

24. WAKE ME UP

R: 29 November 2004 (*What Will The Neighbours Say?*) & 21 February 2005 (single); S: album
W: with Tim Powell/Shawn Lee/Lisa Cowling/Paul Woods/Yusra Maru'e

3:27

What Will The Neighbours Say? 4/7; Singles 11/17; Silver 12/14 (S2 T5); FA40 #24 (non-mover); PJ15 #20
"Sherbet"

Let's sift through the haze of the past 18 days and set out where I'd be in an actual Popjustice discography rate. They worked like this: you marked every song out of 10 and chose *one* to receive your 11. The countdown was then based on average marks. By my marking scheme, this list would have started with impregnable 7s and borderline 8s. We're now on to rock solid 9s, which could be 10s on the right day.

One such day might be: in the crowd at *The Girls Aloud Show*, after the emotional tribute to Sarah ([GA35](#)), and seeing the other four re-emerge on motorbikes, suspended high above the stage. Then watching as the bikes move forward, over the VIP pits and the front rows of the crowd, all while they perform 'Wake Me Up'.

So, I thought about it over the last couple of weeks, but the song ended up where it was in my 2021 ranking. Because 'Wake Me Up' is the definition of solid. This is not meant as even a mild pejorative. In context, it means they're still trying things no-one else was doing, but there are more exciting examples. It means the structure and production are immediately arresting, but not as astonishing as some of their other singles. It means there are some fantastic sections, but maybe they're overshadowed by what other tracks from the same album are up to. It's the fourth single from that album, and obviously a damn sight better than the third (I'll Stand By You'). But still a step below the first two, and indeed [WWTNS's](#) 'Great Lost Single'. Finally, it won the 2005 [Popjustice £20 Music Prize](#). But it's the weakest of GA's five winners, and beat arguably the weakest crop of nominees from the 2000s (I'd have voted for 'Lola's Theme' over this, by the way).

What do I really like about 'Wake Me Up'? What Alexis Petridis called its "implausibly dumb three-chord garage-rock riff" for starters. Is it even *possible* to hear that opening without picturing sexy young women on motorbikes? Some of the squeaky sound effects that fight a losing battle against said riff. Opening with the chorus (a first for GA singles, I think). Sarah and Cheryl's quiet but slightly menacing opening verses, and with it the decision not to lead with Nadine for a change. Sherbet dips and margaritas.

What do I really *love* about 'Wake Me Up' though? The best bit. One of the easiest "best bits" in this whole list. And the first time in their career you can unequivocally give it to Nicola:

"You always were a dye in the wool/Always thought that you were so cool/Never realised that you'd been shared/I think you're off your head!"

Bloody marvellous stuff, and frankly *incredible* in the [video](#). Gobshites like Chris Moyles still managed to refer to her as "ugly" or "untalented" after this, but I think Nicola's last line sums them up rather nicely. Immediately after this, there's a close second best bit involving Nadine and Kimberley taking alternate lines in a shout-singing contest. Nadine's boob-jiggling moment from the video has become "iconic". Nothing else in 'Wake Me Up' really lives up to that midsection, but that's more than enough for a nine point five.

There are ten singles left (including the One True 'Untouchable'), and yes... they're all undoubted 10/10s. Ludicrously though, I'm not even one hundred percent sure yet whether the best ([👉](#)) will 'get my 11'.

[You Have Been Listening To...](#) [LYRICS](#) [YOUTUBE](#)

23. WATCH ME GO

R: 5 December 2005 (*Chemistry*); S: album; W: with Tim Powell/Lisa Cowling/Shawn Lee/JC Chasez
4:05

Chemistry 5/10; Album tracks 10; Silver 3/14 (S1 T3); FA40 #25 (up 2); PJ15 #25
"Strippers"

Oh god... just send me to horny jail right now. I've mentioned this a couple of times already, for being a touchstone track on *Chemistry*, and for being sexy AF in exactly the way 🍌 1 'Fix Me Up' isn't. I sequenced it after 'Love Machine' on the *Silver* comp, because this is the tale of a *real* love machine, ho ho. Name of Nadine Coyle. It'll happen more often as we progress through the top 20 or so, but this is really the first song in the list where she fully justifies the term 'pop goddess'. Yet, while Nadine is the main focus, somehow it's Cheryl and Sarah who elevate this into the GA hall of fame. *That's* how great 'Watch Me Go' is.

This is the filth they were only hinting at back in [GA56](#) 'Not Tonight Santa'. But let's make one thing clear. 'WAP' it ain't. GA go badly awry when they try to imitate American sexual directness (see that lemon again). Instead, this time they've gone exactly far enough in that direction, enlisting former N'Sync singer [JC Chasez](#) as co-writer. He's added backing vocals and given the production a touch of authentic raunch, without overplaying his hand. The girls - three of them especially - have done the rest. The result is GB/NI fire.

So, first of all the beat establishes itself, and it's a good one, with a hint of sleaze and kinkiness. In fact it's reminiscent of a proto 'Control of The Knife' ([GA28](#)), which is why I avoided sequencing them together. Then Nadine comes in with some car/sex metaphors, all "gasoline" and being "ready to blow". I mean, don't expect 'Little Red Corvette' or 'Pull Up To The Bumper' here. She does a fantastically sexy "For sure" at the end of her second couplet though (which I long thought was Cheryl). But at 0:53, just watch her go. Stratospheric.

What happens here is both racier than [Lacey](#), and a remarkable bit of pop craft. Nadine relates a sexual encounter with a guy called 'Ben', marked by two things. First, the details are way beyond anything on [What Will The Neighbours Say?](#), or previously on [Chemistry](#). And second, she notes the time at which various events happened. Always quarter past the hour. Now, set aside the carnality for a moment and look at the rhyme scheme for Nadine's night of passion:

(Note: * is a half or full rhyme which anticipates the new time, **bold** is the time)

A - A - A - B* - **B** - C - C - D* - **D** - E - E - F* - **F** - G - G - F.

I mean, wow... Here are the actual words, same notation:

ONE - fun - on - move* - **TWO** - red - bed - knees* - **THREE** - shower - hour - door* - **FOUR** - again - Ben - more.

Just outrageously good pop songwriting, yet I can't even claim this as Exhibit A in why [Chemistry](#) is more than just 'Biology'. It's full of this kind of uninhibited inspiration, and you should get it in your ears ASAP.

Credit where it's due, Sarah shares a lot of this section first time round, and Nicola and Kimberley join in on the second. But it's still the Nadine Show. By 2:30, after both the opening and the time check have been repeated, the only lines the insatiable Miss Coyle hasn't sung are the first "quarter past two" and the second "said your name was Ben". The JC Chasez production is really hitting its stride and working it. But, without something extra, something new, the song might be about to shoot its load.

Enter Miss Tweedy. Even on an album full of random, unexpected thrills, Cheryl's moment is off-the-scale bonkers. But it works like a charm. It changes the tone instantly, from a tale of wild exploits that could give you an inferiority complex, to one that welcomes you into a world of adult play. Where we're all sexual beings, but we have to undercut it with a bit of good old British laughter. This is what Cheryl semi-raps, twice:

*"Strippers and the vicars in the back, first man cracked, jump on the mainline track and
I take a little bit of pay, OK, and the beat of the big trombone"*

Look, I know this barely makes sense (trombone though, snigger). What can I tell you? It's Miranda Cooper. All I can say is, the effect of these 15 seconds is instant, exuberant mirth. By the time Nadine comes back, 'Watch Me Go' feels sexier because its world suddenly seems fun and attainable. As if proving the point that those who don't take sex *too* seriously are sexier people. But anyway. You thought Cheryl's intervention was funny? Unbelievably, there is one final, scarcely credible twist to come, courtesy of Miss Harding.

We hear the opening section again, backed by some new production touches. Nadine dissolves into a few sub-Donna Summer "oh oh"s and obviously the song is going to fade out here. Instead... GWAN SARAH....!

*"I know what you're thinking, you've been thinking 'bout my butt
Bet you'd like to know what's got my body feeling hot"*

She's probably pissed, but delightfully so. This is the outro, repeated four times. If it doesn't put the biggest grin on your face, give up on the Almighty Aloud right now. Honestly, if I hadn't decided to pick the obvious, for obvious reasons, this gloriously silly but insanely flirtatious moment would be one of Sarah's medals.

'Watch Me Go' is described as "deliciously slutty" in [Chemistry's Wikipedia page](#). It's an apposite phrase, but it still doesn't capture the boggled joy of listening. Where 'Fix Me Up' tried to be saucy and instead gave everyone the most detumescent or quick-drying ick imaginable, 'Watch Me Go' gets it wickedly right.

[You Have Been Listening To...](#) [LYRICS](#) [YOUTUBE](#)