'Every fashion's rise and fall'

*Quit Dreaming and Get on the Beam* (deluxe edition), Bill Nelson, (Esoteric/Cherry Red)

Bill Nelson, erstwhile guitar hero and frontman of rock band Be Bop Deluxe, was not immune to punk and new wave ideas of energy and the rejection of instrumental prowess. In 1978 he reinvented himself as Red Noise and released the *Sound-on-Sound* album in early 1979. It took on board synthesizers to produce clipped, electronic pop, including the brief opening track (and single) 'Don't Touch Me, (I'm Electric)', and sat well musically amongst the music being produced by the likes of Gary Numan, Simple Minds, XTC and others. However, it received mixed reviews, mostly on account, it seemed, of Nelson's musical past which gave rise to accusation of contrivance and bandwagon jumping.

The band recorded a second album, *Quit Dreaming and Get on the Beam*, although this was mostly a solo studio project, but EMI refused to release it. Eventually, Nelson released four tracks as the *Do You Dream in Colour?* EP in 1980 on his own label, and Mercury released the album in 1981, to both critical and commercial success: it remains Nelson's most commercially successful album.

Now, in 2025, comes a bumper CD reissue, with not only the original album but a CD of singles and radio sessions, along with new stereo and 5.1 mixes from the studio recordings, and the rare promo video for *Do You Dream in Colour?* The album remains on target for the late 80s, full of new wave energy and aggression coupled with a pop sensibility; the live versions on the second CD often sound even better, with instrumentation stripped back and aggression and pace increased. The booklet's pretty cool too, with lots of photos, details of the music, and a new essay.

Although at times Bill Nelson seemed convinced he was at the cutting edge of music when he was actually riding in the slipstream of others, this is the period when he was most on creative form, and it's hard to see why the 1983 follow-up mini-album *Chimera* wasn't more successful or why Nelson soon turned away from synth-pop to making endless instrumental albums, many of an ambient nature. Although they were occasionally interrupted by collections of songs, he effectively sidelined himself and became a cult artist.

Let's hope this reissue as well as those of other solo and Be Bop Deluxe albums will introduce him to new listeners and facilitate a reconsideration of these neglected works.

Rupert Loydell

[400 words]

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