



## **KURT BAKER'S JUKEBOX FAVORITES**

When Luis asked me to write about some of my favorite tunes for Power Pop Action, I immediately jumped on the offer! Not only have I had some of the most wild and fun parties in Spain with the Power Pop Action gang... but I couldn't pass up the chance to talk about the music that i'm routinely playing either on my record player, iPod or even the tunes so catchy and unforgettable that they are forever engrained in my mental psyche. You see, that's what I love about Power Pop - or even Rock n' Roll... it has the power to live with you in the best moments of your life! Rock n' Roll is like my best friend, always there for the good times and stickin' around when times are rough. I really wish that there was still an abundance of actual REAL functioning Jukeboxes that still worked and played the hits. I recall being a young kid in the States and going to greasy neon lit fast food diners, where there always was a Jukebox in the entrance area when you walked in. With a drop of a coin they played nothing but the finest 45's and oldies.. Elvis, Beach Boys, Everly Bro's.. you name it! If someday I were lucky enough to own a real old fashioned Jukebox, you can be sure as hell i'd have these tracks ready to be played at any given moment - to get the party started and the good vibes flowing!

### **Dusty Springfield - "Little By Little"**

When it comes to 60's female vocalist, nobody tops Dusty. She can sing any song with so much soul and passion.. it's intriguing! I always thought she was incredibly good looking too.. I'd probably try and steal a kiss if it were 1965 and I was at the New Musical Express awards show trying to score some drugs backstage, haha! But in all seriousness, "Little By Little" is one of my favorite singles by her. Dusty's best skill was being able to mimic the singers she loved..yet her own personality was what made her music and sound so unique. You know a Dusty Springfield tune when you hear it, and that is a hugely important aspect as a recording artist. From the intro, you really don't know what to expect with just an off tempo bass line. The melody is captivating, and the tune just rolls on with an infectious groove... a perfect example of the R&B infused British Pop track.

### **The Ramones - "Carbana Not Glue"**

It's so funny to me, but as I grow older the more and more I appreciate the amazingness of the Ramones. They have always been one of my favorite groups of all time, but the fact that they keep getting better to me is wild! "Leave Home" is a classic punk rock record, with it's production a step above from their debut, yet retaining the attitude and energy of the dirty, gritty streets of NYC in the mid-70's. This song is pretty ridiculous - besides being a straight up rocker, I find it lyrically interesting. Here are the Ramones, leather clad misfits suggesting that inhaling "Carbana", a cleaning solvent, is more pleasurable than sniffing model airplane glue! This track didn't originally appear on the "Leave Home" album because of a lawsuit.. but apparently it did influence kids in the UK to actually get high on the Carbana. I can totally support a party like that! Long live the Ramones!

### **The Grass Roots - "Midnight Confessions"**

I've been rocking this track a lot lately. It evokes a feeling that I can't even quiet explain. One thing is for sure though, and that is that this is one well crafted piece of pop music. The Grass Roots were a rag tag group of guys, and were produced by the songwriting team of P.F Sloan and Steve Barri, who are responsible for writing (amongst many things) hits for one of my all time favorite groups, The Turtles!



But back to the Grass Roots.. this songs chord structures and melodies are different that anything else i've heard. The high pitched farfisa, the bright brass section and a romping drum beat! It's really got everything. I just played this record at a DJ night last night, and the crowd went nuts. I've always been a big fan of the TV show "The Office", and in the American version one of the funniest members of the cast is a actor named Creed Bratton, who is an original member of the Grass Roots. Fun facts.

### **Small Faces - "Tin Soldier"**

I dig the Small Faces! It's amazing that they were never really able to achieve success in the USA. What an incredible group, with each member extremely skilled and versatile with their instruments. On many of their recordings, but especially "Tin Soldier", the Small Faces bring this urgency and energy that is unmatched and is a crucial element in the makings of a great song. The breakdown on this track when it cuts to the Rhodes keyboard and comes back in with the full band as lead by Steve Marriott's yell is so heavy! I often opt to listen to the Small Faces records instead of the Who or the Kinks sometimes, just because the quality of the sound on those old Decca recordings, they really just do the trick.. pristine drums, loud guitars and swaggering soulful vocals.. It's my jam baby! Get down!

### **Paul Collins Beat "Don't Wait Up For Me"**

He's the king of Power Pop! Paul Collins is the man. You can't top him... and just the fact that he continues to rock around the world and keeps it alive is highly commendable. The first Beat record is more than classic, it's completely essential to the rock n' roll fan! I was lucky enough to have recently played with Paul Collins at the Power Pop-A-Licious festival in Asbury Park, New Jersey. It was a party, and I got drunk! The pinnacle moment of the fest was when Paul and the boys took the stage. They opened their set with "Don't Wait Up For Me" and everything just clicked. It was the perfect performance and gave me so much confidence in having fun on stage and playing the music that I love.. I owe a lot to Paul, a great influence for sure. I hope to do some more shows with him in the future, and will always look forward to hearing this tune.

### **The Romantics "Talking In Your Sleep"**

When I was young and in High School, I discovered a cassette tape of The Romantics "In Heat" album. When I first listened to it, I was a little put off by the 80's production quality. I always preferred the more raw and natural sounds of their earlier records, like on "When I Look In Your Eyes" and "What I Like About You". But here is the thing about cassette tapes that also can be said about the vinyl format - Since it is not as easy or convenient to skip track to track quickly like an iPod, you are forced to listen to the entire album as a whole. This way, sometimes you begin to appreciate music that you might have just quickly skipped over if the Mp3 didn't do anything for you on first listen. And so as I drove around town in my car, listening to the Romantics "In Heat" cassette and feeling like a crazy teenager, I began to really LOVE this record. Fast forward a few years and I lived with some of the members of my old group the Leftovers. We would throw huge house parties (like the ones in the movies) with lots of beer, dancing and fun! I'd often throw records on the turntable and get the dance party started. "Talking In Your Sleep" was a staple song to any party we ever hosted.. by the end of the night everybody was naked!

### **The Rubinoos "Leave My Heart Alone"**



I'll never forget the first time I heard the Rubinoos. I was on tour in Italy with the Leftovers and we had arrived at the club in the Skaletta Rock Club real early. There aren't many things I dislike about being in a band, touring and making music.. I love almost every aspect! But, one thing I never really dig is hanging out at the club early before the show starts, and nobody else has arrived yet. I always start to get antsy and flustered. I just wanna play the music and party, but hanging out at a club with no cold beers.. it seems to drain my energy! Luckily this night would be different at the Skaletta club. I remember vividly, sitting on a couch and instantly hearing music that made my ears perk up with excitement! I immediately ran over to the sound man to ask him what he was playing, and he replied "The Rubinoos", and ever since they've been one of my all time favorite groups. "Leave My Heart Alone" is a classic track off their debut album, and it's got everything I love about the band on the one track. From it's instantly catchy hook, to Jon Rubin's soaring vocals - It hits the spot! I was extremely lucky enough to working with Tommy Dunbar on a tune called "Can't Have Her Back". The Rubinoos recorded a version for their latest record, and I've recorded my own version as well that will be on my upcoming EP.

### **The Lyres "She Pays the Rent"**

Garage rock has always been one of my favorite musical genres.. specifically 60's garage. I live for the fuzz! I actually think the greatest music ever created was in the 1960's, but that's a whole other story. In the 80's some groups emerged that brought back the 60's garage sound, electrifying bands like The Chesterfield Kings, The Pandoras and my top group from Boston, Massachusetts, The Lyres! I believe that their record "On Fyre" is one of the top garage rock records ever made. It could be an overstatement on my part, but i've listened to this record so much i've worn out the grooves. Jeff "Monoman" Conolly is a wild dude and a great vocalist, and they've just recently begun to play a lot more down in Boston, which is not to far from my hometown of Portland, Maine. "She Pays the Rent" has this soul groove, that when matched up to the garage rock rawness is a new sound in it's own. I'd like to meet a lady that is cool enough to pay the rent for me.. Jeff is a lucky guy! Of course I'd buy this imaginary lady other things of course.. chocolate, champagne, slippers.. stuff that girls like! I don't want to be a total loser.

### **Cheap Trick "Oh Candy"**

The Midwestern United States has given us some of the best Power Pop and Rock n' Roll for many years now. Cheap Trick were probably the most famous out of the bunch, but bands like Off Broadway, Pezband, Hawks, Shoes, Shivvers (just to name a few!) have always been on constant rotation for me. The first Cheap Trick record is very special in it's own way..they would never release another record like it again. Song wise they cover a lot of darker subject matter for Pop music, and the recording sounds raw and dangerous. I find that these elements are what really stood out to me about this record, and it's one of my favorites by them. Tunes like "He's a Whore" and "Hot Love" are a big influence to me.. but the top track is definitely "Oh Candy". It's funny but their is not ONE love song on this record, and I'm a HUGE love song fan. I think for that reason alone, i've always appreciated this record and this band for being so different yet highly accessible. Cheap Trick are truly a unique band that I will always love.

### **Fountains of Wayne "The Girl I Can't Forget"**

I was so excited to see Fountains of Wayne perform in my town last fall. When they played the tune "Hey Julie", they invited a few of us on stage to sing along with them. I remember their guitar player coming up to me on stage and yelling in my hear "Hey buddy, do you have any drugs?". I think he was looking for some groovy stuff... I ended up getting some from him, but he was all talk and went back to his hotel



room to sleep, so I did all the drugs with some ladies instead! His loss! It's a funny story I guess, but I must say this tune "The Girl I Can't Forget" is classic pop craftsmanship that can only be done by the genius, Adam Schlesinger. Someday i'd love to work with him.. it's definitely a dream of mine. What I love about this song is how it tells a story, with the musical back drop of a 60's sunshine pop song. Whenever I hear this tune it brings me to a happy place, where the sun is shining and i'm on the beach relaxing and feeling good. I love a tune that get you in a good mood! I also can totally relate to the lyrics of this song.. it's a pretty often occurrence that I wake up in the morning with out a clue what happened the night before.. no cell phone, black eye, bad hangover! Haha, I love to party, what can I say!

Kurt Baker