

IT'S A  
FUNNY RELIGION  
WHEN YOU PRAY, 'HEY, MR. TAMBOURINE  
MAN, PLAY A SONG FOR ME'

(or, Liner Notes for a YouTube Playlist)

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ÉDITIONS SAINT-GILLES DE RAIS  
B R U S S E L S

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**T**he writer's profession obliges a certain amount of hyperbole, which I shall resist with all the sobriety of the honest broker. Yet this much is absolutely true: there are few discoveries in a young man's life as decisive as that of Vic Godard and his Scottish disciples, specifically Edwyn Collins, James Kirk and Orange Juice. I'm not alone here but, at the same time I'm not at all qualified to speak in broader terms about 'generations' and 'movements' and the like. There are affinities more select and, I think, more precious which apply here.

When we— a small, insular clique of students at the University of Florida (of all places!) in the late '90s (of all times!)—got our hands on *You Can't Hide Your Love Forever* (in the form of a Japanese reissue CD) and, later, an original 45rpm copy of 'Blue Boy' (with reversible, hand-colored sleeve), we were only vaguely aware that this Orange Juice might have had some existence beyond the Romantic hothouse in which we cultivated our own idiosyncratic and fairly—nay, *thoroughly*—self-serving ideas about them. We certainly had no idea that they had been on *Top of the Pops*. Nor, indeed, would we have known what *Top of the Pops* was. (In any case, bassist David McClymont demonstrated on the screen what *that* was worth to the group.)

Yet, for all our ignorance and for all our egoism, we got the essentials right. We understood the *esprit* of the enterprise. Orange Juice were the final word on contemporary art. Their records were born of a perfect marriage between ‘punk’ populism and æsthetic elitism. (As such, they were also the natural antidote to that *other* marriage—evidently as common in their day as ours—between æsthetic populism and ‘punk’ elitism.) Forget Warhol. Orange Juice’s appeal went well beyond camp to the most basic impulses behind art for art’s sake. Collins, with his naïve bark and raw pop instinct, was their Verlaine. Kirk, with his demolished [sic] chords and dry, cerebral drone, was their Mallarmé.

We were smitten. ‘Consolation Prize’ and ‘Louise, Louise’ were duly worked into the live set we had been developing in front of apathetic hometown audiences. These, incidentally, remained as apathetic as ever. (Our only fan was a veteran barfly who regaled us with tales of his time drumming behind local-boy-done-good River Phoenix in an Echo & the Bunnymen cover band.)

So we couldn’t credit word of mouth when, in 2000 or 2001, we were phoned by one Greg Gibbs. In-between shifts at the local adult superstore, courses at an Arizona luthier’s academy, silkscreen sessions in his garage and live shows with several post-punk bands, the gentleman from Phoenix was recruiting for an Orange Juice/Edwyn Collins tribute disc. And the man wanted us to submit a track. We obliged him with a warts-and-all recording of ‘Consolation Prize’ made in our kitchen.

As inadequate as it may have been, this was the last piece of the puzzle for Gibbs. He had already solicited a slew of Japanese and European groups, including The Divine Comedy, who granted permission to use an existing recording of ‘Untitled Melody’ (originally released as a b-side in 1993). Gibbs was already coordinating release with an independent German label. He had even already undertaken a pilgrimage to London and

Edinburgh to meet some of the participating artists as well as Postcard principals Malcolm Ross, Davy Henderson and Edwyn Collins himself (who had not yet suffered the illness which would put him out of commission for years).

Somehow the project never came to term. Although we became fast friends, Gibbs only ever spoke in impressionistic terms about the nuts-and-bolts of the thing. It was enough for me to gather that formalities threatened an 'official' release. By 2003, after spending years on the project, it was clear that he had thrown in the towel. So had we, for that matter. My group fell apart that same year and I emigrated haphazardly, first to Detroit then to Brussels.

It was underneath these gray Belgian skies that I had the misfortune to learn of Greg's death in 2010. The tribute project had long since been abandoned, of course, but now his disappearance made me the *de facto* steward of these neglected recordings. In a nostalgic moment during one of my mid-decade sojourns *chez lui*, Greg had given me a copy of the disc in its final running order (minus his own recording of 'Simply Thrilled Honey', with which the perfectionist in him was never satisfied). I enjoyed the set privately for a long time, all the more after Greg's death made a ritual of the act of listening.

Recently, in another nostalgic moment, I forwarded it to McClymont, who proposed a belated release of sorts, a new tribute built on the majestic ruins of the last, which reminds me once more that these songs have meaning apart from and outside of my clichéd artist's garret. I must be forgiven for forgetting so insistently: the genius of these songs rests precisely there in their natural intimacy, in their collusion in the listener's every scheme, however quixotic.

— *Georgio Valentino*  
*Brussels, June 2013*

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