

In the



TUNES TO BONK TO

JONO HALL STICKS HIS NEEDLE IN THE GROOVE

I don't go to brothels. Well... there was that one time. But that was an unfortunate incident involving mistaken identities and a dwarf on stilts. But the other night found me happily propping up the bar at a house of ill repute' somewhere in middle-Johannesburg. Luckily I wasn't alone. Two good friends (let's call them Mark and Amanda) had come along for the ride (in fact it had been Amanda's idea in the first place. She's a strange girl).

The reason we were there was a mix of tequila-induced bravado and a stray thought that had struck me during the evening. Music and sex have walked through the ages pretty much hand in hand. It's weird to think that humans often need some form of aural motivation to get their groove on. You'd think that simply being in the slippery embrace with well anyone who's willing to do it with you, would be enough to get us going. But no, music is often an essential component of the whole thing. Hell, Marvin Gaye and Barry White build an empire making music that other people wanted to make babies to. You could say it's the grease in the cog of humanity's after-dark playtime activities.

So, we decided to go and find out what music "the professionals" had spinning in their shuttle. What music were they playing in an effort to settle their clientele into the right mood for doing the nasty? Would it be Madonnas "Forbidden Love"? "Six Underground" by The Sneaker Pimps? R&B Hits? Actually, the reality was way bleaker. The sounds that greeted us as we made our way past the peroxide-blonde landmass acting as bouncer, were the synthy strains of Carl Jones' "Kung-Fu Fighting". Not exactly a tune that makes you want to rip your clothes off and leap in the sack with the first person sporting a heartbeat. Which is exactly the kind of tune you'd need to induce any form of sexual fervour in the girls, sleepily sprawled around on couches, looking as though they had been liberated from a corner cafe in Brakpan.

Groove

It's got to be said that the place was pretty empty. There were a couple of middle-aged men in casual "after work" clothes milling around, and the bored-looking working girls kept on disappearing to answer their cellphones. So we ordered beers from the bar and "Kung-Fu Fighting" kept on playing (damn it's a long song). Around the bar it looked like a high school dance. All the ladies of the night were sitting on one side of the room and all the men were trying to dance. They were almost getting it right, but mostly ended up looking like turtles trying to climb out of their shells. And then along came Eagle Eye Cherry's "Save Tonight". Glancing around the room to see the effect of the music didn't give me much hope. The women were still lounging on the couches looking uninterested and the handful of men on the other side of the room had sat down because they couldn't dance to this tune. So far, no one had disappeared "out the back" with guilty expressions, the temperature hadn't risen noticeably, sex wasn't oozing anywhere and my beer was almost finished.

Then came on a bit of a strange creature, Gordon Lightfoot's "If You Could Read My Mind", was actually quite appropriate, I thought. It was remixed as part of the soundtrack for the movie *Studio 54*, and wasn't that about sex and all? Things were looking up and the turtle boys were up and dancing again. We then got smacked with a whirlwind of tracks, the highlights of which included "The Music Sounds Better With You" (Stardust) coupled with Abba (naturally) and then ending with the staggeringly awful "MMMbop" by Hanson. Now the thought of three pre-pubescent boys being associated with a bunch of uninterested sex workers and handful of fumbling middle-aged men was enough to bring that particular evening to a close. So much for brothels.

You see, when you go to strip clubs, the atmosphere is very different. Sure it's still about sex, but it's less about the deed and more about the build-up to it. And of course, there's the fact that the girls need to dance, which means a specific repertoire of tunes. Predictably enough, when we did our "research" at a couple of strip clubs later in the week, house remixes of classic rock tunes along with appropriately themed songs like the Divinyls' "I touch myself" and Hot Chocolate's "You Sexy Thing" were the order of the day. The funny thing is, the girls didn't seem to really mind what was blaring over the speakers, and you got the distinct impression they could have pulled off their splendidly accomplished moves to the sound of my mom having a good snore. Also, having questioned some of the patrons of the place during the evening, none of them could name more than two songs that had played while they had been there. Which is exactly right. Who's paying attention to the tunes when a girl is wiggling her well-oiled bum a couple of feet from where you are sitting? When you visit a strip club you're not preparing yourself for anything other than sitting back and being entertained.

But when it finally comes to doing the deed, no one can discount the importance of "mood music". Yet our small survey seems to indicate that your average brothel doesn't have the necessary musical sophistication to appreciate the effect of sound on relations between the sexes. I mean, seriously. It's not like I'm going to pop on "Kung-Fu Fighting" to set the mood for a night of rumpy for the missus. And it also seemed that any of the turtle boys who might have been wavering in their decision to hire themselves some ladies for the evening weren't further inspired to do so by the evening's play list. Barrelling down the highway later that evening with the new Ravonettes album washing over us like a free-love tidal wave, I watched as Mark and Amanda slowly entangled themselves into each other in the back seat of the car. There was something in the air. This was the atmosphere we had been missing the entire evening, and it struck me that representatives from the sex industry should have been driving with us taking some notes.