

Backstreet Boys - This Is Us (2009)

Written by bluelover

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1. *Straight Through My Heart* 2. *Bigger* 3. *Bye Bye Love* 4. *All Of Your Life (You Need Love)* 5. *If I Knew Then* 6. *This Is Us* 7. *PDA* 8. *Masquerade* 9. *She's A Dream* 10. *Shattered* 11. *Undone +* 12. *All In My Head* 13. *Callin' Your Name* 14. *Don't Try This At Home* 15. *Fallen Angel* 16. *Funny Face* 17. *Helpless* 18. *Hologram* 19. *International Luv* 20. *Straight through my heart* 21. *Trouble*

Since their mid-2000s reunion, the Backstreet Boys have been acting like adults so it's not entirely a surprise that they've decided to shake things up on *This Is Us*, their third album of the comeback and second since becoming a quartet. Teaming up once again with Max Martin and working with a host of modern hitmakers as RedOne, the group takes a left turn back toward the rhythm-heavy, harmony-laden dance-pop that made their reputation a decade before. Never mind the name of the album -- the group is tellingly quite willing to fade into background, letting the producers do their work, just content to sing the hooks. It's a sharp move in two ways: BSB never had as much on-record charisma as *NSync, their best trait was how they could sell a hook without affect, and that returns here. Of course, it helps that they have a bunch of hooks here, too -- hooks that aren't quite as galvanizing as "I Want It That Way," but easily eclipsing those on the pedestrian *Unbreakable*, helping the band seem modern without seeming pandering. It's a move that the New Kids on the Block couldn't pull off on their tawdry, sex-obsessed comeback, and it's one that the Backstreets seemed incapable of doing just a few years ago, but on *This Is Us*, the group sounds great for their age, and they sound like they're at their peak -- which is no guarantee of a hit, but it sure makes for a better album than they've produced in quite a while. --- Stephen Thomas Erlewine, allmusic.com

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