

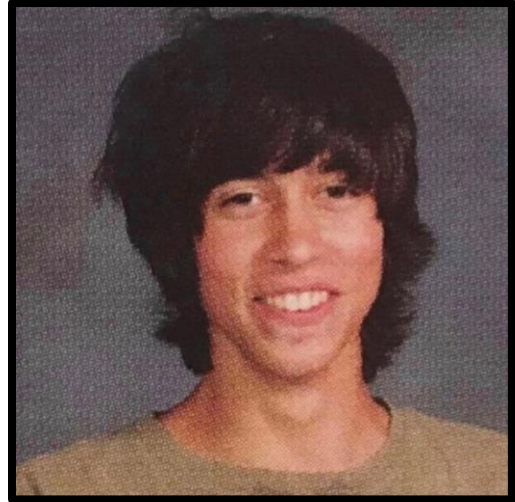
“This Kid’s in High School?” by: Phifer Pemberton



Yep you read that right, Alex Giannascoli was only 16 years old when he wrote his first big debut album Race.

Through his huge and I mean HUGE discography Alex G proves himself time and time again to be an insanely talented musician and songwriter.

While many musicians eventually gain their footing in a genre and style that works for them Alex proved just how talented he truly was straight from the get-go with his first official release Race. After working on music projects such as making “Goth Techno” with his sister and indie punk, rock with his highschool band Alex G began working on solo projects. Race was his first official album made when he was only 16 years old! Before being released to any music service Alex burned CDs and gave them to friends, Race was officially released a year later on August 9, 2011, after his graduation from highschool. Alex G explored many genres and styles in his earlier years and is and always has been an extremely talented singer and songwriter.



Kickstarting his musical career Alex G released race to bandcamp where he would then begin to release all of his musical works silently on. Alex G wasn't met with immediate critical acclaim after the release of Race, he simply continued to release self titled music each year until being signed to a record company and finally gaining major traction around 2020 - 2024 where many of his songs we're finally being recognized by public media eventually Alex G played an NPR tiny desk in December of 2022 and on Jimmy Fallon “The Tonight Show” in July 2022. Due to his obscurity at the release time of Race there is little existing information on the recording and writing process of the album. Race was recorded over a few years in highschool on his own mixed 100% in garageband, he compiled the best recordings from 2009-2010 and created the album “Race”. Modest Mouse and Elliot Smith were Alex’s biggest influences while recording in early years in an interview with “American Songwriter” he notes that Elliot Smith was his biggest influence on how he recorded his songs.

Race has a distinct sound unlike any other album being an edgy, low fidelity, completely homemade indie folk rock album with very melancholic and hauntingly beautiful themes and songwriting, with songs that are bound to be remembered after listening bringing us to the first song on the album:

“Remember”

8/10

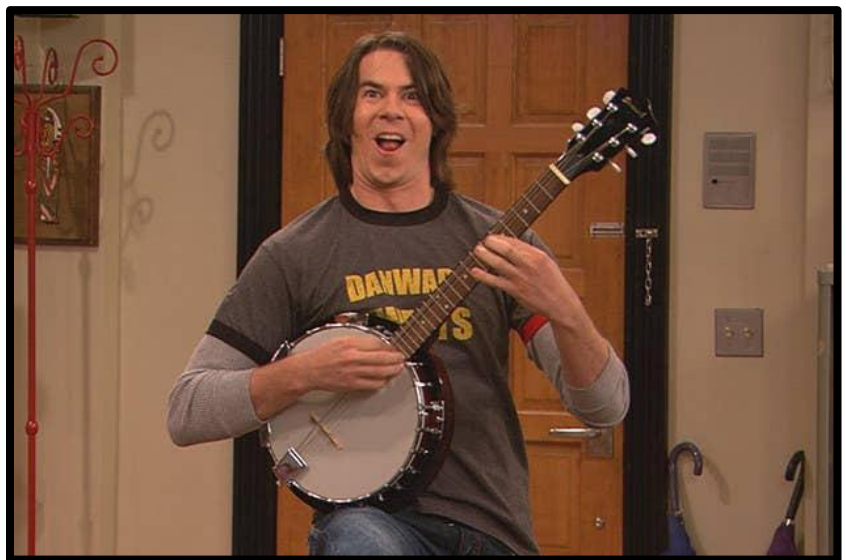
“Remember” is deemed by many as Alex G's “best opening track”. Instrumentally Remember begins with a quick bar of muted guitar strums into a beautiful acoustic guitar arrangement after a couple of bars, a banjo and an acoustic guitar riff matching the banjo are overdubbed alongside the slow percussion made up of a tambourine and claps to create a beautiful soundscape of acoustic guitars, banjo and percussion mixing together into a gracefully dark atmosphere with a wonderful authentic folk feel. In typical Alex G fashion Remember is widely left to interpretation and having no sources on true themes of the song only reinforces this fact. Remember is a short song only having two full verses however the verses are astonishingly gorgeous. “I remember everything. You're inside singing, you look so different, you're walking across the tile floor, you look like Jesus on the water.” This verse brings in religious themes painting the subject of the song in a ‘Godly light’ as well as conversing in the main subject as the singer “remembers everything”, During live shows when playing remember this verse is changed from “you look like jesus on the water” to “you open up you're wings to show me” this is because Alex G distances himself from his past works as he has changed a lot since creating these songs and would rather sing recently written lyrics. Remember being the intro track had to set the tone for the remainder of the songs on the album lyrically and instrumentally which it did perfectly putting together a gorgeous combination of classic folk instruments into a beautifully bittersweet song about Remembrance and past love.

Remember Lyrics:

I've come here to kill my maker
'Cause I'd feel much safer alone

I remember everything
You're inside singing
You look so different
You're walking across the tile floor
You look like Jesus on the water

Please don't help me, oh
Please don't help me, oh
Please don't help me, oh
Please don't help me, oh
Please



“The Same”

9/10

The same is the second song on race and despite coming after such a good opening track still places immaculately in the albums tracklist. Alex G writes about characters in most of his works and “The Same” is a great example of that, “The Same” is about someone who is transgender but is forced to act and remain as the gender they were assigned at birth, reinforced by the opening line “I was a girl” clearly stating that they were but no longer define as a girl, leading into the big drop of the song are the lines “I’ll be downstairs, let me do my hair, and put my makeup on, it feels so wrong, you say rock on” continuing to say that it feels wrong to portray the person they are not through their hair and makeup but are unheard and unaccepted. Instrumentally “The Same” begins with a single acoustic guitar accompanied by Alex’s vocals as the song slowly picks up drums start to kick in and loud amp feedback before Alex yells the line “I’M NOT THE SAME” as synthesizers and several layers of electric guitar come in for the drop of the song, the drop of the song is unlike the rest of the instrumentation in the album so far and “Remember” makes for a wonderful build up to the drop of “The Same”. “The Same” is not only a turning point in instrumentation in Race but also shows how Alex has always cared and stood up for the right reasons and lastly demonstrates how Alex can build tension between songs creating a world for the album.

The Same Lyrics:

I was a girl, I was the only kid in the world, I thought I knew
What it meant to you, But I'm wrong I'm wrong, I'm wrong
I'm not okay, In fact, I'm sick today, I'm on the floor
It's such a bore, it's
Nothing new to you
I'll be downstairs, let me do my hair
And put my makeup on, it feels so wrong, You say
"Rock on"
I'm not the same
Everybody wants you, yeah, Everybody loves you
Your smile, your teeth, your hair, They don't know you're not there
They don't know you're not there, Too fast, too slow, too late
You are never gonna make it, You're never gonna make it
(I'm not the same)

“Gnaw”



“Gnaw” is the fourth song on race and is my personal favourite. “Gnaw” was the first song I heard from race and after only one listen I completely fell in love and listened to the entire album 3 times introducing me to my favourite artist. “Gnaw” begins with an absolutely beautiful acoustic chord progression alongside two layers of electric guitar one is low and quick playing a few notes in rhythm while the other is playing lead high and all over the place in and out of tune crescendoing into a beautiful apex before the song pauses and kicks into the first lines: “Yeah you were scarred, and you we're crying loud right out in the school yard, and yeah I felt good, everything I knew was looking just as it should” taking the perspective of ‘the bad guy’ and still being comforting yet hauntingly gorgeous and nostalgic. At this point the song is built up of the same acoustic chord progression, an electric guitar following his vocals and lethargic percussion. Satanism is a reoccurring theme in Alex G's music as the number 666 is found in many of his tracks among these is “Gnaw”. “Gnaw” is enveloped in contradicting comfort and fear, “I saw the tree carved in it 666 and he found me” this line creates an eerie chilling atmosphere which is either intensified or dulled by the next line “I know every time I look in his eyes he sees me too” as this may be interpreted comfortably as one is seen or it may be interpreted terrifyingly as one is found. During this break Alex vocalises alongside an acoustic guitar which builds higher in pitch until the song gets quiet at which point Alex comes in with yet another graceful, melancholic and gorgeous guitar riff after playing it for twice he begins to sing again and the percussion, bass and electric guitar return to the song. Ending the song Alex sings “please don't cry, I am not your brother, I am not your lover, and there is nothing wrong.” once again playing into the contradiction of comfort and fear as the singer is no longer laughing at misery but caring for it and comforting it reassuring that they aren't a big part in their life and nothing is wrong. The final symphony in “Gnaw” sees a wonderful revision of every instrument played as the gorgeous and graceful complex layers collide to create a true masterpiece of voices

and melodies which apex and careen back downward to see the song off with a couple simple cymbal hits.

Gnaw Lyrics:

Yeah, you were scarred
And you were cryin' loud, right out in the schoolyard
And, yeah, I felt good
Everything I knew was looking just as it should
I saw the tree
Carved in it "666" and he found me
But I am no fool, I know every time I look in his eyes,
He sees me too

Dry your eyes
I won't tell your mother
She won't ever discover
The things you kept under the covers
And please don't cry
I am not your brother
I am not your lover
And there is nothing wrong

“Trash”

9/10

“Trash” is the fifth song on Race and is instrumentally the most unique track. “Trash” opens up with a spooky organ loop and as Alex begins singing percussion made from mainly cymbals and a marimba layer in creating a wonderfully inventive and unique yet fitting style. “Trash” is about growing up and the heartache that surrounds the challenges of maturity, my personal favourite line from this song being “The kids on the carpet have to go their separate ways” which Alex wrote while his brother refused to turn off the Big Bang Theory which Alex hated while he was trying to write a song giving an example of ‘the kids on the carpet’ going their separate ways. “Trash” is a complete curveball in the album but can be seen as a separation from the first four songs and the remainder of the album, with the ultimatum this is Gnaw “Trash” had to move on and grow away



from the mainly guitar focused instrumentals of the intro tracks on the album and branch out into more complex melodies and arrangements.



Don't think twice, maybe
The world is a really scary place
But I know from the look that's on your face
Your life has been over way before it all began
If you don't want to be lonely, then I can be your man
I know that your mommy's getting underneath your skin
But girl, it's all a fuckin' joke, so just live it while you can

“Crab”

Crab is the seventh song on Race and is the first song on the album to properly feature the piano. “Crab” begins with short lived but melodic muted guitar strums which lead into an arpeggiated riff of layered distorted piano and acoustic guitar, a small cymbal count-in begins the lyrics to the song: “do you miss me you sad lady? Cause’ im really feelin’ down.” introducing listeners to the themes of loneliness and desire prevalent throughout the song. After the line “I just wanna be a part of something” a small distorted segment with piano and a clip of his friends talking plays over the riff from the intro before the second verse which is counted in again. As the song ends the instrumentals ramp up in intensity with multiple layers of this slightly distorted piano playing on top of other keyboard instruments, acoustic

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9/10

guitar, bass, and drums, the song ends with one final runthrough of slightly more distorted piano matching the intro yet again.

Crab Lyrics:

Do you miss me, you sad lady?
'Cause I'm really feeling down
And if you're feeling lonesome too
I'd like it if you came around
Do you miss what you thought you were
Back when you thought you knew what you are
Do you miss your favorite song
Back when you thought you knew what was wrong
Where you are
I don't care, I just wanna be a part
Of something
When I was sixteen, I was dead
I was sick from being underfed
When I was twelve, all I did was cry
I saw my favorite band burn alive
When I was ten, I hated you 'cause you hurt me
It was what you knew
Do you miss me, Stephanie
'Cause I'm really missing you
Where you are
I don't care, I just want to be a part of something



“Let it go”

10/10

“Let it go” is the ninth song on Race and was named, written, and recorded before Disney's Frozen in 2013. “Let it go” opens with only acoustic guitar and Alex's vocals before the refrain “are you really there?” bringing in a wonderfully arranged ragtime piano and drums to accompany the acoustic guitar and vocals, before the second verse the ragtime piano turns into an organ before coming back once again during the second refrain. Alex G doesn't often use the same lyrics throughout songs with the few exceptions being the number 666 and constant revisions to the line “Are you really there?” with an example being in “The Same” with the repetition of the line “they don't know you're not there”. “Let it go” features a repeated refrain of the aforementioned line “are you really there?” before the climax of the song and the only mention of the albums name within lyrics “you

know it's all just a race, YOU CAN LET IT GO". straightforwardly "Let it go" is about letting things go and recognizing that life continues mercilessly and everyone has to go through it and letting go is not a bad thing.

Let it go Lyrics:

It's a really big car, It's a really big part
Of a really big heart, Are you really there?
Are you really there?
It's a really big van, For a really big band
They're not goin' anywhere, Are you really there?
Are you really there?
I'm sure sorry about your son, I heard he was a lot of fun
And I'm sorry 'bout the way, That he ran away
Are you really there?
It's a really great place
Way up here in outer space
You know it's all just a race
You can let it go
You can let it go
You can let it go
You can let it go



"Things to do"

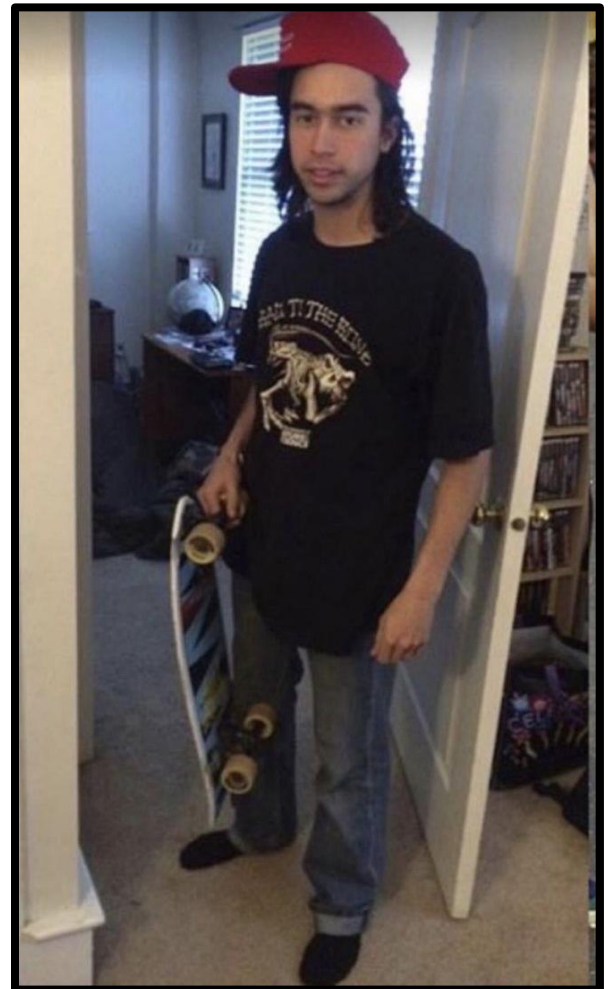
9/10

"Things to do" is the tenth song on Race and marks the beginning of the four song medley which ends race, this medley consists of "Things to do", "Time/Space" (which is an extension of "Things to do"), "Cross country" (which is instrumental), and the final track "Race" all fluidly mixing together giving the album a grand, rewarding, and fitting ending. Like many other songs from Race "Things to do" opens with solo acoustic guitar playing a melancholic and slightly detuned ascending and descending chord progression after a few seconds a pitched up vocal is layered on top of the guitar giving "Things to do" a great catchy and unique hook which comes back for the chorus. During the verses layers of acoustic guitar almost mirroring the intro accompany Alex singing, during the chorus while the intro is played again vocals now follow the acoustic lead while other backup vocals are pitch shifted and layered in as well. "Things to do" delves into themes of dependency, reliance, and the fear that life is only finding 'things to do' to pass the time before death, the lines "And now you're the only thing keeping me awake, a

calculator will make the same mistakes yeah I see it in its face” show how the singer is reliant on the subject sung about and even someone who is perfect would do the same. The chorus of “Things to do” is only sung once in the song but makes up the entirety of the lyrical content in “Time/Space” making this chorus spread between two separate tracks, the chorus speaks to anxiety revolving the unimpactful nature of individual human existence, the conflict of comprehension of individual consciousness, and being misunderstood by the people who surround you. “Things to do” is the beginning of the end of Race being the second last ‘full song’ and being the first song in the final four song run of Race. “Things to do” has a mournful feeling of finality, the album is coming to a close and Alex perfectly encapsulates the closure required for the end of an album.

Things to do Lyrics:

Thinking of things to do
Yeah, only the cheapest things left there for you
And the only thing I learned from you
Is that there's nothing left to look forward to and
I was asleep for days
And now you're the only thing keeping me awake
The calculator will make the same mistakes
Yeah, I see it in its face
Hold on tight to this time, this place
'Cause everything you know will be erased
You were born inside your head
And that is where you'll be when
you are dead
You're just a boy, you are no man
And nobody you know will understand
You're just a boy, you are no man
And nobody you know will understand
Welcoming you back home
The only one that you have ever known
Welcoming you back home
The only one that you will ever know



“Race”

8/10

“Race is the final song and title track on Race bringing Alex G's first full album to a close. “Race” continues the four song medley at the end of Race and

immediately opens with a wonderful cacophony of electric and acoustic guitar, drums, and feedback creating an atmosphere that similarly to “Things to do” has a very strong feeling of finality. “Race” is the ultimatum of Race and though still being left to interpretation sings about change and not recognizing the people we once were “You're starting to look really weird oh yeah your face is out of place and i can't make you up” and the abuse of drugs/ negative impacts on the body as well as the mind “you think the brains in your head are worth breathing the smoke and itchy throats and being happy”. The verses of “Race” are built up of only acoustic guitar, bass, and drums while the chorus is much spacier utilizing electric guitar and feedback alongside a cymbal-ridden drum pattern with very distant and spacey vocals to make the verses hit harder as they are less spacey and distant. “Race” is the ultimatum of the album Race and is the climax of the album in intensity and finality, “Race” is a wonderfully crafted hauntingly gorgeous mix of melodies that create a melancholic loving caring, hating and bruting motif which perfectly sums up the themes throughout the album giving the listener a sense of unmatched closure upon the end of Race.

Race lyrics:

(One, two, three, okay)

You're walkin' on hot coals now, you fuck

'Cause you're a joke, yeah, you're a hoax and now I found you out

'Cause you think the brains in your head are worth

Breathing this smoke and itchy throats and being happy

And I could be your man all day and you could look inside my brain and see this one thing

But then it disappears like smoke and you're alone

I forget, How to play

The game, Everyone

Wants to come, Along

I don't know, Where you are

(One, two, three, okay)

You're starting to look really weird, oh, yeah

Your face is out of place and I can't make you out

And I forget just what you said

Yeah, it's not clear,

it was about fear and getting out of here

But you're okay with me

Tear it down



It's not right
Tear it down
It's not right

Race is a beautifully complex layered indie, folk rock masterpiece recorded by a highschooler completely ALONE, the fact that every bit of mixing, recording, and singing is done by 1 person brings out the genuinity of this low quality soul devoted album and brings light to the immense talent Alex G had before his career even began.

Personally this is by far my favourite album lyrically and instrumentally and after listening to only one song I was hooked. I was introduced to Race when Spotify shuffle randomly played the song "Gnaw", I immediately fell in love and added it to all my playlists on Spotify and when I went home I had it on repeat, the next day I listened to the whole album front to back 3 times and after the third listen I had fallen completely head over heels for every single song on the album. Alex G has been my favourite artist for nearly 3 years and I can probably name any song within the first 2 seconds. Alex inspired me to begin making my own music I spent the summer working to afford a macbook so I could use garageband to record songs alone just as he did at my age but more importantly he single handedly made me realize the beauty and power in music and began my undying immense passion and love for music.

Final rating $10^{1000000000000}/10$