

What was the first song you remember loving?

There was a lot of music in our house growing up, but it wasn't all necessarily pop. My mum listened to a lot of 80s reggae and 80s soul and R&B, but my dad listened to jazz and folk. I'd say the first song I remember loving was Luther Vandross' *So Amazing*. It's sort of a cheesy love song, but my mum played it all the time and I got obsessed. There was also Gladys Knight's *Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me*. But then there was also the stuff that me and my sister [novelist Zadie Smith] discovered ourselves that I couldn't stop playing like *Dub Be Good To Me* by Beats International and Deee-Lite's *Groove Is In The Heart*.

Are there any artists that you're completist about?

The Strokes – I have everything. I just bought all their singles on 7" in a little box from Rough Trade the other day, like an impulse buy. Mark Ronson introduced me to them and I became immediately obsessed. It's funny, on the rare occasions that I get to see them live, because obviously I'm very much known for rap and hip-hop, there's always someone who turns around and is like, "Who is that? Who knows every single word of this song?" Bob Marley as well. Growing up in a Jamaican house, reggae was huge, and he was the absolute king. I think I've got everything he ever put out, including rarities, acoustic songs and live recordings.

Have you ever met any of your musical heroes?

I'm cautious about meeting musical heroes, because I quite enjoy my favourite musicians being a mystery and an enigma.

Ben recently impulse-bought The Strokes' 7" singles boxset



My POP Life

Ben Bailey Smith

THE ACTOR, PRESENTER AND COMEDIAN AKA DOC BROWN REVEALS HIS LOVE OF THE BEASTIE BOYS, A TRIBE CALLED QUEST AND THE CARDIGANS...

STEVE O'BRIEN



The Cardigans are a family favourite

I don't want to know that much – and I even like not learning the lyrics to songs. I like not knowing and thinking, "Oh, well, this is what I take from it, and this is maybe what he or she meant, but who knows?"

Are there any gigs that you remember loving?

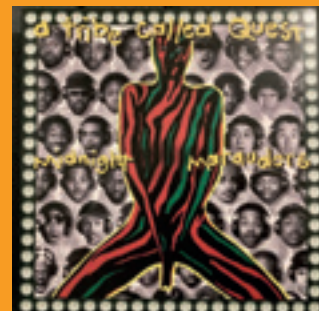
I saw the Beastie Boys on the Ill Communication Tour at Brixton Academy in the mid-90s. I actually whited my halfway through that show

and then came back and watched the rest of the set after spending a few minutes in the St John's Ambulance room. That was an amazing gig. I also saw Oasis at the Astoria when they were still breaking out of Manchester, so this was on the cusp of *Definitely Maybe*, and it was just so raucous. It was like going to a punk gig, but it was indie. I remember thinking, "Oh my god, these guys don't give a shit". They were all drinking on stage, and it was just craziness and real loutish behaviour. That is the

reason I didn't bother getting tickets for these new Oasis gigs, because they're never going to be like that again.

Do you have an all-time favourite album?

I think I'd have to name a few. The way that I judge it is was I listening to it when I was a kid and am I still listening now – stuff that stands the test of time. So I would have to include *Midnight Marauders* by A Tribe Called Quest and *Come On Feel The Lemonheads*, I still listen to those to this day.



Are you much of a vinyl-head?

I stopped collecting – those Strokes singles were a rarity – when my kids were born and I never really got back into it. It was just too hard to justify. So that was 2005, but by then, I already had thousands and thousands of vinyl. In fact, I've given hundreds away just to make space. The other thing is, when you have babies, I just stopped listening to music, and it took me a while to get back into it. Now my children are young adults, 20 and 16, and they introduce me to new music and stuff that I've missed. What's beautiful as well is that I introduce them to old stuff, some of which they obviously hate, and other stuff they really love. Both my daughters and I are completely obsessed with the album *Life* by The Cardigans, which is another one I should put on my all-time favourite albums list, because that was 1995 and I still listen to it today. Me and my daughters are always scrubbing the internet to find out when The Cardigans will be playing in the UK, because they very rarely perform. They don't really exist as an entity that much but they occasionally get together and do a festival, but it's always in places like Denmark or Sweden. So my dream is to take my kids and wife to see them play *Life*. Because it's 2025, I really thought they'd do a 30th anniversary tour, but nothing as yet. ■