

The Art of Landscape

Landscape A Go-Go (5CD, Cooking Vinyl/Landscape Music)

Subtitled 'The Story of Landscape 1977-83' this 5 CD, 84 track box set, which will be released on 21 July, is a welcome and surprising release from the band who made electrifying jazz-rock (which they sometimes erroneously called punk-jazz) but went to make electrified dance-funk as part of, or right next to, the New Romantic movement.

Originally an 8-piece, then a 6-piece, jazz band, Landscape performed anywhere and everywhere they could in and around London and then further afield, from art colleges to village fetes (if you call Barnes a village; it likes to pretend it is) to pub and club venues. I'm not sure if I first saw them at The Nashville or The Music Machine, but they were a welcome distraction from and contrast to the pub rock and recycled pub rock of punk in 1977.

They were one of the first bands to issue their own EPs back in the day too: *U2XME1X2MUCH* in 1977 and *Workers Playtime* the following year. There was quite a buzz around the band at the time, with sold-out gigs and the blessing of well-known hippy Jesus* who usually danced semi-naked in front of the stage, having handed out percussion instruments to those around him.

In 1980 their eponymous first album was released and they also appeared on *Tomorrow's World*, discussing computer programming as well as their electronic drums and wind instruments. It was a sign of things to come. Before long two of the band were programming Fairlights for Kate Bush's third album *Never for Ever* and the band reinvented themselves as an electronic dance band, somewhat incongruously dressing themselves in futuristic vinyl, but soon achieving pop success with 'Einstein A-Go-Go' and 'Norman Bates.' Both singles were quirky, unexpected tracks with killer hooks and bizarre videos.

The band would also turn up doing production duties on various, often surprising, projects, not least music & dance troupe Shock's reversioning of 'Angel Face', a neglected 7" classic. Anyway, Landscape persisted with the dance music, following their hit album *From the Tea Rooms of Mars...* (which contained their two hit singles and also the unjustly unsuccessful 'European Man' which had been issued several times) with a third, 1982's *Manhattan Boogie-Woogie*. But the moment had gone, as moments often do, and despite a brief incarnation as Landscape III (a trio), the band broke up for good in 1984, with members continuing session and production work, and writing for films and television, including bass player Andy Pask's theme for *The Bill*.

Now, in 2023, it's great to have a CD box set that gathers up everything there is from back in the day, presumably on the back of new interest in and belated recognition of the band in the likes of *Electronic Sound*, *Classic Pop* and *Rock & Roll Globe* magazines, not to mention what Simon Reynolds calls Retromania, the

urge to dig deep into and unearth the recent past.

Beautifully designed, produced and manufactured, *Landscape A Go-Go* kicks off with the first album before a smattering of unreleased live tunes from Norwich and London. Then it's straight into the hit album on the second disc accompanied with various versions of singles, including a stonking 12" version of 'European Man', and a couple of never released tracks. As you might expect, the third CD repeats the process for *Manhattan Boogie-Woogie* and its associated singles and mixes.

The really good stuff, for me anyway, is on the final two discs, where listeners will find music from the now impossible-to-find EPs ('I still have mine,' he said smugly) and the didn't-even-know-about-it-til-now cassette album *Thursday the 12th* from 1974, as well as some unreleased music from London 1977-78 and tracks by Landscape III. And there are a few other versions, mixes and remixes too.

Although I like the *Tea Rooms* album, I don't feel it's aged well; I also get less and less interested in production and hi-fidelity as I get older. So, for me, it's the highly original and perverse (if you think about the social and musical context of when it was produced) music from the band's early days which is the real treasure here.

Rupert Loydell

*Find out more about Jesus Jellet here

<https://flashbak.com/jesus-amongst-fans-naked-hippie-dancer-394617/>
and here

<https://www.ukrockfestivals.com/jesus-jellett.html>

Pre-order *Landscape A Go-Go* at <https://landscape.lnk.to/landscapeagogoYo>

The Landscape official website is at <https://landscape.band/>

Landscape – U2XME1X2MUCH (you two-timed me one time too much):

EMBED <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoC4s95nEW8>

Landscape – European Man (7-Inch Version)

EMBED <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UY1IIBAMP7E>

(743 words)