

This Is All Yours:

Alt-J



This Is All Yours was released in September 2014. This is only the second album the band has dropped. The album is composed of new-wave and ambient alternative rock. With electronic synths, and eerie vocals this is not music that suits just anyone. For an individual who enjoys the act of simply listening to the music, and dissecting the lyrics would embrace the psychedelic- pop ideal that is Alt-J. *This Is All Yours* LP came in at #1 of the *Billboard 100 Best Alternative Albums* in 2014, and their previous album "*An Awesome Wave*" reached as high as #15 of the *Billboard Top 100 Alternative Albums* in 2012. The Rolling Stone describes Alt- J's "*This Is All Yours*" as, "A perfect mix of alienation and a southern beat of low-fi guitar action." Some popular singles featured on the album include, "*Warm Foothills*," "*Left-Hand Free*," and "*Every Other Freckle*." With an album such as this being their latest, listeners are keen on what's coming next from Alt-J.

Δ...A Bit About the Band

This is music geared toward a certain audience, while they are not about elite-ism, their complex lyrics offer this: the perfect music for... well...nerds. As described by *Buzzfeed* in 2014. With an extremely dedicated fanbase the band has become known for their amazing live performances. Including fantastic light shows, impeccable live audio, and haunting rhythms to every staging. The Greek delta symbol above is now the band's trademark, also that is how they developed their name, by typing “alt-j” on a Mac keyboard to form said shape. Another component that set this band apart, was the fact they produce, and write nearly all their own music. The band did not gain much popularity until they were awarded the UK Mercury Music Prize in 2012, giving them an avenue into mainstream alternative music.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmMD_LugC-c

This is from their live performance at the O2 Academy Brixton Theatre in May 2013. A link to demonstrate the skill of the band, while performing live. It's pretty amazing how little audio editing they need...



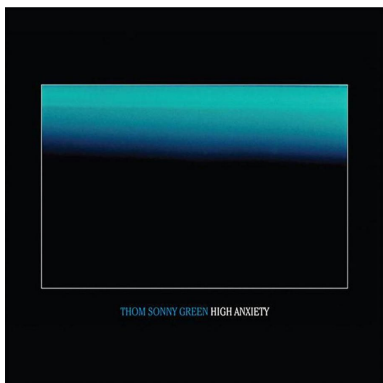
An example of the band's crazy light shows.



The band's delta trademark, being shown by the dedicated fans.

Δ...A Bit About the Band contd.

After the artistic leave of former guitarist, and bassist Gwil Sainsbury in 2014, the band has been on a type of hiatus. During this absence from the industry, keyboardist, Gus Unger- Hamilton has had time to open a small café in East London, drummer Thom Green released a solo electronic album called "High Anxiety" (a hip-hop infused LP with 90's vibes). And singer Joe Newman has been featured on multiple singles with other artists such as Clams Casino, and Lil B. Leaving the audiences in a bit of a standstill, waiting upon their next production.



Green's Solo
Album "*High
Anxiety*"



Unger-Hamilton's Cafe
"*The Dandy*" in
Fields, East London,
formed from an old
shipping container lot



Newman's feature, on The
Clams Casino album *32
Levels*

Band Members and Info

Gwil Sainsbury
2007- 2014



Alt-J was formed in 2007 while the band members were attending University of Leeds, in England. The band is made up of vocalist Joe Newman, keyboardist Gus Unger- Hamilton, drummer Thom Green, and former guitarist Gwil Sainsbury now temporarily replaced by long time mate Cameron Knight (plays while touring). A short interview with the band, let the masses know that Gwil quit the band because "he believed the industry to be bull****," and no longer continued on with the band as of 2014. He was a dear friend, but non-essential to the band's success. They have not (formally) replaced him, as vocalist Joe Newman is a skilled guitarist as well. Alt-J continues to tour, and the band has an upcoming show in Spain, next year.

Band Members



Joe Newman- Guitar- Vocals

It's interesting, there isn't much information at all on the band as individual members, but if we're being smart, it's safe to assume Joe Newman is anywhere between 27 and 30 years of age. He was born in Southampton, England, that much we know, but much else on Newman, is *extremely* vague.



Gus Unger Hamilton- Keyboard- Backup Vocal

Here, we get only a little more info. He was born in Leeds, England, as Augustus Unger-Hamilton. On August 20, 1989. His partner is named April, and they have been together for some time. Again, the information is rather undetailed.

We know that he was studying the Fine Arts, as was the rest of the band, when they met at the university in his hometown.



Thom Green- Drummer- Backup Vocal

There are several more details on Thom Green, than any other band members at the moment. He was born in Harrogate, England as Thomas Sonny Green on November 5, 1985.

He suffers from Alport Syndrome, and was on a kidney dialysis for 4 years, until he received a transplant.

Another fact is, that due to performing, he is nearly deaf, he has very poor hearing in both ears. It seems Thom gets the short end of the stick, when it comes to "*fun*" facts.

I believe it's part of the band's persona to be private about personal information, even after two hours of research, all I could find was what's listed above, and it's all from questionable sources. It's truly fascinating to find a band so committed to keeping their lives separate from performing, and fame. I've watched four interviews, and in all of them, the band remains quite closed off about their personal lives. Simply reiterating what we know already, as if they choose to be different people when they are in the limelight. As a personal fan, it's interesting to know so little about them as people, if anything it adds to their alt mannerisms, and ideals.

Some Songs to Ponder

Something Alt-J has come to be known by, is their seemingly nonsense lyrics. Although each song sounds as if the lyrics were written by a mental patient, with an obsession for ill- defined vocabulary and strong language, they all have immense meaning. This is where the “nerd” comment comes into play. Generally if you are well informed, and well-read you could pick up on many of the references Newman makes in his lyrics... I definitely didn't, until I looked it up.



Nara is the second installment in the Nara song trilogy. The first being “Arrival in Nara” and the third (and final) being “Leaving Nara” which is the last song on the album. This song alludes to supporting gay marriage. The first hint of this is when Newman sings:

“Love, love is the warmest colour.” This is a nod to the indie film *Blue Is The Warmest Colour*, a movie about a girl discovering herself, and her sexuality, in the end she realizes she is in love with girls. The point of the film was to advocate for the lesbian community.

Finally, when Newman intones “ Hallelujah, Bovay, Alabama, marry a man like no other man” Bovay = Alan Earle Bovay, one of the founders of the Republican Party in America, the single party most opposed to gay marriage. Alabama has only *just* legalized gay marriage, as of 2015. It was not legal when this song was released. This is one of my personal favourite songs on the album.





Every Other Freckle is an idiosyncratic song in Alt-J's repertoire. It's in the end, a love song. Which is something a band like Alt-J hardly dabbles in. The song is based on a man and woman, who are very intimate with each other. Without the clever word play of Unger Hamilton, and Newman, this song would be rather explicit.

"I want to do all the things your lungs do so well.." Is showing the level of love the characters share. The song is in the perspective of the man, and he is saying to her *"I want to be the air in your lungs, I want you to breathe me."* A sense of obsession is found here.

"You're the first and last of your kind." Refers to the woman's unique and ethereal beauty, which he has seen in no other woman.

And finally in the bar *"I want to be every button you press, and all the baths that surround you, yes I'm going to roll around you, like a cat rolls around saw dusted patios, I'm going to kiss you like the sun browns you.."* is the man's description of how much he wants to be her everything, her main driving force to live.

As you listen to the song, you begin to understand the man's love, and desire for the woman. In such a strength that he wishes he could be part of her. It's truly mesmerising.





This song is the sequel to the single "Bloodflood" on their previous album **An Awesome Wave**, which told a semi-fictional story of how Neman was attacked in a Southampton (his hometown) park, called The Common.

"Bloodflood began as just a riff and a melody that eventually became a verse idea," Newman says during an interview with critics *Nothing But Hope And Passion*. "It didn't really dawn on any of any of us to turn it into Bloodflood Part II until we started writing towards a second album. I think as the ideas started to evolve, we started thinking about having a Bloodflood Part II and it being related to the other side of the story."

References such as "The Mandela boys, soon become Mandela men," are from singer Joe Newman's life as a boy growing up in Southampton. The Mandela Boys were a gang from his town, and they truly frightened him. This bar 'soon become Mandela men' is him wondering if they've grown now, and have jobs and families.

I like the meaning behind this one, it's interesting, and uncommon in music today.





For an Alt-J song, this one is rather straightforward. This song was based on a film, like the band's song "Matilda" from an **Awesome Wave**. The film in which the song is based is *Alien*, one of Hurt's best known roles.

It's especially inspired by his death scene, where an alien bursts out of his chest. This was a shock to his fellow actors, and anyone watching, just how gory it had been was what inspired Newman to compose such a song. Newman was particularly moved by this scene because of how unexpected it was, saying "As a writer... why not write about what moves you the most?"

I'm a sucker for secret messages and inventive ideas, so this one wasn't as exciting for me.



Conclusion & Recommendation

All in all, Alt-J's **This Is All Yours** is a true piece of art. The band feels very strongly about the album, with the loss of one of their band-mates (he didn't die, he just quit, as stated above) the 'silent leader' as Joe Newman described him, they were unsure of how they would continue. With an open mind, and willingness to comprehend, anyone in mood for musical stimulation would sincerely value this album.

I would honestly recommend this to every single person I know. There have been murmurs in the media of a new album, with drummer Thom Green even saying: *"We're excited to start working on our next album; we have some new ideas, and we're ready to see where they take us."* I've followed Alt-J from the very beginning, and I for one, and extremely thrilled to see what the future brings for this band, and especially their music.



Fin.