



The making of 10cc's 'I'm not in love'

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Released in the UK in May 1975 the song 'I'm not in love' became a world-wide hit for the band 10cc reaching the top ten in the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and many European charts. It won many awards (including the prestigious Ivor Novello Award for best pop sing in 1976) and remains popular today having sold in excess of 5 million physical copies and many more in downloaded formats. The song has been widely used as soundtrack in over twenty movies, most recently '*Guardians of the Galaxy*', and also features in the computer game '*Grand Theft Auto*'.

At the time it represented a significant breakthrough in sound, featuring a backing track made up of the band's voices painstakingly multi-tracked and layered into sheets of sound. The song was originally written by band member Eric Stewart who got the idea in response to his wife's claim that he never said he loved her. He wrote most of the melody and the lyrics on the guitar before taking it to the studio, where fellow band member Graham Gouldman suggested some different chords for the melody, and also came up with the introduction and the bridge section of the song. They spent several days writing a song (which at that point mainly involved guitars and had a bossa nova rhythm) before playing it to the rest of the band, Kevin Godley and Lol Creme.

Their response was not positive; in fact Godley's comment was '...it's not working, man. It's just crap, right? Chuck it.' So they did, throwing away the song and even erasing the early bossa nova version they had recorded. But Stewart noticed that staff members at their 'Strawberry Studios home were humming the melody so he persuaded the group that they should take another look at it. Godley's response was that it would only work if '*... we do it like nobody has ever recorded a thing before. Let's not use instruments. Let's try to do it all with voices.*'

The result was a radical departure from 'normal' recording, involving amongst other things the group members spending three weeks singing "ahhh" 16 times for each note of the chromatic scale, building up a "choir" of 48 voices for each note of the scale, 624 voices in total. In these pre-computer days they solved the problem of sustaining the notes by using tape loops strung out across the studio, wrapped around a mike stand and fed back into the tape machine! Twelve of these loops gave them the 'scale' they needed on which to build the song; they were fed separately into the mixing desk which effectively made that the 'instrument' on which the song was played! Very few 'real' instruments were used and the song's haunting effect comes from the choir they were able to create. They used a very

soft drum sound to mimic a heartbeat and borrowed a child's toy music box to add another effect.

When they sang the main vocal track over the backdrop they felt something was still missing in the middle section. Stewart remembers that Lol Crème introduced a thought – he'd been saying the phrase 'Be quiet, big boys don't cry' as a test for setting up the grand piano microphones and Stewart had the crazy idea of using that but still needed a voice. *'At that point the door to the control room opened and our secretary Kathy [Redfern] looked in and whispered 'Eric, sorry to bother you. There's a telephone call for you.'* Lol jumped up and said *'That's the voice, her voice is perfect!'* Her whispered voice saying the phrase is one of the hallmarks of the song.

When the band played the finished version to Mercury Records their response was that it was 'a masterpiece' and the band received a five-year contract on the strength of it.

There is an excellent documentary about this at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qq7oGenbp2I>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06r14pr>