



By **Stephanie King**

On Tuesday 2nd March The xx played a gorgeous, accomplished gig at Shepherd's Bush Empire, building an atmosphere of hushed intimacy in which their debut album was joined by some of their Youtube-friendly cover versions. [Do You Mind](#) was the spine-tingling highlight.

Superficially, it may seem strange that the brooding xx would cover 2008's funky house track *Do You Mind*

. In the sunny spend-spend days of the early noughties, 2-step was all about [lovin' it, lovin' it, lovin' it](#)

, but come 2008, it was

[Burial's](#)

disembodied voices that haunted us along the ransacked aisles of Woolworths. So when the year closed with the canned bongos and hormonal happy-hour vibe of

[Kyla's](#)

[Do You Mind](#)

, it's no surprise people embraced it.

By contrast, The xx are celebrated for their understated introspection, creating melancholy pop songs to be listened to in dark rooms. Up-tempo floor-fillers they are not.

When played live by The xx, *Do You Mind* transforms from a cheeky pick-up song to a lovelorn wish to curl up with a stranger and disappear. Opening with a fraught guitar peal, rumbling drums and bass line, Romy Madley Croft's seductive voice is every bit as alluring and polished as Kyla's. Moving into a typical xx duet, Oliver Sim's growling murmur lends the cover depth and texture, this delicate balance between the two vocals being one of their greatest strengths.

But it's not so much what The xx have done to the song that's remarkable, as what they've left alone. The basic melody is unchanged – The xx have simply sliced off the funky house backing to highlight *Do You Mind's* underlying minor tone. Slowed down and stripped of all the defining sounds of its genre, *Do You Mind* is almost unrecognisable. Gone

are the chirpy house samples and sexy soca rhythms, to be replaced with Jamie Smith's barely-there beats and spectral samples. The lingering guitar draws out every breathless cry, so the original song's infectious *whol*

e night

refrain becomes a plea, reducing a club classic on free-spirited promiscuity to a song about the loneliness of the dance-floor. Definitely more

[How Soon Is Now?](#)

than

[Dance Wiv' Me](#)

Yet I've never found The xx downbeat. There's something uplifting about the complimentary sighs of Sim's and Croft's voices, and a flickering optimism in the broken prettiness of their song-writing. The xx's cover of *Do You Mind* is every bit as young and innocent as Kyla's buoyant anthem, only The xx offer the more serious and intense flipside to teenage dreams.

This is music that owes as much to the high-gloss of [Aaliyah](#) and [Womack and Womack](#) (check the cover of

[Teardrops](#)

) as it does to the shoegazing

[Jesus and Mary Chain](#)

, minimalist

[Young Marble Giants](#)

and dark and dirty

[dubstep](#)

. One nay-saying acquaintance of mine reckons The xx are "overrated, soporific Observer Music Monthly nonsense". I think they possess a simmering genius that promises very good things to come.

So there.