



VA The Rubens Room - É! Records: In Camera

April 11, 2025
2-LP / CD



Of all the independent record labels of the 1980s, **él** was the most singular and exciting. **él** only existed for a few short years and yet paradoxically - given its modest commercial success - was hugely influential. For writer Jonathan Coe, one of the label's many devotees, **él** was 'Britain's great musical secret'.

This 'best of' compilation LP, curated by label supremo Mike Alway himself, will remind the world of the greatness of **él**. The secret is out...

él was created in 1984 by Alway, a mercurial A&R man for Cherry Red signing outstanding artists like Everything But the Girl, The Monochrome Set and Felt. Alway briefly co-ran Blanco Y Negro (an offshoot of WEA) but was soon constrained by the conservatism of the commercial music sector and left to set up his own label. **él** was once described as 'the most innately English record label there has ever been' and yet the look and the sound of the label achieved global reach.

Alway's 'hands on' approach was to take complete control of the philosophy of the label's releases and even the titles of songs in the manner of pop impresarios of the past. Alway became a curator, selecting, shaping and overseeing the records issued on **él**. He employed songwriters proficient in classical pop techniques such as Nicholas Currie (AKA Momus) and Philippe Auclair (AKA Louis Philippe) who issued their own records while writing, arranging and performing for other **él** artistes. Great musicians such as Simon Turner (AKA The King of Luxembourg), Dean 'Speedball' Brodrick and producer Richard Preston completed the picture.

él had a unique musical flavour, eschewing rock music for 1960s bubblegum, chamber pop, European chanson, Latin rhythms and film scores (see in particular the work of Marden Hill). The label was decidedly un-macho and key artists such as Would Be Goods, Anthony Adverse and Bad Dream Fancy Dress examined the modern world through the female gaze. Alway saw **él** as a celebration of elegance and beauty: 'a pop world beyond leather jackets and jeans'.

The fantastic visual style of the label, adopting the aesthetics of high fashion, art photography and pop graphics was created by Alway with photographers Nick Wesolowski and Pete Moss and designer Jim Phelan. The **él** 'look' was so strong that one UK music paper even reviewed the records simply on the basis of the sleeves!

él was critically acclaimed in the UK and popular in America and mainland Europe but in Japan had a profound effect, directly influencing the Shibuya-kei phenomenon that included Pizzicato Five, Kahimi Karie and Cornelius.

The Rubens Room accompanies the book **Bright Young Things** by Mark Goodall (Ventil) the first publication to tell the fascinating story of the music found on **The Rubens Room**.

Mike Alway writes in his sleeve notes that '**él** was the joy of my life. It was monumental'.

With **The Rubens Room**, we can all share that joy.

Artist - Track

- A1 Louis Philippe - Anthony Bay
- A2 Louis Philippe - Like Nobody Do
- A3 Louis Philippe - Guess I'm Dumb
- A4 Louis Philippe - Touch Of Evil
- A5 Louis Philippe - If You're Missing Someone
- A6 Anthony Adverse - Now Listen
- A7 Anthony Adverse - Ulysses And The Siren

- B1 The King of Luxembourg - A Picture Of Dorian Gray
- B2 The King of Luxembourg - The Rubens Room
- B3 The King of Luxembourg - Smash Hit Wonder
- B4 Would-Be-Goods - The Camera Loves Me
- B5 Would-Be-Goods - Velasquez & I
- B6 Would-Be-Goods - Cecil Beaton's Scrapbook

Artist - Track

- C1 Marden Hill - Curtain
- C2 Marden Hill - Oh Constance
- C3 Marden Hill - The Execution Of Emperor Maximillian
- C4 Bad Dream Fancy Dress - Choirboys Gas
- C5 Bad Dream Fancy Dress - Where Have All the Schoolboys Gone?
- C6 Bad Dream Fancy Dress - Lemon Tarts

- D1 The Monochrome Set - Jet Set Junta (Single Version)
- D2 Always - Thames Valley Leather Club
- D3 Always - Park Row
- D4 Momus - John The Baptist Jones
- D5 Momus - Paper Wraps Rock
- D6 Simon Fisher Turner - Umber Wastes

Promotion

Sean Newsham
+49(0)40-88166663
sean@tapeterecords.de
www.tapeterecords.com

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CD 268722
4015698869156
LP 268721
4015698503982