

PART TWO

B

BEST BUYS

In general, sound quality is most variable with early material, as one would expect. Here the benchmarks must be *The Original Chart Hits*, *The Early Years*, and the recent digipaks of individual Albums (with an exception noted presently). No compilations digitally cloned from masters of this calibre are likely to disappoint, provided of course that the mastering process is carefully executed (for some pitfalls see Paul Miller's article in *Hi-Fi Choice*, No. 181 [September 1998] pp. 14–15). This is not to say that worthwhile alternatives are not available, note for example Sweden's *20 Rock 'n' Roll Hits* (obviously sourced from masters for the original LP) and *Shadows are Go* (remastered in the USA).

a-Singles

- ***The Best of The Shadows*** (Portugal 1998: 23 **a**-sides + THE STRANGER)

The most worthwhile collection of its kind, better sounding than UK equivalents, whether full-price (*20 Golden Greats*) or budget (*The Very Best of The Shadows*¹)

a-Singles plus

- ***The Original Chart Hits*** (2 CD UK 1990: 50 tracks)

A fine set with all the main hits (including 33 **a**-sides) and other classic tracks in sparkling sound.

- ***30 All Time Greatest Hits*** (Australia 1997: 30 tracks + 1 spoken intro)

A more modest collection with many of the essentials (including 23 **a**-sides); good sound (all tracks were remastered in Australia), though a pressing-fault occurred on the first issue and a different one on the second (see CD Catalogue 2)

¹ It is hard to see how such a poor specimen of FOOT TAPPER (Stereo version) could have found its way on to a commercial pressing, and there are other imperfections: on two copies of the disc in my possession the opening track needs a flick of the backward-scan button to start properly!

a/b-Singles

- ***The First 20 Years at the Top*** (3 CD UK 1995: 75 tracks)

Relatively inexpensive, this set does full justice to the flip sides.

a/b-Singles plus

- ***The Shadows Collection*** (Trio box) (3 CD UK 1996: 60 tracks, 7 of them Hank Marvin)

Great variety at a budget price — a real bargain.

Polydor b-Singles plus

- ***Shadstrax*** (UK 1998: 21 tracks)

Superb music, superb documentation.

EP material

- ***The EP Collection Volumes 1–3*** (UK 1990/ 1993 reissued 1997: 64 tracks)

A diverse and enjoyable selection, well worth having, even if superior masters are available for a number of the tracks.

Album material

- ***Listen to The Shadows*** (UK 1989 reissued 1997: 22 tracks)

The best-sounding compilation of its kind by far, warm but dynamic.

- ***The Sound of The Shadows*** (UK 1997: 14 tracks)/ ***Shadow Music*** (UK 1998: 14 x 2 tracks)/ ***Out of The Shadows*** (UK 1999: 13 x 2 tracks)/ ***Dance with The Shadows*** (UK 1999: 14 x 2 tracks)

On these reprocessed versions of classic originals in Digipak form the music is amazingly clear (and the silences profound)². — The first three Digipaks in a projected series from Magic Records France are also highly recommended: ***Hurrah! for The Shadows & Dance with The Shadows*** (1998: 22 tracks apiece), ***The Sound of The Shadows*** (1999: 24 tracks); all have skilfully chosen bonus tracks, not complementary Mono versions.

More UK Digipaks will follow, see *Shadsfax* Issue 19 (1998) p. 9. It is hard to see how the sound of these issues (with the exception noted) could be bettered, and the inclusion of tracks in both Mono and Stereo (*Shadow Music/ The Shadows/ Out of The Shadows/ Dance with The Shadows* at the time of writing) will be welcomed by

² The exception is *The Shadows* (UK 1999), the sound-balance of which in my estimation compares unfavourably with that of the set on *The Early Years*, on a number of counts (notably in the overblown bass and strident treble).

many. Presentation however leaves a lot to be desired. The Digipak format does not lend itself to anything very ambitious — just a microscopic reproduction of the LP back cover. It is a pity I think that the chance has been missed to do for The Shadows' major Albums what Columbia/ Sony, for example, have done for those of The Byrds in a series of brilliant CDs: first-rate remastering (the clarity is stunning), but also extensive and well-informed liner-notes with detailed track-analysis, sturdy jewel cases, excellent artwork (from the original LPs, with numerous additions), carefully chosen bonus tracks expertly documented — and all at a bargain price. — See now the superb EMI *Hank Marvin* (next entry but one).

• ***Guardian Angel ... Plus*** (UK 1998: 19 tracks)

The first ever digitised original Shadows Album, reissued with eight bonus tracks from the Polydor years (two of them new to CD) and with outstanding liner-notes.

This is in fact the longest single compilation Album, clocking in at 79m 09s. Compilations exceeding the 74m mark (the maximum for standard CDRs) are very much in the minority, but are on the increase (five in 1998): **78m+**: *The Best of Hank Marvin & The Shadows* (1994), *Listen to The Shadows* (1989/1997), *Shadstrax* (1998), *A Thousand Conversations* (1997); **77m+**: *The First 20 Years at the Top* Disc 3 (1995), *The Very Best of Hank Marvin & The Shadows* Disc 2 (1998); **76m+**: *Another Side of Hank Marvin* (1998); **75m+**: *The Shadows Complete* Disc 3 (1992), *The Shadows Collection* (Trio box) Disc 3 (1996), *The Very Best of Hank Marvin & The Shadows* Disc 1 (1998); **74m+**: *Thirty All Time Greatest Hits* (Australia 1997). — The shortest compilation runs to a mere 31m 30s: *Lo mejor de los mejores* (Spain 1993). There are seventeen others falling short of 40m.

• ***Hank Marvin*** (UK 1998: 22 tracks)

The original 1969 Album with ten bonus tracks, all in limpid Stereo; reprocessing as for Digipaks above, but standard packaging: marvellous sound, excellent documentation and artwork.

Overseas Album material

- ***Live in Japan/ Pops in Japan*** (Japan 1991: 26 tracks)

The second part of this “2 on 1” (the longest there is at 74m 17s) contains the Japanese version of the Album *From Hank Bruce Brian and John*, in first-rate sound. Presentation is exemplary, as are a number of other releases from this part of the world.

Early material

- ***20 Rock 'n' Roll Hits*** (Sweden 1995)

A popular LP in its day, now a CD with an appealingly raw feel to it.

- ***The Hit Collection*** (Norway 1996: 18 tracks)

A lively-sounding mix of early Singles and selected tracks from *The Shadows* LP.

- ***Shadows Are Go!*** (USA 1996: 23 tracks)

An exceptionally tight and dynamic sound, well worth seeking out.

- ***The Early Years*** (6 CD UK 1991, reissued 1998: 120 tracks, one of them Hank Marvin)

An indispensable collection for admirers of The Shadows’ music in the first half of the 60s.

Archive material

- ***The Shadows at Abbey Road*** (UK 1997: 23 tracks)

An astonishingly rich and varied selection of tracks from EMI’s vaults.

Vocal tracks

- ***Another Side of Hank Marvin*** (UK 1998: 22 tracks)

An inexpensive coupling of the greater part of two unjustly neglected Albums from the early 80s.

- ***A Thousand Conversations: The Best of Marvin Welch & Farrar*** (UK 1997: 24 tracks)

A fine selection at a bargain price from Albums which enjoyed wide critical acclaim.