer Steve Rowland added a brass section to an early single called "Progress", Pendleton was so unhappy that he did not show up for a band meeting in December and simply disappeared without notice. No would see him again for four years.

One month later, Stax followed suit, again not happy with the brass and string additions Rowland was making. Now missing a bassist, May had to act quickly and contacted one of his childhood friends, Wally Waller (born Alan Edward Waller on April 9, 1944 in Barnehurst, England). Waller had just left a band called the Fenmen and went to work immediately.

It turned out that the Fenmen's drummer, Jon Povey (born August 20, 1942 in London, England). Was a terrific keyboardist and excellent singer. In fact, he had even worked out Beach Boys like vocal arrangements with Waller when both were in the Fenmen. Given the imminent change in direction musically, the band correctly reasoned that they would be better off with a keyboard player than a second guitarist and hired Povey.

Behind the scenes, The Pretty Things had been fighting with Fontana for months. The group members wanted out but Fontana wanted the last album that they owed them, which was *Emotions*. Waller and Povey helped May, Taylor, and Alan finish the album, which was released in April 1967. While the album represented a complete change of direction, it disappeared quickly and has largely been ignored in the group's catalog. Only one song, "Children", was even played live and that was in June 1967 when it was released as a single.

While one can now consider it as part of the transition to psychedelic music, which would result in *S.F. Sorrow*, there was, and remains, little love for it. With the departures of Pendleton and Stax, the Pretty Things had to reinvent themselves and they did that largely through the efforts of May and Waller, who wrote most of the material on *S.F. Sorrow*. They also needed to make some money and did so in an unique manner.

Over the previous years, the group had been approached by film producers and directors to record stock music that could be used only in films and television shows. One particular company that was big in this subgenre of the music industry was De Wolfe Records. They had developed a successful niche in the music industry and The Pretty Things agreed to work with them.

Under the pseudonym Electric Banana, the band recorded an entire album of new songs with the Tilsley Orchestra that De Wolfe could then license to producers and directors. Since the music was not intended for commercial release, the group was free to experiment with different genres, as the music would only be released to producers and directors through De Wolfe, who maintained a large music library just for that purpose.

As it turned out, this stock music has become popular among Pretty Things fans. Between 1967 and 1969, three albums of stock music were recorded under the titles *Electric Banana* (1967), *More Electric Banana* (1968), and *Even More Electric Banana* (1969). And, just as intended, music from these albums

did appear in various horror films, soft porn movies, and various other movie or television media, providing the band with a steady income when they most needed it.. The concept was so successful that the group returned to it in the seventies for *Hot Licks* (1973) and *The Return of the Electric Banana* (1979).

Over time, some tracks from these albums did leak out and the response was so notable that De Wolfe decided to license the music to other labels for commercial release. In 1990, Repertoire Records released *Electric Banana* and *More Electric Banana*. In 2004, a label called Tenth Planet released a compilation called *The Electric Banana Blow Your Mind* followed by Guerssen's 2004 release, *Rave Up with…* (2004). The later set includes a mixture of Pretty Things and Electric Banana tracks. Finally, Grapefruit Records released a box set called *The Complete De Wolfe Sessions* in 2019 that includes every track they recorded for the label.

With the new lineup in place, the band played some live shows in support of *Emotions*, then turned their attention to finding a new label. EMI Columbia was interested in their new music and signed them in September 1967 but hedged their bet and gave them such a small advance that it didn't even pay off their debt to Fontana. However, the label did agred to give them enough money to record a new album and also gave them full creative control over their new music. Working with producer Norman Smith, who had been the recording engineer on all the Beatles' albums up to *Rubber Soul* and had just finished working with Pink Floyd on *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, the band embarked on a new project that could have made them rock legends.

Their EMI debut single, "Defecting Gray", was released in November, 1967 and set their new direction. The song was full blown psychedelia, similar to what Pink Floyd was doing at the time. The band's fanbase had no idea what they were listening to and the single did nothing on the charts, but the band had a new direction, and May went from on from there.

May had written a short story titled *Cutting Up Sergeant Time* about World War I trench warfare. Questioning why a typical album had to have separate non connected songs, he decided to write a complete piece of music based on his story. Waller and Taylor bought on to the idea and formed a songwriting trio, with Povey and Adler also contributing ideas to the new material. Most importantly, Smith was completely in, and the band started work on what would become S.F. Sorrow.

The story focuses on the main character, Sebastian, and his journey through the horrors of the war and his subsequent move to a new country. Most of the songs were written on the fly during recording sessions and the sessions lasted for several months.

While recording the album, Smith gave the band free reign, and they wound up taking full advantage. They used exotic instruments like modified kazoos, sitar, mellotron, Tibetan drums, trumpets, recorders, and marching drums to create the music, understanding that the album was a studio project and not meant to be played live. They even invented new instruments like a twangy dulcimer. Nothing was off limits and finished product reflected that approach. It was complex and unconventional as it could be.

There has been considerable debate in the music world about the importance of *S.F. Sorrow*. Frank Zappa and The Kinks had experimented with unifying album themes in 1966 with *Freak Out!* and *Face To Face*. Then, the Beatles pushed the concept forward with *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* in 1967. The Moody Blues created *Days Of Future Passed*, which dealt with a contained one day cycle and released it in September 1967. The Pretty Things did not even start recording S.F. Sorrow until after all these albums were released an certainly were inspired by their success.

What made *S.F. Sorrow* somewhat different was that it told a clear, continuous narrative story throughout all of its tracks. In that way, it was very similar to the Who's *Tommy*, which was started after the Pretty Things had finished recording *S.F. Sorrow*. Whether Pete Townshend had any idea that *S.F. Sorrow* even existed at that point is debatable.

By February 1968, it became clear to EMI that the album was going to take awhile to finish, so they took two songs intended for the album and released them as a new single. The A side was "Talkin' About The Good Times" and it was backed by "Walking Through My Dreams". Without any context behind the single, it did not get any traction and failed to chart.

In March 1968, Alan lost faith in the project and left. Desperate not to lose any recording time, the group convinced Adler to replace him. The drummer wound up playing on ten of the thirteen tracks and stayed with the band through 1969. Since the band did not have enough money to pay him a session wage, they promised him a share in the album's publishing.

Recording sessions finally wrapped in September 1968 and EMI got the new album out the door three months later. It quickly became clear that EMI had no idea how to promote *S.F. Sorrow*, not even mentioning in their advertising that it was concept album. Meanwhile, the Who's manager, Kit Lambert had used the term, which was supposedly invented by Frank Zappa in 1963, in regard to two very early Who recordings, "I'm A Boy" and "A Quick One, While He's Away", which was released in 1966.

With unclear advertising, EMI would have relied on the new album to gain momentum through television appearances and live concerts. However, with all the overdubs used in recording the album, the band literally could not reproduce it on stage. In January 1969, the label set up two shows at London's Roundhouse Theatre to debut the album live. They were so bad that they actually generated negative publicity.

When the band took the stage for the first show, it was immediately clear that nearly all the music was pre-recorded and the group members were simply acting roles, with May serving as the narrator. Lip synching and miming actual playing may have been allowed on television, but definitely not on a concert stage. The band knew deep down that this was not going to work, so they took the stage stoned on acid, which made the entire thing worse as they bumbled around the stage in a drug induced haze.

When word got out that the Pretty Things could not even perform the album live, everyone abandoned it. By the time the Who released *Tommy* in May and played it live on stage right from the start, *S.F. Sorrow* was doomed. It became a huge hit and Taylor decided to leave, departing in June 1969. He was replaced by Victor Unitt (born July 5, 1946), who had been a member of the Edgar Broughton Band.

The band was now in dire straights financially. Desperate for money, they got involved in yet another bizarre venture. A French millionaire playboy named Philippe DeBarge hired them to write and record a new album that he would add his lead vocals to and release as a solo album under his name only.

Apparently, a considerable amount of money was offered and the group agreed to his terms. May and Waller wrote the entire album and recorded it with Unitt, Povey, and Alder. Even Taylor and Alan came back to play on one track. May even laid down all the lead vocals as a guide for De Barge to follow before he overdubbed them with his own voice. As fate would have it, even De Barge's wealth could not convince any label to release it and it languished in the vaults for nearly forty years before it was eventually released under the title *The Pretty Things/Philippe DeBarge* (2009).

At the end of 1969, Alder left to form the Pink Fairies and was replaced by a returning Skip Alan. The new lineup returned to the studio and recorded *Parachute* (1970), under the direction of Smith. With Taylor now gone, Waller became May's main songwriting partner with Smith working with May on a single song. The new songs all seemed to follow a loose concept of urban and rural life. As a result, side A was considered the urban side while side B was rural. Side A also included two (3) song medleys.

Now with some idea now on how to market the album, EMI was able to get it into the right circles and it received sparkling reviews. It even made the British pop albums chart, peaking at number 43 during the week of June 27, 1970. The band was able to tour behind it through the end of 1970, when Unitt left to return to the Edgar Broughton Band. He was replaced by Peter Tolson (born September 10, 1951 in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, England).

For the most part, the Pretty Things toured mostly in England in 1970 and 1971. They had established a strong fan base in Germany and the Netherlands and would sometimes festival in Europe. During 1971, the band suffered a blow when Waller was offered a job as an EMI staff producer at EMI. This was a serious loss for the band, especially in reference to his songwriting. He was replaced by Stuart Brooks, who had been playing in Black Cat Bones.

Waller did return in 1972 to produce the Pretty Things' next studio album, under the alias Asa Jones. The new album, *Freeway Madness* (1972) was released in December 1972 and was stylistically connected to the material on *Parachute*. All of their former raucous r&b was gone, replaced by lush harmonies and a keyboard based sound that accented their softer side. The album was not received, failing to chart. That was enough for Columbia, who pulled the plug on their contract.

After a supporting tour, Brooks left and was replaced by Gordon Edwards (born Gordon John Edwards on December 26, 1947 in Southport, England). He could play guitar, keyboards, and bass as well as sing. The new lineup wound up signing a new record deal with Swan Song Records, which was owned by Led Zeppelin and their manager, Peter Grant and distributed by Atlantic Records. Around the same time, they added ex T Rex member Jack Green (born March 12, 1951 in Glasgow, Scotland). Green was another multi-instrumentalist but he primarily joined the Pretty Things to share lead vocals with May.

Swan Song brought back Norman Smith to produce the album, which was called *Silk Torpedo* (#104-1974). It was released on November 1, 1974 and targeted to American audiences. The album followed the journey of a single man through heartbreak, the death of his father, the emotional distance of his mother and subsequent enlistment into the Navy, new love, and WWII activities in Ireland.

Since Swan Song was distributed by Atlantic Records, they had a strong distribution network in North America. Up to this point, the Pretty Things had had no success in North America and were determined to change that. They toured there for the first time in 1973, establishing an audience in major cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, and outside of NYC. Atlantic pushed the record and it began to get some radio airplay.

The album entered the American pop albums chart and rose to number 104 during a nine week chart run. The band toured throughout Europe and England in support at the end of the year, then traveled to the United States for some shows in 1975. With optimism high for a second studio album, the group began work on *Savage Eye* (#163-1976) in 1975. It was also produced by Smith and released in January 1976. It followed a similar hard rock nearly glam style as *Silk Torpedo* and did chart, peaking at number 163 during a six week American pop album chart run.

However, the recording sessions for the album were marred by internal problems between May and the Edwards/Green duo. May shut down and things came to an head during a supporting tour, which included a North American leg. When May did not show up for a high profile London show at the Lyceum on July 9, 1976, he effectively resigned from the band.

As the last original member, May owned the trademark and Swan Song had no choice other than drop the band. In addition, Grant had lost interest in continuing without May. Alan, Edwards, Green, and Tolson formed a new band called Metropolis and tried to get Swan Song to sign them, but the label was not interested and the venture quickly failed.

May quickly formed a new group, Phil May & The Fallen Angels, with Mickey Finn, Bill Lovelady, Brian Johnston, Wally Allen, and Chico Greenwood. They released one self-titled album in 1978. Later that same year, May, Taylor, Povey, Tolson, Alan, and Waller reformed the Pretty Things, signed with Warner, and released *Cross Talk* (1980) in August, 1980. It did not chart, and the group broke up once again in 1981. The band would not release a new studio album for nearly twenty years.

The Pretty Things reunited many times over the next twenty years with May and Taylor teaming with various personnel to tour and record. These activities yielded a handful of albums, including a 1984 live album called *Live At The Heartbreak Hotel* (1984) which was recorded with guitarist Joe Shaw, bassist Dave Wintour, keyboardist Dave Wilki, harmonica player John Elstar and drummer John Clark. During this period, saxophonist Kevin Flanagan often performed with them on stage.

Two years later, May, Shaw, and Taylor teamed with bassist Roelf Ter Veld, drummer Doede Ter Veld, and guitarist Perry Margouleff to tour. After Doede Ter Veld left and was replaced by Bertram Engel, May, Shaw, Taylor, Roelf Ter Veld, Engel, and percussionist Steffi Stephan recorded the live in the studio *Out Of The Island* (1987), which was released on a small German independent label called in-akustik records.

For the next several years, members came and went on a regular basis. In late 1990, May and Taylor teamed with guitarist Frank Holland, drummer Hans Waterman, bassist Steve Browning, percussionist Mark St. John (born Mark Ibbotson), and guitarist Barkley McKay to participate in a European blues package tour with Stan Webb's Chicken Shack and Luther Allison. This lineup wound up staying together until the mid-nineties, touring frequently throughout Europe.

May and Taylor also formed a side venture with ex Yardbird's drummer Jim McCarty. They called themselves The Pretty Things & The Yardbird Blues Band. The trio wound up releasing two albums, *The Chicago Blues Tape* (1991) and *Wine Women Whiskey* (1994).

In the early nineties, the former early members of the band sued EMI regarding publishing, past royalties, and copyrights. In 1993, the court ruled in their favor. Several former members benefitted from the settlement, including the original lineup of May, Taylor, Prince, Pendleton, and Stax. In addition, Waller, Alan, and Povey also received back royalties, and the band was given their master tapes and publishing copyrights.

Surprised that something had finally gone their way, May and Taylor reunited with Skip Alan, Jon Povey, Pete Tolson, and Wally Waller to tour and record. However, old tensions resurfaced between Tolson and the rest of the band and he was quickly replaced by Frank Holland.

The May, Taylor, Povey, Waller, Alan, Holland lineup signed a new record deal with Snapper Records, who then reissued many of their older albums with new bonus tracks. The label also encouraged the band to figure out how to play *S.F. Sorrow* in a live setting. Once everyone was satisfied that they could do it, Snapper set up a live simulcast from Abbey Road studios on September 6, 1998. With the help of four guests, who included David Gilmour (5 tracks), Arthur Brown (narrator), Mark St. John (percussion), and Dov Skipper (percussion), the show was a success. It was captured on the CD/DVD *Resurrection* (1999), which Snapper released on January 26, 1999.

Just six weeks later, Snapper released a new studio album called *Rage Before Beauty* (1999), on March 9, 1999. Once again, the band got Gilmour to play on one track and convinced Ronnie Spector to sing on another. The album did not chart but did generate a supporting tour, which went so well that the lineup decided to focus on touring, playing annually for the next several years. These tours focused on England and certain countries in Europe, especially Germany.

In 2001, Alan experienced some heart related problems and Mark St. John, who was also their manager, filled in for him when he was too ill to play. On May 25, 2001, Pendleton passed away from lung cancer at the age of fifty seven. After leaving the original version of the band, he had worked as an insurance underwriter.

In addition to touring, The Pretty Things released a series of live recording over the coming years. In 2003, Repertoire released *The BBC Sessions* (2003). Snapper followed with *40th Anniversary - Live In Brighton* on November 21, 2006. It was recorded on August 30, 2004 by the May, Taylor, Waller, Povey, and Alan lineup as part of their 40th anniversary tour.

The band started work on a new studio album in 2005 and finished it in 2006. *Balboa Island* (2007) was released on Zoho Roots Records in May 2007. It would turn out to be the last studio album for the May, Taylor, Holland, Waller, Povey, and Alan lineup. After completing a well received supporting tour, Alan, St. John, Povey, and Waller all decided to leave for various reasons. That left May, Taylor, and Holland to put together a new version of the band. They started with drummer Jack Greenwood, who left music school to join. He would remain with the band until they broke up in 2018.

They then paired Greenwood with bassist George Woosey (aka George Perez). He had been a member of the Dull Knife and like Greenwood remained with the band until the end. This new lineup was the most stable in the band's history. While there were various one-time reunions of the former members over the coming years, the May, Taylor, Holland, Greenwood, Woolsey lineup remained together until the band retired from touring at the end of 2018.

In June 2009, the Pretty Things received the Mojo Heroes Award. May, Taylor, Waller, Povey, and Alan attended the ceremony. The following year, Waller, Povey, Alan, and Tolson reunited to record their own version of *Parachute*, under the moniker the xPTs (ex-Pretty Things). May and Taylor were not involved in the project. The new album was called *Parachute Revisited* and was released by Esoteric Recordings on April 30, 2012. The album was later remixed and released again as Parachute Reloaded in 2024. The xPTs did not tour in support as this was a studio only project.

The 1969 Philippe DeBarge recording was finally released as *The Pretty Things/Philippe DeBarge* (2009) on February 18, 2009 by Ugly Things Records, bringing the long lost and forgotten project into the public for the first time. On April 10, 2009, the new lineup band played all of *S.F. Sorrow* on-stage for the first time.

Focusing on touring, the new lineup toured New Zealand in 2012 for the first time since 1965, with Stax joining them on stage during the Australia leg. It was his first appearance with the band since 1967. In total, they played 56 shows. They celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2013 with a 36 date tour in England and Europe. They followed with 39 shows in 2014.

During this period of renewed activity a series of legacy live recordings were released. In 2014, LMS Mobile Recording Studio released *Live at the 100 Club*, which was recorded on January 25, 2008 with the just assembled May, Taylor, Holland, Greenwood, and Woosey lineup. The band played their entire debut album at this show.

Repertoire then followed with the *Live At Rockpalast* (2014) on December 23, 2014. It has been released in various formats and includes full shows recorded for the German television show in 1998, 2004, and 2007. The label quickly followed with the four CD *Live at the BBC* on May 18, 2015. A two album edition set was released on September 30, 2016.

In between these BBC sets, the band released a new studio album, *The Sweet Pretty Things (Are In Bed, Of Course)* on July 10, 2015. The lineup included Taylor, May, Holland, Greenwood, and Woosey. In support, they performed 46 shows. The group remained active in 2016 with 38 more concerts. They then picked up the pace in 2017, playing 55 shows.

In the beginning of 2018, the group members announced that their upcoming tour would be their last. They wound up playing 72 shows, culminating with a December 18 show at the O2 Indigo Arena. The core lineup of May, Taylor, Holland, Greenwood, and Woosey invited Waller, Povey, and Alan to play during the show. David Gilmour also played on several tracks along with Van Morrison, who sang on two tracks. The show was captured in multiple formats by Madfish Records as *The Final Bow* (2019) and released on November 1, 2019.

While the band was touring worldwide in 2018, Repertoire released two more legacy live sets. On September 28, 2018, they released *Singapore Silk Torpedo Live at the BBC & Other Broadcasts* (2018). They quickly followed that with *Live at the BBC Paris Theatre – 1974* (2018) in late December. Another label called No Kidding Records released *BBC 1964-1967* during that same year.

In May 2020, May was riding a bicycle when he got into an accident. During subsequent hip surgery, there were non-COVID related complications, and he passed away on May 15, 2020. At the time, he had just finished a new studio album called *Bare as Bone, Bright as Blood* (2020) with Taylor for Madfish. The set was released on September 25, 2020 and features stripped down mostly acoustic recordings. It received strong reviews. In tribute to the band, Repertoire pulled together all known BBC recordings and released them as *Live at the BBC* in the summer of 2021. It remains the group's last album.

Since the final breakup of the Pretty Things, Taylor has remained active. As of 2024, he was playing lead guitar with the Hillmans. John Stax is also still alive. After leaving the band in January, 1967, he eventually moved to Australia in 1970, where he worked as a guitar luthier, specializing in cigar box guitars. Viv Prince passed away at the age of 84 on September 11, 2025 at his home in Portugal. He had played in a series of groups after being booted from the Pretty Things and also ran a club in Soho, London.

Povey preceded him by a couple of years, passing away on May 9, 2023 from leukemia. At the time, he was working on a solo album and an autobiography. Skip Alan is also still around, having essentially

retired from drumming after leaving the Pretty Things in 2007. Finally, Wally Waller is still alive, having released his last solo album, *Kitchen Rock*, in 2023.

The Pretty Things are featured on several compilations but stick with the later day recordings. Recall's 2001 set, *The Rhythm & Blues Years*, includes 34 tracks recorded in 1964 and 1965. The same label's 2002 release, *Psychedelic Years – 1966-1970*, contains 35 tracks from that period. Repertoire's 2002 triple CD set, *Singles A's & B's*, includes 66 tracks from their entire career. Repertoire's 2003 release, *The Very Best Of The Pretty Things*, contains 26 tracks from throughout their career.

Snapper's 2004 release, *Still Unrepentant*, contains 45 tracks plus a live reunion show. Shout Factory's 2004 set, *Come See Me: The Very Best Of The Pretty Things*, includes 25 tracks from throughout their career. Snapper's 2013 release, *Introducing The Pretty Things*, contains 32 tracks. Madfish's 2017 set, *Greatest Hits*, contains 25 studio tracks and a 12 track live show from December, 2010.

The group is also featured on a handful of live recordings. Repertoire's 2003 set, *The BBC Sessions*, contains 41 tracks. Big Beat's 1984 release, *Live At Heartbreak Hotel*, includes 12 tracks recorded on March 13, 1984 at a single show. Snapper's 1999 set, *Resurrection*, includes 27 tracks from the live broadcast of *S.F. Sorrow* from Abbey Road studios on September 5, 1998. Snapper's 2006 release, *40th Anniversary – Live In Brighton*, contains 16 songs from an August 30, 2004 show featuring Taylor, May, Alan, Holland, Waller, and Povey. Repertoire's 2014 set, *Live At Rockpalast*, includes 14 tracks recorded on December 19, 1998. An expanded version also includes two additional 14 track shows that were recorded for the show in 2004 and 2007.

Repertoire's 2018 release, *Live At The BBC Paris Theatre 1974*, contains 8 tracks. Repertoire's 2018 set, *Singapore Silk Torpedo Live At The BBC & Other Broadcasts*, includes 21 tracks recorded at five different broadcasts in 1974 and 1975. Madfish's 2019 release *The Final Bow*, captures the band's final live show on December 18, 2018. It contains 32 tracks. Finally, Repertoire's 2021 set, *Live at the BBC*, includes all material they recorded for the BBC includes 118 tracks recorded between 1964 and 2018. It was meant as a replacement for all the earlier Repertoire *Live at the BBC* sets.

Various band members are also included on other live sets, sometimes with guest artists from other bands. While the gold standard for a collector would be a live recording from the Prince era of the band, nothing has been released. However, there is a fourteen plus minute video on YouTube that captures a live television appearance from Germany that features a show from 1964 and captures the band in all their maniacal glory.

During these fourteen minutes,, you can clearly see the crazy intensity of May, who preens around the stage projecting an almost dangerous vibe. People will tell you that Prince was the crazy one, but as you will see if you bring up the video, May had him beat by miles. As for Prince, he gets up and leaves him drum seat a couple of times during songs, takes his sticks with him and pounds on anything he can find, including the floor, his other band members, stage equipment, microphones and literally anything within reach. He then returns to his drum seat and plays away like nothing had happened.

One of the surprises of the video was bassist John Stax, who is often seen playing while lying on his back, dancing wildly around and kicking out his legs at all sorts of angles. Once again, this does not affect his playing or backup singing, where he is heavily featured. While all this is going on, Taylor and Pendleton are as steady as a rock. They are the Pretty Things' version of the Who's John Entwistle, standing dead still while Daltry, Moon, and Townshend are doing their thing.

The video does include performances of all their 1964 hits, but the songs are so interrupted by the stage antics and so poorly recorded that they are only good for documenting why they were one of rock music's most discussed bands at the time. And, judging by the frenzied reaction of the audience, one of rock's most dynamic live performers.

When a new label called The 1960s Records Company LTD was formed in England on August 17, 2016,, they decided to specialize on releasing rare live recordings from primarily sixties bands. For the most part, these recordings were mostly made while the bands were performing on television, often in Germany or France. As luck would have it, they found five tracks that the Pretty Things recorded in 1966 and 1967 and released it on a five song EP called *Live In Europe 1966-1967* on April 21, 2018. I immediately purchased a copy and it is one of four live recordings I have from the band.

The first three tracks were recorded in Bremen, Germany in April, 1966 by the Taylor, May, Pendleton, Stax, Alan lineup. They begin with a truly priceless wild cover of "Roadrunner" which includes some of the weirdest lead guitar work you will ever hear. Taylor scratches and claws his way through three guitar sequences while Stax and Alan play frenetically behind him. Pendleton tries his best to keep things on track while May lays into the vocals.

The chaos continues with "Midnight To Six Man", which includes another priceless guitar solo from Taylor. It is played at the same frenetic pace as the first song. The group finally reigns things in with a bluesy solo version of "Rainin' In My Heart". Stax's bass work and Taylor's conventional guitar solos stand out, along with May's strong vocals.

The two 1967 tracks from Paris, France feature the Taylor, May, Pendleton, Waller, Alan lineup. Both are representative of their psychedelic music. The first, "Reincarnation", would have sounded at home on a San Francisco recording from the same year. May does a solid job on vocals and Taylor's guitar work is strong, with peals of droning feedback through the last section. The rhythm section of Alan and Waller wail away in the background, providing a nice up-tempo bottom end. Through the closing section, the French crowd is literally going wild, indicative of the effects the band still had on audiences even in 1967.

The second song, "Children" is more lightweight, but with the same psychedelic stylings. It is typical of 1967 British psychedelia, evoking an early Pink Floyd feel. There is a Yardbirds' like distorted guitar riff and May is featured on vocals. Alan's drum work also stands out. The song ends with Taylor creating a "Have You Seen Your Mother Baby Standing In The Shadows" like drone.

These five tracks, which are definitely true live recordings, capture the original r&b side of the band as well as their psychedelic side. It is a must have in any serious live collection.

Title: Live At Rockpalast 1998

Label: Repertoire Records

Release Date: 1998

Medium: CD

Availability: Very Good

Venue: Dusseldorf, Germany

Recording Date: December 19, 1998

Lineup: Phil May - Vocals, harmonica
Skip Alan - Drums
Dick Taylor - Guitar, vocals
Frank Holland - Guitar, vocals
Wally Waller - Bass, vocals
Jon Povey - Keyboards, vocals

Set List: Road Runner
Don't Bring Me Down
Havana Bound
S.F. Sorrow Is Born
Baron Saturday
Private Sorrow
Balloon Burning
Loneliest Person
Come See Me
Cries From The Midnight Circus
Judgement Day
L.S.D.
Old Man Going
Route 66

The first of my three Rockpalast Recording comes from their appearance on Rockpalast's 1998 Christmas Special, which was recorded at the Philips Halle in Dusseldorf, Germany on December 19, 1998. At the time, the band's lineup included May, Taylor, Alan, Waller, Povey, and Holland. Everyone other than Holland had played in one of the Pretty Things sixties lineups.

The fourteen song set visits all eras of their career. They include their second single, "Don't Bring Me Down" along with "Road Runner" and "Judgement Day" from their self-named debut album. "Come See Me" and "L.S.D. from *Get The Picture?*, "S.F. Sorrow Is Born", "Baron Saturday", "Private Sorrow", "Loneliest Person", "Balloon Burning", and "Old Man Going" from *S.F. Sorrow*, "Cries From The Midnight Circus" from *Parachute*, "Havana Bound" from *Freeway Madness*, and a cover of "Route 66, which the band had been playing live for many years. Recording quality is excellent.

When the Pretty Things finally won their royalties and publishing lawsuit with EMI in the early nineties, May, Taylor, Waller, Povey, Alan, and guitarist Pete Tolson reunited. Tolson quickly decided that he did not fit and left, with Frank Holland taking his place. The new lineup began to tour on a regular basis. They signed a new record deal with Snapper Records, who reissued all their earlier albums. They also encouraged the band to tackle the issues around playing *S.F. Sorrow* live, which they did by broadcasting a live show from Abbey Road studios worldwide in September 1998.

The band was then invited to play a Christmas Special *Rockpalast* television show on December 18 from Dusseldorf, Germany. That particular show is captured here. The fourteen song set was heavily oriented to their earliest material through *S.F. Sorrow*, with twelve of the fourteen songs coming from that period. Six of those twelve songs come from *S.F. Sorrow*, which they had clearly mastered. In fact, they would continue to play live material from the album through the end of their career in 2018.

This version of the Pretty Things had clearly matured over the years. May still had the ability to get down and dirty with the early songs but he had toned things down by the late sixties and had become a well rounded singer. He sounds great throughout and the harmonies provided by Taylor, Waller, Povey, and Holland are very strong. Waller provides tandem lead vocal lines as well as harmonies. Overall, the ensemble singing on this album is very strong and May proves to be a great frontman, urging the audience to get involved every chance he gets.

Instrumentally, the band were now seasoned performers. May could still play a mean harmonica and is featured on the earliest material. The lead guitar work of Holland is often spectacular and hard rock oriented. Taylor had also matured and while he still retained a sixties based sound, his lead playing had

greatly improved, and he shows an overall mastery of the blues. Finally, the rhythm section of Alan and Waller anchors everything and Povey is a marvel, whether he is on piano or electronic keyboards. His church organ work on "Private Sorrow" brings poignancy to the song. His overall skill allows the band to pull off the *S.F. Sorrow* tracks with ease.

There are a number of standout tracks with the two seventies songs, "Cries From The Midnight Circus" from *Parachute* and "Havana Bound" from *Freeway Madness* coming across well, which was impressive given that Taylor did not play on either original recording and Waller was absent by the time the second was recorded. Taylor also does a great job on lead vocals on "Baron Saturday", which has a crunchy hard rock base.

The mix of the older material and the *S.F. Sorrow* songs works very well, chronicling the transition from a full blown r&b band to a psychedelic group. Of the three Rockpalast sets in this collection, this one will give you the most S.F. Sorrow material.

Title: Live At Rockpalast 1998

Label: Repertoire Records

Release Date: 1998

Medium: CD

Availability: Very Good

Venue: Harmonie, Bonn, Germany

Recording Date: October 8, 2004

Lineup: Phil May - Vocals, harmonica
Skip Alan - Drums
Dick Taylor - Guitar, vocals
Frank Holland - Guitar, vocals
Wally Waller - Bass, vocals
Jon Povey - Keyboards, vocals

Set List: S.F. Sorrow Is Born
Balloon Burning
Don't Bring Me Down
Midnight To Six Man
Havana Bound
Hoochie Coochie Man
Rosalyn
Mama Keep Your Big Mouth Shut
Goodbye, Goodbye
Goin' Downhill
Come See Me
L.S.D.
Route 66/Mona

On October 8, 2004, the band appeared on *Rockpalast* once again, appearing at the Harmonie in Bonn, Germany. Since the intervening six years from the 1998 appearance, the lineup had stayed the same and the band had released one new studio album called *Rage Before Beauty* in 1999. Two tracks from that album "Goodbye, Goodbye" and "Goin' Downhill" are included on this set.

Like the 1998 appearance described above, this show includes old sixties classics like "Don't Bring Me Down", and "Come See Me". They also play "Havana Bound" from *Midnight Madness* and cover "Route 66" again, this time pairing it with "Mona". This also repeat "L.S.D." from *Get The Picture?* as well as "S.F. Sorrow In Born" and "Balloon Burning" from *S.F. Sorrow*.

Ultimately, the value of this set comes from the new songs that do not appear on the 1998 set. They pull off a great version of their debut single, "Rosalyn", and include a rare album track from their debut album

called “Mama Keep Your Big Mouth Shut” which features Waller on bass, Alan on percussion, and Holland on lead guitar. It sounds great.

One of their most underrated singles, “Midnight To Six Man” from *Get The Picture?*, is given a gritty treatment and the band hits a high point with a kick ass cover of “Hoochie Coochie Man”, which features a guest appearance by Arthur Brown. It includes some mean slide guitar work from Taylor and plenty of May’s harmonica. Both May and Brown share lead vocals.

The two new tracks from *Rage Before Beauty* showcase how much the band’s core blues sound had evolved over the years. On “Goodbye, Goodbye”, Povey is featured on piano and organ. The quality of May’s lead vocals are excellent and Holland’s guitar work is blues based hard rock delight. The song immediately transitions into a second track from the album called “Goin’ Downhill”, which continues the slow blues rock vibe of the first.

Once again, May’s vocals, Povey’s keyboards, and Holland’s lead guitar work stand out. The vocal work on both tracks features the entire band and the overall sound is outstanding. The band also does an outstanding job with the medley of “Route 66” and “Mona”, which takes out the set in style.

Of the three Rockpalast sets, this one has more unique moments, like the “Hoochie Coochie Man” cover and the two Rage Before Beauty tracks which represent their later sound.

Title: Live At Rockpalast 2007

Label: Repertoire Records

Release Date: 1998

Medium: CD

Availability: Very Good

Venue: Harmonie, Bonn, Germany

Recording Date: October 19, 2007

Lineup: Phil May - Vocals, harmonica
Skip Alan - Drums, percussion
Dick Taylor - Guitar, vocals
Frank Holland - Guitar, vocals
Wally Waller - Bass, vocals
Jon Povey - Keyboards, vocals

Set List: The Beat Goes On
Don’t Bring Me Down
Havana Bound
Buried Alive
S.F. Sorrow Is Born
Baron Saturday
Can’t Be Satisfied
Livin’ In My Skin
Midnight To Six Man
Cries from the Midnight Circus
Come See Me
Judgement Day
L.S.D.
Old Man Going
Road Runner
Rosalyn

My final live Rockpalast recording took place on October 19, 2007 just before the band went through a major transition. Earlier in the year, the band had released a new studio album called *Balboa Island* (2007). After a supporting tour, which included this performance, Povey, Alan, and Waller left and while they did participate in some subsequent reunion shows, they never returned to the band on a full-time basis. This ushered in the May, Taylor, Holland, Greenwood, and Woosey lineup that lasted until the band played their last live show in 2018.

Like the two sets above, there are songs on this set that do not appear on the other Rockpalast recordings. They include “The Beat Goes On”, “Buried Alive”, and “Livin’ In My Skin” from *Balboa Island*. They also perform “Can’t Be Satisfied”, a Muddy Waters blues cover that they frequently played live. The other twelve songs all are repeats from the earlier sets, with “Rosalyn”, “Don’t Bring Me Down”, “Come See Me”, “Judgement Day”, and “Road Runner” dating back to their earliest recordings and “Midnight To Six Man”, “Cries From The Midnight Circus”, and “L.S.D.” all capturing their pre-psychedelic period on *S.F. Sorrow*.

Of course, the band does play “S.F. Sorrow Is Born”, “Baron Saturday”, and “Old Man Going” from that classic album. They also throw in “Havana Bound” to represent the seventies, providing an excellent retrospective of their entire career. And, given that three of the group’s core members knew that they were leaving, the band is on fire during this performance. They knew they were at their best and clearly wanted to go out on a high note.

The three new songs from *Balboa Island* represent the band well. “The Beat Goes On” is a hard rocker, with a strong bottom end and plenty of distorted rhythm guitar work. There is a nineties grunge feel to the song, which features great ensemble vocals. “Buried Alive” has a *Tommy* era Who feel with a Daltry like vocal and restrained but loud guitar work. Finally, “Livin’ In My Skin” also turns back to the early nineties, with a slow ominous feel and some effective slide guitar work from Taylor.

The cover of “Can’t Be Satisfied” is pure traditional blues, never straying from its Muddy Waters roots. Taylor is the only accompanist, playing traditional slide guitar from start to finish. May delivers a vocal performance worthy oof the old masters and Alan provides a minimal beat on the drum rim. This is pure blues equal to anything Mayall did back in the sixties, and it showcases just how great a blues band The Pretty Things were during their entire career.

Of the three Rockpalast sets, this one is the best There is an intensity to this performance that reflects the unique circumstances behind the show, and the band includes all of their best material. The ensemble performances are tight and just unhinged enough to keep things interesting. It is clear that no one is leaving anything in the bag and with the last eight songs coming at you like a freight train, you could not script a better ending. Without question, the entire three show set should be part of any live collection.