

= The Age of Plastic =

The Age of Plastic is the debut studio album by the British new wave duo The Buggles, composed of Trevor Horn and Geoff Downes. The name of the record was conceived from the group's intention of being a "plastic group". The album has lyrical themes of nostalgia and anxiety about the possible effects of modern technology. The titular song, "Living in the Plastic Age", views the experiences of watching media coverage of the Vietnam War, while "Kid Dynamo" follows a child overexposed to media and its resulting effects on him. Described by writers as the first technopop landmark, the record is an electropop new wave album that includes musical elements and influences of disco, punk, progressive rock and 1960s pop music. In a 1979 interview, Downes defined the album as "science fiction music. It's like modern psychedelic music. It's very futuristic." Horn used pre-dated technology for the album to have sounds unlike what was typical in records that were released at the time. The songs were written by The Buggles between 1977 and 1979, with contributions on several tracks from Bruce Woolley. The backing tracks were recorded at Virgin's Town House in West London, while the vocals were recorded and mixed at Sarm East Studios. Mixing was completed before Christmas 1979.

The Age of Plastic was released by Island Records in Australia in January 1980, and later in February in the UK. The album's release followed the success of the group's 1979 first single, "Video Killed the Radio Star", which reached number 1 on the UK Singles Chart. Most of the songs for the album were written during promotion of the song. Three subsequent singles, "The Plastic Age", "Clean, Clean" and "Elstree", all released in 1980, followed "Video", and also charted in the UK, reaching number 16, 38 and 55 respectively. In Europe, The Age of Plastic reached the Top 20 in Italy and the Top 40 in France, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In other continents, the album reached the top 40 in Japan and was number 83 on the Canadian RPM albums chart. It has been met with positive critical response, with some critics comparing it to other albums of its genre. There have been two reissues of the album, in 2000 and in 2010. A September 2010 performance of the album by the Buggles, a gig live at the "Ladbroke Grove's Supperclub" in Notting Hill, London, marked the first time the group performed it in its entirety.

= = Background and production = =

Geoff Downes formed The Buggles in 1977 in Wimbledon, South West London with Trevor Horn and Bruce Woolley. The trio had done rough demos of early compositions such as "Video Killed the Radio Star", "Clean, Clean", and "On TV", a track later included on their second album *Adventures in Modern Recording*. Talking about the formation of the Buggles, Downes said about the demos:

"We'd sort out the songs at my place and do all the arrangements together. Later we'd kick the artist out of the studio and spent most of the studio time just doing different things of our own, using every moment to our best advantage. It was a big experience for both of us and after a couple of years of doing that, we had quite a few songs together... It was at that stage that we decided to become artists. We felt that it was about time that somebody started making good, well-produced pop records again. We wanted to give people something more than they already had."

The Buggles were signed to Island Records, who gave Horn and Downes recording and publishing contracts, and started recording their upcoming first studio album in the first half of 1979. Although Woolley was originally intended to be the band's lead vocalist, he left the group during the sessions to form his own band, The Camera Club, who also did versions of "Clean, Clean" and "Video" that appeared on their album *English Garden*. When "Video Killed the Radio Star" was a huge commercial success, they had realized the problem that they had not finished an album's worth of material yet, so they wrote more during the promotion of the single, while in airport lounges, dressing rooms, rehearsal rooms and studios.

= = Production process = =

The Age of Plastic had a budget of £ 60 @, @ 000 . Hugh Padgham recorded the backing tracks at Virgin 's Town House in West London , due to Sarm East 's very small size and Horn wanting to record real drums . The Buggles went to London ' s Wardour Street to gain the attention of and record two females to appear on the album . The mixing and Horn 's vocal recording were later done at Sarm East Studios , and mixing was finished before Christmas 1979 for a new year 's release of the album . Sarm East mixer Gary Langan used a 40 @-@ input Trident TSM console to record and mix the album , which was housed inside the same control room as two Studer A80 24 @-@ track machines and outboard gear that included an EMT 140 echo plate , Eventide digital delay , Eventide phaser , Marshall Time Modulator , Kepex noise gates , Urei and Orban EQs , and Urei 1176 , Dbx 160 , and UA LA2 and LA3 compressors .

The vocals of the album were recorded at Sarm East to a click track using a Roland TR @-@ 808 drum machine , and other various machines and boxes sync ? ed up the tracks . As Langan recalls : " In those days of relatively limited technology we again had to push what we had to the limit ... If , for instance , something required an effect , whether it be tape delay or phasing or some big , delayed reverb , the art was to get that effect right and record it ... It all had to be done and then , as I said , it would influence the next process . " Langan has noted that balancing the backing vocals in the songs from the album was a major problem , due to no available terabytes of storage . He stated : " We 'd make it as clean as we possibly could , bounce that down to two tracks and then we 'd erase . "

= = Music development and arrangement = =

The Age of Plastic lasts for a total length of 36 minutes and 24 seconds . Unable to make the album sound like what was typical of other records released in the late 1970s , as well as finding it boring , Horn " figured that if I couldn 't get records to sound like Elton John , which I couldn 't because I couldn 't figure out how they did it , then whatever I could do , I 'd better exaggerate it . " He had also wanted to " perverse things with sound , except that in 1978 and 1979 , none of the equipment which would later allow me to do that was available . So I had to pre @-@ date that technology by finding my own ways of achieving certain sounds . " Audio noted the album 's sound to be reminiscent of duo Godley & Creme 's debut album Consequences .

Writers have labeled The Age of Plastic as the first landmark of another electropop era . In his book Are We Not New Wave ? : Modern Pop at the Turn of the 1980s , Theo Cateforis wrote that the album 's title and the songs " I Love You (Miss Robot) " and " Astroboy " " picture the arrival of the 1980s as a novelty era of playful futurism " . In a 1979 interview , Downes defined the album as " science fiction music . It 's like modern psychedelic music . It 's very futuristic . " Writers have described it as a mixture of synthpop and new wave music , with elements of disco , punk , progressive rock and pop music from the 1960s . The music on the album was also influenced by groups such as 10cc , ELO and Kraftwerk .

Journalists noted the tracks ' instrumentations of guitars , bass guitar , drums , vocoded , robotic and female vocals , and synthesizers used to emulate orchestral instruments , and well as compositional elements of a variety of complex builds . Downes said that he used five synthesizers in making The Age of Plastic , which were used to " fake up things and to provide effects we won ? t use them in the manner that somebody like John Foxx does . " According to Horn : " We used about three different drummers including one from Landscape and Johnny Richardson from The Rubettes , who ? s really good . We also used the occasional session guitarist to play various bits and there were three or four girl singers involved . Apart from that , we did everything ourselves . " Downes claimed of using George Shearing 's trick of doubling melody lines in block chords very heavily on some of the songs .

= = Lyrics and song information = =

The Age of Plastic is a tragicomic concept album with lyrical themes of intense nostalgia and

anxiety about the possible effects of modern technology . The lyrics , which were written by Trevor Horn , were inspired by the works of J.G. Ballard . The Buggles claimed they were necessarily a " plastic group " to meet the needs of a plastic age , which was why their debut album was called *The Age of Plastic* . Downes said that the lyrics were " trying to make cynical comments on a number of issues . " Eight tracks are included on *The Age of Plastic* : " Living in the Plastic Age " , " Video Killed the Radio Star " , " Kid Dynamo " , " I Love You (Miss Robot) " , " Clean , Clean " , " Elstree " , " Astroboy (And the Proles on Parade) " , and " Johnny (on the Monorail) " . The album 's lyrical concept was compared by *Orange Coast* magazine to that of the works of Canadian progressive rock band *Klaatu* .

The Age of Plastic starts with the title track " *The Plastic Age* , " which , according to Downes , is about a person 's view of plastic experiences from watching and reading news reports on the Vietnam War . " *Video Killed the Radio Star* , " the second track , refers to a period of technological change in the 1960s , the desire to remember the past and the disappointment that children of the current generation would not appreciate the past . The fast @-@ paced third song , " *Kid Dynamo* , " is about the effects of media on a futuristic kid of the 1980s . " *I Love You (Miss Robot)* " is the album 's fourth track , that Downes said it talks about " being on the road and making love to someone you don 't really like , while all the time you 're wanting to phone someone who 's a long way off . " *Wave Maker Magazine* viewed the song as " a darkly soothing , bass guitar @-@ driven ballad which brings us back into cyberpunk country . "

" *Clean , Clean* " is the album 's fifth track , and follows the story of a young boy who grows out of being a gangster , and , despite not willing to do so , he will at least try to keep the fighting clean . *Wave Maker Magazine* found " *Elstree* , " the album 's sixth song , as lyrically similar to " *Video Killed the Radio Star* , " as it follows " a failed actor taking up a more regular position behind the scenes and looking back at his life in regret . " The slow @-@ tempo ballad " *Astroboy (And the Proles on Parade)* " , according to *Wave Maker* , " once again revisits cyberpunk with a much lighter vibe , although the keyboards do occasionally border darker realms , expecially [sic] with the post @-@ chorus hook , " and the album closer " *Johnny on the Monorail* " has a " pop atmosphere " that " better suits the flow of the rest of the album . "

= = Release and commercial performance = =

The Age of Plastic was first released in Australia on 10 January 1980 , and in the United Kingdom on 4 February the same year . In 2000 , as part of the *Island Remasters* series , the album was reissued with three bonus tracks , " *Technopop* " , " *Island* " , and " *Johnny on the Monorail (A Very Different Version)* " . The album was remastered and re @-@ released again on 24 February 2010 in Japan . The new edition included 9 additional tracks , three of which were from the 2000 re @-@ release album . Initially , songs from *The Age of Plastic* were played on English radio stations from 31 December 1979 , and two advertisements of the album were also released . Domestically , *The Age of Plastic* appeared on the UK Album Charts for six weeks , reaching 27 on the chart . In Nordic countries , the record debuted at number 32 in Norway , eventually reaching number 23 , and peaked at number 24 in Sweden . It also reached the number 15 spot on the French Albums Chart , and number 35 in Japan . The album 's 2010 reissue briefly appeared at number 225 in Japan .

Four singles were released in support of the record , with the second track " *Video Killed the Radio Star* " being released as the album 's leading single . The LP version of the song was included on the 2010 reissue of the album , with the song " *Kid Dynamo* " as its B @-@ side . The single was commercially successful , topping the record charts in 16 countries , including the UK Singles Chart . The album 's title track " *Living in the Plastic Age* " was released as the second single . The single version was later included in the 2010 reissue . The fourth track " *Clean , Clean* " was released as the third single from the album , while " *Elstree* " was the album 's fourth and final single . All of the singles had chart success in the UK , with " *The Plastic Age* " and " *Clean , Clean* " gaining chart success on international level . A single and special DJ version of " *Elstree* " also appeared on the 2010 reissue of the album , as well as a 12 " version of " *Clean , Clean* " .

On 28 September 2010 , The Buggles reunited to play their first full @-@ length live concert . The

event was billed as " The Lost Gig " and took place at " Ladbroke Grove 's Supperclub " in Notting Hill , London . It was a fund raiser with all earnings going to the Royal Hospital for Neuro @-@ disability . With the exception of " Video Killed the Radio Star " and " The Plastic Age " , which the band had previously played together , " The Lost Gig " saw the first live performances of all of the remaining songs from The Age of Plastic .

= = Critical reception = =

Most reviews of The Age of Plastic have been approving , with some critics comparing it to other albums of its genre . Melody Maker noted that the album is " all jerky twitchings and absurdly inflated post @-@ punk melodrama " and named it as " essential " . The Canberra Times 's Keith Gosman found the production excellent and said the album sounded " crisp as fresh dollar bills " . The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction described the LP as " one of the best examples of the decade 's characteristically disposable pop " , while Spin named it one of the " 8 Essentials of Post @-@ Kraftwerk Pop " .

In a retrospective review , Jeri Montesano from AllMusic gave the album 4 @.@ 5 out of 5 stars and described it as " a fun record that doesn 't need to be taken too seriously " . He further said that " it would be difficult to find a record from this era that sounds half as good . Pop rarely reaches these heights . " While reviewing the Buggles ' second album , the same author stated that both albums " still sound fresh " compared to 1990s pop music . An Amazon.com editor named Grant Alden also compared the album to 1990s pop , and labeled the group as " Part of the early @-@ 1980s great explosion of pop music [...] to have any real impact " . Trouser Press called both albums " technically stunning , reasonably catchy and crashingly hollow . "

Smash Hits rated the album 8 out of 10 and called it " quite human and therefore the most enjoyable of the lot " . In a review of the 1999 re @-@ release of the album , Vincent L. of Krinein Magazine praised the entire record because it contains " catchy tracks and joyful melodies " . Napster 's Nicholas Baker liked the album 's composition and concluded " this LP is not so much a guilty pleasure as an essential point in electropop history . " Metro Pulse 's Anthony Nownes found the tunes " punchy , memorable " and " accessible " , concluding his review with " If all rock records sounded like this ? shiny and slick and highly processed ? the world would be terrible . But a few Trevor Horns ? people who use studio technology the way a curious and playful child uses a room full of fictile toys ? are nice to have around . "

On the mixed to negative side , Joseph Stannard , in his review for Adventures in Modern Recording , opined The Age of Plastic " sounds like unfinished business , a series of good ideas in need of elaboration " . Dave Marsh and John Swenson , writing for The Rolling Stone Record Guide , opined that " aside from the wonderful ' Video Killed the Radio Star ' ? perhaps the most successful recent example of a single where the production was catchier than the material " , the album was " high @-@ tech dreck " . Betty Page from Sounds commented that the group " stretches uncomfortably out into the long playing medium like a skein of well @-@ chewed bubblegum . " In a review of the 1999 reissue of the album , Richard Wallace of Daily Mirror wrote that the record " shows how [The Buggles] pioneered the synth @-@ led nonsense which fused much of the decade 's pop , but had little creative imagination . That bombastic electro @-@ sound became [Trevor] Horn 's trademark as a producer . Skip it . " Alexis Petridis of The Guardian has been the harshest on the LP , calling it " awful beyond measure " and " everything bad that people say about the music industry : it 's wasteful , it 's stupid , it has no interest in actual music . "

= = In popular culture = =

Popular French bands such as Justice , Daft Punk and Phoenix have been known to include influences of The Age of Plastic . Justice said that they were " totally fascinated by The Buggles ' first album [The Age of Plastic] . It 's full of stuff we like - there 's a bit of electro , a bit of pop , a bit of classical going on there ? We like the way they operated too , as an autonomous duo ? "

In Adrian McKinty 's novel I Hear the Sirens in the Street : A Detective Sean Duffy Novel , the book

's main character goes into his house on a rainy day listening to The Age of Plastic , calling it a " very bad album . "

= = Track listing = =

All songs written , produced and performed by The Buggles .

Original LP release

Side 1 :

" Living in the Plastic Age " ? 5 : 13

" Video Killed the Radio Star " ? 4 : 13

" Kid Dynamo " ? 3 : 29

" I Love You (Miss Robot) " ? 4 : 58

Side 2 :

" Clean , Clean " ? 3 : 53

" Elstree " ? 4 : 29

" Astroboy (And the Proles on Parade) " ? 4 : 41

" Johnny on the Monorail " ? 5 : 28

Bonus tracks on 2000 CD re @-@ release

" Island " ? 3 : 33

" Technopop " ? 3 : 50

" Johnny on the Monorail " (A very different version) ? 3 : 49

Bonus tracks on 2010 Japanese CD re @-@ release

" Video Killed the Radio Star " (Single version) ? 3 : 25

" Kid Dynamo " (Single version) ? 3 : 29

" Living in the Plastic Age " (Single version) ? 3 : 51

" Island " (Edit version) ? 3 : 33

" Clean Clean " (12 @-@ inch version) ? 5 : 15

" Technopop " ? 3 : 50

" Elstree " (Single version) ? 4 : 06

" Johnny on the Monorail " (A very different version) ? 3 : 50

" Elstree " (Special DJ edit version) ? 3 : 36

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = Chart positions = =