

Hiestand
MUS 363
Women in Music
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Artist Research

Pete Burns had one of the grittiest gorgeous baritones the world will ever know. Taken from us in the year that people are calling cursed, 2016, within a few days of his death was a greatest hits single from Dead Or Alive. Peter Jozzeppi Burns died from a heart attack, having lived a life that few people would envy or condemn, but that so many people took notice of. From rock star during the flamboyantly gay trending electronic 1980s to famous reality star on Big Brother and plastic surgery addict almost killed by a botched lip job, Pete Burns was one of the most recognisable faces in the pop landscape, though many who knew his faces didn't know his name.

Beginning in the 1970s in the post-punk scene, Burns established a unique voice and style of songwriting that he developed with multiple projects that evolved into Dead or Alive, a band still famous for their hit song You Spin Me Round. The band had multiple hits though, and they were influential to other bands including Culture Club (Burns has claimed that Boy George stole much of his fashion) and numerous Japanese bands in the visual genre, including but hardly limited to Dead End and Luna Sea. To clarify, Pete Burns was the only mainstay through the band's incarnations though he spread around the songwriting credits and responsibilities. Much credit should be given to Stock Aitken Waterman, the producers who were able to reproduce the sound (albeit in a less evolved form) but not the success with other artists, including trans-shock icon Divine (who proved that underrepresented gender identities literally have to eat feces with her success following Pink Flamingos).

So what was Pete Burns personally and professionally? As a gender-bending artist in the 1980s he was someone who was not in what would have been considered a respected community. Gay marriage was not legal in the 1980s and gay sex itself was illegal under

sodomy laws in many places, which was still better than it had been previously i.e. the 1930s. Pete Burns was married to a woman for most of his career, but his flamboyant persona and fashion would not have been respected as any kind of mainstream, particularly with his later marrying of a man and his inability and lack of desire to identify as any gender or sexuality. At the very least though, he would have been considered transsexual and someone who sleeps with men. But many pseudo-trans men are 'like' women, not only identifying with women but also being equated by others to them in many ways, though often still embodying that male predatory feature.

His fashion flair and danceable music fit right in with the post-everything revival going on at the time with elements descended from electronic disco, punk, and rock; these elements were epitomised likewise by new artists like Madonna (herself an extension of Marilyn Monroe's superficial glam), Pet Shop Boys and Cyndi Lauper, as well as synthesising image and musical elements from established bands like Roxy Music and David Bowie. Feminine artists were attacking all genres and themes from all angles, but the focus in pop was on romance and dependence. Pete Burns may not have fit in perfectly with gender ideas of his period personally, but his musical ideas coming from a feminine male fit in perfectly here. To clarify, all of this fits better into the decreasingly underground gay West-Hollywood/Village night club circuit narrative, but the trans/gay movement and women's movement have some points of intercession, particularly with a 2010s interpretation/understanding of gender. A study of five of his songs will show just why.

The first single for Dead or Alive that brought them any real fame was not necessarily a breakout single. It was a cover of the song, That's The Way, originally by K.C. and the Sunshine Band. Dead or Alive slowed the song down and gave it an other-worldly vibe with echo. The music video is filled with girl-power, with 'No Boys Allowed' scrawled on the wall and Pete wandering around posing as buff women weight-lift. The new version adds the

phrase “keep that body strong” on the refrain and shatters the expectations of both a music video and a single. The song fits in with the derivative/revival direction of the 1980s but adds a new kind of flair with its gender-bending pageantry.

The second tune, *You Spin Me Round*, has a singalong chorus and a brilliant hook. More than that, the lyrics look into the glamorous transient relationships that are now being talked about openly even among more ‘respectable’ society. This is not the free love music of the previous generation, but a more open society overall where both the suits and hippies have had to put aside their differences and deal with their even more extreme children. *Dead or Alive* breaks through into the mainstream, catching fire as it were, alongside a gay and trans counter-culture that is far beyond anything addressed before in the pop mainstream. All of a sudden feminine men are aggressively attracted and singing to other men with little fear. The song itself fits in with womanly themes of romance and attraction to relationships in and of themselves. The androgyny of the singer and the lyrics allow for wide interpretation and acceptance, using the ‘you’ pronoun and suggestive language of being ‘spun ‘round’.

Lover Come Back To Me is a tune that harkens more to a traditional pop foundation. It relies on earlier generations’ reliance from the woman singer who needs a man in her life. The song expresses that the door can be ‘kicked’ right down. But watching the video, the kick is somewhere between a rock kick and a chorus line kick, symbolic of trans-power i.e. outside of the Stonewall. Further, the possession remains the domain of the singer, “I can make you mine”. This could be a fusion of the singer’s male and female identity, but it could also be an evolution of the feminine role in songs. Pete Burns, here, is clearly taking a more womanly role and is expressing ‘girl power’. At the same time the song is extremely desperate and urgent, demanding and begging for a manly contribution from the object of the lyrics. The video, meanwhile, is fiercely stark and anti-media, filled with bare images and concluding with the shredding of a tv set as Burns rests in a pose similar to the Egyptian

imagery surrounding him.

Brand New Lover is a tune that represents the spirit of change. Women and men had been stuck in relationships for ages, and for same-sex relationships they'd been unable to marry or be open. At the same time, more kinds of open relationships were being accepted. The 1970s had allowed for free love, but same-sex relationships were still somewhat taboo in many circles. Society had to accept the relationships that had existed for a long time, including the free club and bar one-night stands that were common and decreasingly deplored. Brand New Lover speaks to adventure, not just of relationships with another person, but even multiple persons. The protagonist seeks not something better but simply something new and less predictable. This is a time period where people were looking to new horizons, and alternate genders could finally see the sun for the first time in about sixty years.

Something in my House has some of the most lyrical and musical depth and is a rare showcase of Burns' delivery, which is often more of the foundation than the feature. The song uses a theme of hauntings and ghosts as symbols for cheating and lost love, which allows Pete to really get into the technique and express jealousy and bitterness. His vibrato and grace notes are on full display as well as his precision gravel. The song itself is typical of their catalogue but with an unusual amount of chord movement. The song symbolises the love interest as a ghost and the interloper as a witch, creating a love-triangle Lilith situation that has been resolved by the beginning of the song yet still meditated upon. The lack of a transgressive narrative allows the niche of the current situation to breathe, and the concept behind the song with its gothy theme is in common with many goth bands that arose at this time. Dead or Alive broke through the pop bubble but their influence on gender, gender-bending music, and alternative music is immeasurable. His over-the-top delivery, on full display here, combines punk-rocker ethos with an underground drag-show delivery and true star power.

Lyrics:

1. That's the Way
2. You Spin Me Round
3. Lover Come Back To Me
4. Brand New Lover
5. Something in My House

1.

Oh, that's the way, uh-huh uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh That's the way, uh-huh uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh That's the way, uh-huh uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh
When you take me by the hand Tell me I'm your loving man When you give me all your love And do it the very best you can

Oh, that's the way, uh-huh uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh That's the way, uh-huh uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh That's the way, uh-huh uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh

When I get to be in your arms When we're all alone When you whisper sweet in my ear When you turn, turn me on

Oh, that's the way, uh-huh uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh That's the way, uh-huh uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh That's the way, uh-huh uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh

Babe, oh babe (that's the way, uh-huh, that's the way, uh-huh) Babe, oh babe (that's the way, uh-huh, that's the way, uh-huh)

That's the way, uh-huh, uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh That's the way, uh-huh, uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh That's the way, uh-huh, uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh

Oh, that's the way, uh-huh, uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh That's the way, uh-huh, uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh That's the way, uh-huh, uh-huh I like it, uh-huh, uh-huh

2.

If I, I get to know your name Well if I, could trace your private number, baby

All I know is that to me You look like you're lots of fun Open up your lovin' arms I want some, want some

I set my sights on you (and no one else will do) And I, I've got to have my way now, baby

All I know is that to me You look like you're having fun Open up your lovin' arms Watch out here I come

You spin me right round, babyRight round like a record, babyRight round round roundYou
spin me right round, babyRight round like a record, babyRight round round round

I got to be your friend now, babyAnd I would like to move in just a little bit closer

All I know is that to meYou look like you're lots of funOpen up your lovin' armsWatch out,
here I come

You spin me right round, babyRight round like a record, babyRight round round roundYou
spin me right round, babyRight round like a record, babyRight round round round

I want your loveI want your love

All I know is that to meYou look like you're lots of funOpen up your lovin' armsWatch out,
here I come

You spin me right round, babyRight round like a record, babyRight round round roundYou
spin me right round, babyRight round like a record, babyRight round round round

You spin me right round, babyRight round like a record, babyRight round round roundYou
spin me right round, babyRight round like a record, babyRight round round round

You spin me right round, babyRight round like a record, babyRight round round roundYou
spin me right round, babyRight round like a record, babyRight round round round

3.

Kick it right downKick it right downKick it right downRight down

Kick it right downKick it right downKick it right downRight down

I've been lyin' here so lonelyI've been wishin' you would telephone meOh, I just can't lose
this desperationWon't you bring around a new sensationBaby, you got lots of energy,
yeahGonna give that energy to me, yeahTell you, we could have a real good time, yeahBaby,
I can make you mine, oh mine, yeahOh yeah, oh yeah

Lover, come back to meYou don't have to knock on my doorNoLover, come back to meKick
it right downKick it right downKick it right downRight down

Baby, all I feel is desperationAnd it's not a very nice sensationI've been wishin' you would
telephone meI've been lyin' here, oh oh, so lonelyBaby, we could have a real good time,
yeahTell you, I can make you mine, all mine, yeahBaby, you got lots of energy, yeahBaby,
give that energy to me, yeahOh yeah, oh yeah

Lover, come back to meYou don't have to knock on my doorNoLover, come back to meKick
it right downKick it right downKick it right downRight down

Lover, come back to me(Oh)You don't have to knock on my doorNoLover, come back to
meKick it right downKick it right downKick it right downRight down

I hear you knockin', won't you run on in(Oh)I hear you knockin', come back where you've

beenI hear you knockin', won't you run on in(Oh)I hear you knockin', come back where you've been

Lover, come back to meYou don't have to knock on my doorNoLover, come back to meKick it right downKick it right downKick it right downRight down

Lover, come back to meYou don't have to knock on my doorNoLover, come back to meKick it right downKick it right downKick it right downRight down

Lover, come back to meYou don't have to knock on my doorNo

4.

I want surprisesYour sweet nature darlingWas too hard to swallowI got the solutionI'm leaving tomorrowAnd now as I standAnd stare into your eyesI see safety thereI want surprises

What I really need to doIs find myself a brand new loverSomebody who lies with meWho doesn't notice all the others

When you wake up tomorrowYou'll be all aloneAll the love that we hadI have quickly outgrownI wanted to stayBut I just couldn't do itCouldn't stand thereAnd put you through it

My other loves will tell youThat I'm nothing but a pleasure seekerAnd for once I really must agreeI need to leave you by yourselfAnd go in search of someone elseTo satisfy my curiosity

Your sweet nature darlingWas too hard to swallowI made my decision I'm leaving tomorrow

Your sweet nature darlingWas too hard to swallow

5.

I, I, I, I, I, I am being hauntedIt's four o'clock in the morningAnd I'm sitting on my stairsAnd there's bangin' 'round the bedroom

Even though I know there's no one thereAnd I am here all by myselfAnd you're somewhere else with someone elseAnd I am being haunted by a love that isn't there

There is something in my house, my houseIt's just a ghost of the long, long dead affairThere is something in my house, my houseI just keep a hearing, you runnin' on up my stairs but you're not there

I, I, I, I, I, I am being hauntedI really gotta say it to yaYa showed me a good timeBut for every minute that you spent laughin'

There were hours that I criedAnd I think about what might have beenIf I'd never meant that wicked wayThat my heart broke into pieces that midnight on Halloween

There is something in my house, my houseIt's just a ghost of the long, long dead affairThere is something in my house, my houseI just keep a hearing, you runnin' on up my stairs but

you're not there

It's just a ghost of the long, long dead affair
There is something in my house, my house
But you're not there
I, I, I, I, I, I, I am being haunted

And I am here all by myself
And you're somewhere else with someone else
And I am being haunted by a love that isn't there

There is something in my house, my house
It's just a ghost of the long, long dead affair
There is something in my house, my house
I just keep a hearing, you runnin' on up my stairs but
you're not there

It's just a ghost of the long long dead affair
There is something in my house, my house
But you're not there

I am being haunted
I am, I am, I am, I

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