

STUDENT LIFE

If you're happy and you know it... Top ten songs featuring handclaps: Part Two

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This was tough. You really wouldn't think it, but there are about a bazillion great songs with handclaps. And it seems as though the handclap isn't genre-specific: from pop to r&b, even from alternative to rap, handclaps are prominent across every aural landscape.

The song kicks-off, and ultimately ends with a dynamic combination of horns, handclaps and Gore's bursting vocal declaration of independence. She takes a moment of teenage despair and flips the grief into a hip-shaking, handclapping ode not only for herself, but for every heartbroken teenage girl out there.



Lesley Gore
"It's My Party"

Phil Spector almost had this track, but it slipped right out of his hands. The plan was to nab it from songwriters Gold, Gluck and Weiner and record it with his protégés, the Crystals. Unfortunately for Spector, the song had already been selected by 16-year-old Lesley Gore and her partner, a then up-and-coming producer named Quincy Jones, for her debut album. While the Crystals gave us some of the greatest girl-group tunes of all time, there's no doubt in my mind that Lesley Gore was born to sing "It's My Party," and she nails it. The song centers on the narrator who, at her freaking birthday party no less, finds her boyfriend hanging out and holding hands with another girl, Judy (who shows her face again in the follow-up single to "It's My Party," appropriately titled "Judy's Turn to Cry.") But this song is no lamentation. Gore's girlish, nasally-nuanced voice turns the song into a celebration for women: "It's my party / And I'll cry if I want to / Cry if I want to / Cry if I want to." It's her party, she's going to cry, and you aren't going to stop her.



The Supremes
"Where Did Our Love Go"

The 1960s was the decade of the handclap. No doubt, I'd guesstimate that one out of every ten songs released during the Motown-era features handclapping or even foot-stomping. Well, luckily for me, the Holland-Dozier-Holland-penned "Where Did Our Love Go" is full of handclaps and foot-stomps, both of which are maintained throughout the song. Foot-stomper extraordinaire Mike Valvano (who signed with Motown as a teenager with his group Mike and the Modifiers and also stomped on the Supremes' biggest hit, "Baby Love.") lent his click-clacks to the track, and the handclaps were later added the 45's single mix. While the claps and the stomps double-dutch back and forth, Diana Ross' fragile coo weakens the knees and Florence Ballard and Mary Wilson complement her breathy vocal with hushed background chants of "baby-baby." While the handclaps are prominent, they don't overshadow Ross' purring query and Ballard and Wilson's buzzing in the background, making for the perfect pop recipe.



Elastica
"Connection"

Elastica's "Connection," from their eponymous debut record, is like a heroin injection: right from the get-go it fills your veins, pushing and pumping this dirty grungy pleasure through your body and right into your unsuspecting little Britpop brain. Lead singer Justine Frischmann's sassy sensual growl and a catchy post-punk riff (lifted from Wire's "Three Girl Rhumba," according to many critics) catapulted "Connection" straight to the top of the UK charts in 1994. Although the song is only a little over two minutes, the band is able to sneak in some handclaps during the last fifteen seconds, and they're synchronized perfectly with the drums, keeping your attention long enough to make you want to beg for more.

school in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Their sound is raw, jerky and unique -- they combined simple guitar rhythms with Casio keyboard licks; their songs are about the obvious teenage girl dilemmas: boys, boys, boys and, um, food fights. While the Rondelles split up in 2001, "T.V. Zombie" remains one of their best. In 60s girl group fashion, spirited handclaps open the song while Swango softly sings, "I've got / A crush on a boy I know / He don't / Know how I love him so." Those upbeat handclaps combined with Munson's messy drumming style and kiddy-keyboard lines and Swango's sing-along lyrics create an infectious ode to teenage infatuation.



The Cure
"Close to Me"

"Close to Me" is probably one the most-recognized Cure songs besides their early 90s U.S. modern rock hit "Friday I'm in Love." However, "Close to Me," from 1985's *The Head on the Door*, is an overlooked classic. Right from the track's opening, frantic random handclaps, breathy background moans and a joyous vibraphone counter Robert Smith's sensual, soul-exposing lyrics grabs your ears and pulls you in closer and closer until Smith finally whispers to you: "I've waited hours for this / I've made myself so sick / I wish I'd stayed asleep today / I never thought that this day would end / I never thought that tonight could ever be / This close to me." Soon, a fluttering flute solo flies around Smith's vocal and, by the end of the song, handclaps, heavy background breathing and Smith's unintelligible mutterings are working in perfect unison.



The Rondelles
"T.V. Zombie"

No, this isn't another girl group from the 1960s. Although the band's name may give that impression, the Rondelles are a modern-day garage band. Guitarist Juliet Swango, bassist Yukiko Moynihan and drummer/keyboardist/background wailer Oakley Munson began their descent into garage-pop-punk in the late 90s while still attending high



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