



By **Stephanie King**

The name of Gorillaz' forthcoming album *Plastic Beach* provides clues to what [Stylo](#) has to offer – a sci-fi hybrid of the synthetic, the contaminated, the superficial and the beautiful. It's got the sort of smooth, mid-tempo electro-groove that brings to mind car adverts and shopping centres; slick, mechanised and hygienically inhuman. It's precisely the kind of uber-cool detached pop you'd expect a cartoon band to make.

A chugging bassline slides the song along a buzzing riff. The synths switch from drone to shimmer, creating an atmosphere of glossy monorails, glass skyscrapers and jet-powered cars. There is something quaintly futuristic about it, anticipating the kind of supersonic cities envisaged in [Back to the Future II](#).

Mos Def's rap is remote and tinny, a ghost in the machine haunting *Stylo* with a stripped-bare shadow of his usual gravelly murmur. This is balanced by warm backing vocals, breezing through the song with the momentum of a bullet train.

Damon Albarn's solo is a dulcet simper, his stretchy opening call of *Oh Stylo!* rubbing up against the clipped electronic beats before hitching a ride along the track. Disembodied fuzzy voices ripple in the background like so many cogs in a machine.

Bobby Womack's ragged evangelist-preacher rips through the song like an infomercial interrupting the main show. His deranged freestyle leaves the song exactly as he found it, with Albarn's hushed whispers and momentum-building backing vocals cruising obliviously on autopilot while Womack desperately fights to derail the train. But although he temporarily thumps a wad of maddened funk into the song, he is soon devoured by *Stylo's* calm progress,

his perverse outbursts all the more integral to reinforcing its icy restraint. Womack stokes the simmering robotic energy that powers the track along, pushed through with Mos Def's muffled ammunition and Albarn's gliding drawl.

Stylo is a utopian love song to hi-tech efficiency – *Love electricity/Shockwave central/Power on the motherboard/Yes!* – the final *yes* suffused

with the hiss and heat of machines grinding in ordered harmony. Like Gorillaz,

*Stylo*

is littered with top-dollar celebrities that have been depersonalised into ciphers. No surprise then that when the song stops, it cuts off abruptly, like someone flicked a switch on a conveyor belt.

It's too slick a song to love sincerely, but there's something intoxicating about *Stylo*'s automated fantasy that comes into its own when mainlined into your ears on a crowded commuter train. Highly recommended.