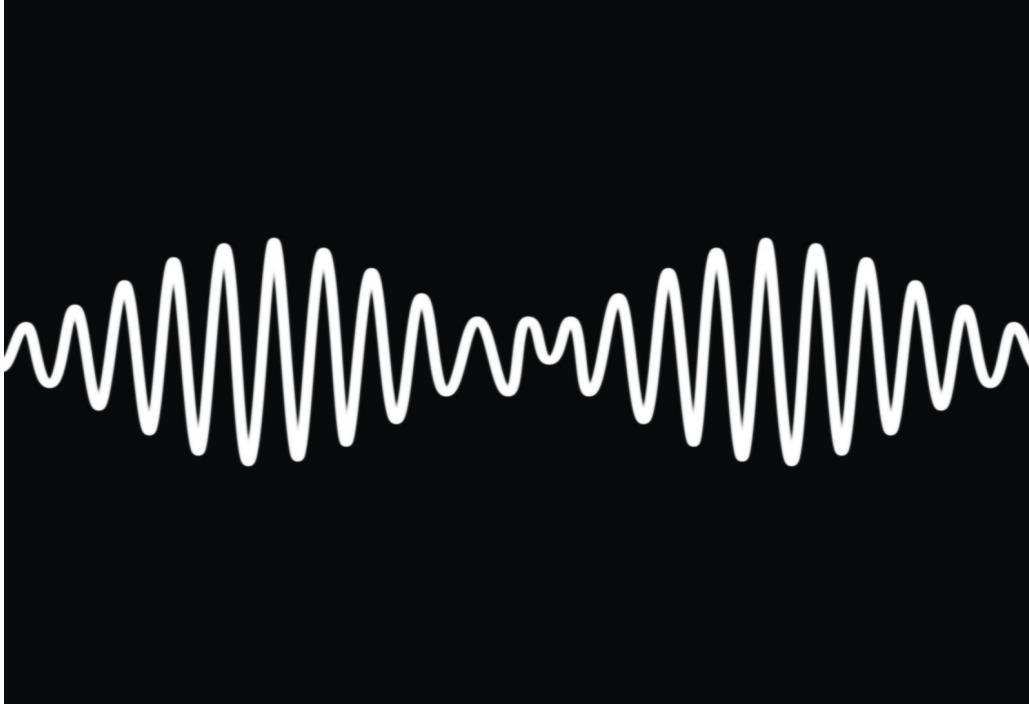


AM by Arctic Monkeys

Album Review by Tiana Turko



Arctic Monkeys are an English rock band formed in 2002 in High Green, a suburb of Sheffield, England. The band consists of lead vocalist and lyricist Alex Turner, guitarist Jamie Cook, drummer Matt Helders, and bassist Nick O'Malley. (Former member, Andy Nicholson) They are one of the most successful British bands of the 21st century.

Turner and Cook both received guitars for Christmas in 2001 and began learning to play them together. Later, they began playing shows in Sheffield after adding Helders and Nicholson to the group. Arctic Monkeys became one of the first bands to come to the public's attention via the internet. They eventually signed a record deal with Domino.



Their debut album sold over 300,000 in just the first week and won the Mercury Music Prize in 2006. Later, NME voted it the fifth best album of all time. While the group was touring the US, though, Andy Nicholson left because of their hectic schedule, and Nick O'Malley was brought in as a temporary replacement. It was later confirmed that Nicholson was leaving the group for good and O'Malley was added as a permanent member of the band.

AM is Arctic Monkeys fifth studio album and is personally one of my favourite albums of all time. This album is extremely important for the success of the band, as it was their breakthrough album in America. The album received critical acclaim from music critics and was included in many year-end lists as one of the best in 2013. AM has become their most commercially successful album, topping charts in many countries and reaching top 10 spots in many more. It has been recognised as one of the best selling vinyl albums of the decade, selling 27,000 copies.

The album gets inspiration from various music genres, including psychedelic rock, blues rock, hard rock, heavy metal, desert rock, R&B, soul and hip hop. Alex Turner described the album as sounding "like a Dr. Dre beat, but we've given it an Ike Turner bowl cut and sent it galloping across the desert on a stratocaster" adding that it "sounds less like four lads playing in a room this time. Essentially, that's what it is, but if you can find a way to manipulate the instruments or sounds to the point where it sounds a bit like a hip hop beat that'd be boss in your car, then I think there's something quite cool about that." Turner also said that Outkast, Aaliyah, and Black Sabbath were influences for the album as well.

In an interview with Zane Lowe on BBC Radio 1, Alex Turner said that the album title was inspired by Velvet Underground's album *VU*. "I actually stole it from the Velvet Underground, I'll just confess that now and get it out of the way. The 'VU' record obviously." He went on to say "Did we cop out? Yeah! Summat about it feels like this record is exactly where we're supposed to be right now. So if felt right to just initial it." Turner revealed later that the album had almost been called 'The New Black', after a guitar amp that they'd used during the recording process. "I got this old Rickenbacker thing that we recorded a lot through. There's no knobs, just two holes. And this little black amp that became known as The New Black. Crossed me mind to call the album that."

The band was at the studio daily for six months recording the album. They experimented with small parts of the sounds, working out rhythm grooves and creating loops. This album was actually recorded in their rehearsal room, instead of a proper recording studio.



“Do I Wanna Know” is the first track on the album, and is probably the band's most well known and popular song in America. It perfectly fuses simplistic, complex, clever and “unorthodox” elements into one song. It is built on Cook’s slow, monolithic guitar riff, Turner’s words of unrequited lust, offset by hand claps and QOTSA-style falsetto backing vocals. The song is about a wounded lover obsessing over a failing relationship. After peppering her with accusatory questions and pleas, the singer dares his lover to come back to him.

“R U Mine” is the album's second track. Immediately a sudden guitar wham introduces you, and the song's first brick is laid with a complex vocal melody backed by toe tapping guitar. The riff keeps you rocking your head for the whole three and a half minutes. The song is much less moody and brooding, it hears the Arctic Monkeys get heavier and scuzzier with unfulfilled passion. This song is entwined with Turner’s distinctive witticisms with the difficult on-off nature of his former relationship with Alexa Chung, being the song's underlying subject matter

“One For the Road” is the third track on the album. Although it’s a small song, it’s had a lasting impression on me. The intro may not catch everyone’s interest, but as the song goes on, it slowly becomes catchier. It continues with a bluesy, chunky riff and Americana-tinged rockabilly twang. Later in the song, it features one of my very favourite guitar solos in any song. It’s short but it’s extremely catchy and is always stuck in my head. The song is about the speaker's fear of the morning's clarity, attempting to extend the night.

"Knee Socks" is the eleventh track on the album. Right away, the song begins with another classic Arctic Monkeys guitar riff. The song has more of a sensual and chilled out sound, it's definitely one of Arctic Monkeys sexier sounding songs. All the transitions are smooth and nothing feels forced.

Maybe I'm biased, but if I had to rate this album, I'd give it a 10/10. For me, it just has everything that a good album should have. Although none were mentioned, it has ballads, songs you can just chill to, and songs that you could dance to. The sound of all the songs are different than any other album that I've heard. It has quite an original sound in my opinion.

Although the Arctic Monkeys were popular for a while because of this album, specifically because of the single *Do I Wanna Know*, but because of the bands inconsistency to release albums, I believe they're still quite underrated. This band has a very talented lead singer and incredible lyricist, and extremely talented instrumentalists. Please do give this album a listen!

