

Who were your musical heroes while growing up?

Early days, I guess it would have been The Beatles. I remember as a kid refusing to eat any food that my mum put in front of me unless it was on my Beatles tray. I wanted to be Ringo Starr, so I would bash all the pots and pans. I was lucky because I was exposed to music at a very young age because my cousins had this legendary nightclub in Manchester called The Twisted Wheel and they'd always take me there. When everyone else was getting me handkerchiefs for my birthday, they would bring me the Top 10 singles as a present. So I grew up being a massive fan of music through that.

What was the first song that you bought?

It was a novelty record by Napoleon XIV called *They're Coming to Take Me Away, Ha-Haaa!* That was the first one I ever bought – after that, I got into The Beatles, Rolling Stones and Aretha Franklin.



What's your favourite album from the 80s?

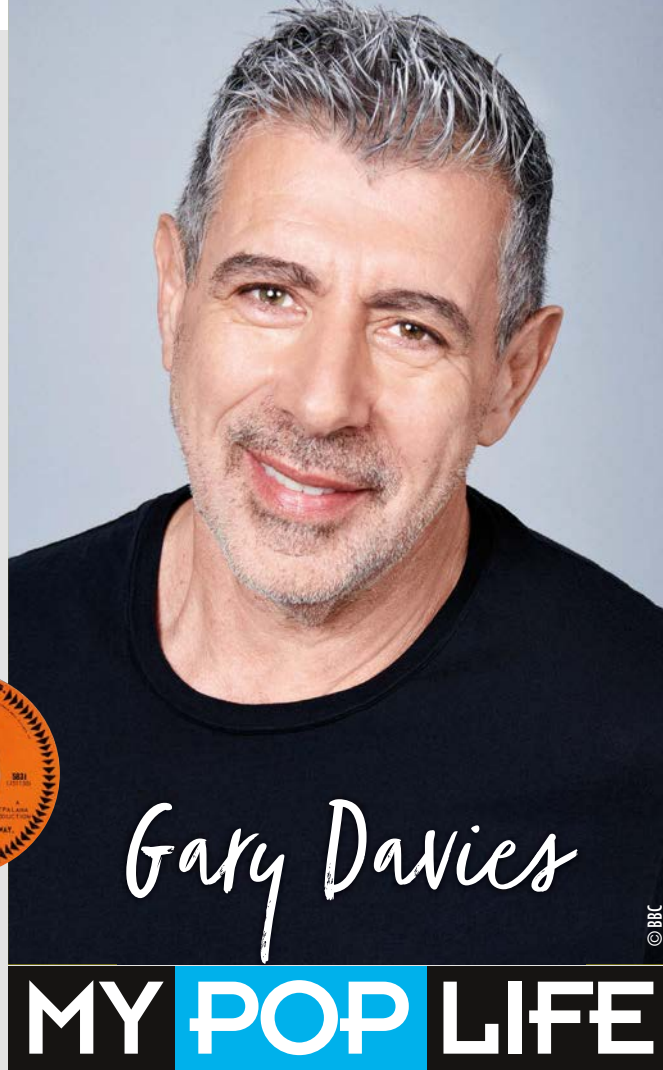
I'd probably say *The Joshua Tree*. It's full of so many brilliant songs and is the album that turned U2 into megastars. They were getting there, but when they released *The Joshua Tree* I think everybody just stopped and went WOW.

Are there many bands or artists that you're a completist about?

Oh, many. Tears For Fears I absolutely adore, Deacon Blue I love, Prince, George Michael – Wham! stuff and his later solo albums, which are all just phenomenal. I loved an artist called Black as well. That song *Wonderful Life* is probably my favourite of the 80s.

What's the best gig you've ever been to?

There was a U2 gig I went to in Milan at an open air football



THE RADIO 2 DJ AND FORMER TOP OF THE POPS PRESENTER ON HIS MUSICAL PASSIONS...

STEVE O'BRIEN

stadium, and I was lucky to have seats near the sound desk. The stadium was overlooked by houses all the way around so if you lived in one of those apartments you'd have had a free view of the concert. It was a beautiful hot summer night and I remember turning around and every supermodel in the world was sitting behind me, together with Michael Hutchence. So that's got to be way up there.

Also Bruce Springsteen at Slane Castle in Ireland. He is by a mile the best solo performer you will ever see in your life.

Is there one song that's guaranteed to get you up and dancing?

I dance really badly, but put on the Gipsy Kings' *Bamboléo* and I'm up there, also *Can't Take My Eyes Off You* by Boys Town Gang, Black Box's *Ride On Time*



and Technotronic's *Pump Up The Jam*.

Out of all the musicians you've interviewed or met, are there any encounters that stand out?

I recently interviewed Bono and The Edge for Radio 2 and I'd met them over the years but never interviewed them – that was just incredible, sitting down and chatting to them. It was amazing to witness the respect they both have for each other. The way that Bono will stop and then The Edge will take over and then he'll stop and Bono will continue. To witness that was very special. Another one would probably be Paul McCartney when he came in with Linda to do *Top Of The Pops* in the 80s. He hadn't been in the *TOTP* studio for a long, long time, and a lot of artists would keep themselves to themselves and lock themselves in their dressing rooms and only come out to perform, whereas Paul and Linda just hung around the set all day, saying hello to everybody. He wanted to get to know all the bands and was completely the opposite to what everyone thought he would be. That was pretty special.

How do you listen to music now? Are you a vinyl hound or a Spotify head?

I broke my back carrying vinyl in the early days of DJ-ing, hauling massive 12-inches up and down stairs every night. I love technology and the fact I can go and DJ now and have my whole music collection on a USB drive. I played vinyl for many, many years. I've had the cassettes, I've had the eight-tracks but I like streaming and digital now. ■

● Gary Davies presents **Sounds Of The 80s** every **Saturday (8-10pm)** on **Radio 2** and **BBC Sounds**.

He will also be at **Radio 2 In The Park** on **16-17 September** on **Radio 2**, **BBC Sounds** and **BBC iPlayer**.

