

All Back to Vinyl – Is This Desire?/Is This Desire Demos

All Back To Vinyl – Is This Desire?/Is This Desire Demos PJ Harvey

PJ Harvey's vinyl reissue series continues into 2021 with the 1998 release *Is This Desire?*

It remains one of the records Harvey is most proud of. She cut a striking figure in 1998 just before its release when this writer met her at the entrance to Edinburgh's Cameo cinema while appearing at the premiere of Hal Hartley's film "The Book Of Life". Harvey had taken on the role of Mary Magdalena for the short film about Christ's return to earth.



Magdalena who remains shrouded in mystery has been painted as a prostitute and adulterer without any historical evidence. The non-canonical Gospel of Mary contends with matters of the soul in the context of sin, desire and passion. Harvey's fourth album is often concerned with the female ascent of the Holy and the dirt behind the fingernails of life in the material world.

St Catherine's, a hilltop chapel in Abbotsbury near where Harvey grew up inspires *The Wind* and *Catherine*. It's on the latter and album opener *Angeline* that Polly brings to light to the stories of martyred, hidden, forgotten and broken women forced to give up their lives for different reasons.

These affecting ballads remain potent now some 22-years later. Written and recorded in the aftermath of a split with Nick

Cave, Harvey recently shared a collage she made for the Australian born singer/song-writer and explained the significance of the new demo release.

“When I am writing an album the demos of the songs capture the atmosphere of the moment in a way that can never be replicated. I made this collage for Nick during the time I was writing this album, and in some ways, the words of the collage went on to inform the song, Is This Desire?, and indeed the whole album.”

Harvey admitted it was a difficult album, it’s probably fair to say that the demo of The Sky Lit Up is an easier listen in demo form and is suggestive of where she goes next. Christian themes carry on during The Garden, an excellent jazzy detour and The River, where the protagonists take the hurt and pain of a relationship to be cleansed in water.

The record produced her biggest U.K chart hit with the driving A Perfect Day Elsie, perhaps the most 90s sounding cut on the record. It comes in 180s gram vinyl with printed inner sleeves and is mastered by Jason Mitchell at Loud Mastering with Harvey collaborator John Parish.

The Demos version feature new album artwork and previously unpublished photos by Maria Mochnacz.

