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like a fine cocktail, it is, without a doubt, an album you don't want to miss."
– BlogCritics.com



Boom Pam

Boom Pam

(Essay)

US release date: 24 October 2006

UK release date: 16 October 2006

by **Deanne Sole**

Email Print Write to the editor

"Boom Pam" is the title of a song popularised in the late 1960s by Aristidis Saisanas, a Greek man who migrated to Israel, mercifully permitted his name to be shortened, and released albums as Aris San. Half a century later, our group of four men from Tel Aviv named themselves after "Boom Pam" as a tribute to San. They also recorded a version of the song in collaboration with Berry Sakharof, veteran of the rock band Minimal Compact, one of the few Israeli groups of the 1980s to make a reputation for itself in Europe.



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Now, to name yourself after a popular song is to take on a challenge. You're stepping up to the crease, giving us a little nod and a grin, and saying, "Yes, we're as good as *that*." Boom Pam's music echoes that decision: it is a mix of the canny, the camp, and the ballsy. Earlier this year, in *The Rough Guide to the Music of Israel*, the compiler Dan Rosenberg made the point that klezmer—the American-Eastern European music that the English-speaking world tends to think of as "typically Jewish"—is not the music of the Israeli state, and *Boom Pam* should serve to drive the message home in case you missed the lesson or thought Rosenberg was exaggerating.

The tunes they play sound Greek, or even Turkish, or like something from the Balkans—from the Mediterranean coastline perhaps. Boom Pam has some of the speed that we've come to expect from traditional Balkan bands. It has that Roma way of taking old music and juicing it with new ingredients, finding a twist, an angle, that brings it to life and makes the audience forget that it's old. The tunes (mostly self-penned) are based around folk tunes, but they're being performed like rock music. Boom Pam uses tubas; and, in an inspired touch, it also uses surf guitars.

The first track, which is simply called "Wedding Song", gives you a good indication of what you can expect to hear on the rest of the album. It begins with a shivery Greek ripple of guitars that sound a little like balalaikas, and then it stops, skips, jets into high speed; and the guitars are joined by a tuba. The two sets of instruments race one another for the rest of the tune, the tuba taking occasional breaks. A simple phrase is attacked, repeated, repeated differently, repeated high by the guitar, low by the tuba, repeated madly and moistly by several surf guitars acting together, playing with the notes, giving it back to the tuba, the whole thing ending with a massed shout of, "Hey!" and a terminal blurt as the tuba sits down for a rest. If this really had been a wedding then the dancers would be laughing, mopping their faces, clapping, eager for the next one.

"Souvlaki #3" has a hammering backing and a guitar that goes off on its own, winding higher and running up and down, dancing and spinning. "The Souvlak", which has a similar name but sounds very different, begins with a modest tuba that leads into a slowly rising slope of noise. This build-up gradually gets faster until all of the instruments are tearing around in a circle, snapping at one another's heels.

Boom Pam is primarily an instrumental album, but most of the few lyrics it has are funny and worth listening to. "Otto Choconi" is a small masterpiece of straight-faced humour that starts off as the simple tale of a man's fondness for his useful mule and then gets stranger, casually, almost as if it doesn't mean to. It's not until Uzi Feinerman decides to stop rhyming his lines and announces that his wonder-mule lives on gasoline and peanuts that you realise something odd is going on. "Let Me Touch" is a piece of comic mock-sleaze that sounds as if Boom Pam has borrowed it from the Red Elvises and thrown in some Danny Elfman

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violins as a friendly bonus.

The group says that it is influenced by Dick Dale, but there's a danger in Dick Dale that you don't feel on this recording. *Boom Pam* is fun and exciting and it's rock without danger or rebellion; it's all good, high energy, perhaps too neatly contained by the album itself. They're wilder live, apparently. But this is good music, happy music, music to put next to good, fast Balkan albums, and to enjoy in the same way. It's music to dance to, or bounce on the spot to. It's not onanistic music for the introverted. It's music for gatherings, for crowds, and joyous mobs. It's wedding music.

RATING: 

— 12 December 2006

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