The Beat Goes On

Reissues of ’90s Red Hot AIDS benefit albums

November 16, 2020 By Trent Straube

In 1990, the Red Hot Organization released its debut compilation album to raise HIV funds and awareness. A collection of Cole Porter covers by megastars such as U2, Annie Lennox and Sinéad O’Connor, Red Hot + Blue was a hit and kicked off the Red Hot AIDS Benefit Series of nearly 20 albums. To mark the project’s 30th anniversary, Red Hot digitally is reissuing five of the albums plus a retooled video of Neneh Cherry’s “I’ve Got You Under My Skin.”

Red Hot + Blue will be issued December 1, which marks World AIDS Day, and the others will follow thereafter.

“What made Red Hot + Blue so impactful and different was that it celebrated life and the power of music and art to lift people up during dark times,” John Carlin, Red Hot’s president and cofounder, told Rolling Stone. “Red Hot pioneered using pop culture for social change—good propaganda.” In the process, Red Hot drew major funding for AIDS causes, including $1 million to activist coalition ACT UP and its Treatment Action Group.

The five album releases include:

1. Red Hot + Blue

Covers of Cole Porter’s music; 1990

Red Hot + Blue Covers of Cole Porter’s music; 1990Courtesy of Red Hot Organization

2. Red Hot + Bothered

An indie rock anthology; 1995

Red Hot + Bothered, An indie rock anthology; 1995Courtesy of Red Hot Organization

3. Offbeat—A Red Hot Sound Trip

A music compilation companion piece to the multimedia release The Beat Experience about Beat culture; 1996

Offbeat—A Red Hot Sound Trip, A music compilation companion piece to the multimedia release The Beat Experience about Beat culture; 1996Courtesy of Red Hot Organization

4. Silencio = Muerto: Red Hot + Latin

A compilation that puts a global focus on HIV in Latin communities in the United States and South America; 1997

Silencio = Muerto: Red Hot + Latin A compilation that puts a global focus on HIV in Latin communities in the United States and South America; 1997Courtesy of Red Hot Organization

5. Red Hot + Indigo

A tribute to Duke Ellington; 2001

Red Hot + Indigo A tribute to Duke Ellington; 2001 Courtesy of Red Hot Organization

Editor’s note: This article was updated to include the new release date of December 1.

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