

‘Genius of Love’: An introduction

In the Summer of 1981, as my Dad drove me around in his Datsun Cherry, I heard The Tom Tom Club’s first hit ‘Wordy Rappinghood’. This kindled my interest. ‘Genius of Love’ was released later that year in October and I was hooked. The status of ‘Genius if Love’ was further elevated by its video. Its wobbly felt-tip pen animation was a fabulous vision although I didn’t actually see it in colour at the time because we only had a small black and white portable TV with no video recorder. MTV had only been launched in the U.S. in August. In fact, I only saw it once or twice... by chance. I sensed that it was extremely novel, although it didn’t have the naff-ness of a ‘novelty record’. I think it was a big crossover hit, it appealed to children and cool dance audiences. As a 14-year-old, surrounded by electro pop, I was on the cusp of my ‘cool’ identity. The lyrics additionally provided some intriguing signposts to an unexplored world of funk, soul and reggae. All of the artists listed are now cornerstones of my record collection: Bootsy Collins, Smokey Robinson, Bob Marley, Sly and Robbie, Bohannon, Kurtis Blow and of course James Brown.

It took me a further 5 years to finally own ‘Genius of Love’. It’s on their first album which I bought at a record fayre at the Maclellan Galleries in Glasgow. Maclellan Gallery record fayres were regular, sprawling and majestic affairs. After a visit to one, for the rest of the following week, I would have strange dreams that involved discovering rare records with elusive images on their covers.

My recording is document of Gil my 11-year-old son playing some treated keyboard stabs over some handclaps and bass. I’ve designed a sleeve and label in response to the lyric: ‘Who needs to think when your feet just go’. I’ve produced a set of pop-ups that celebrate two of the less familiar artists on The Tom Tom Club list: Hamilton Bohannon and Kurtis Blow. I have also paid homage to the energy of the video by producing an ‘earworm’ multiple made from reclaimed copper electrical wire. I’ve additionally included a short philosophical text in response to the lyric which is part of the recording.