

Music

ARCTIC MONKEYS *WHATEVER PEOPLE SAY I AM, THAT'S WHAT I'M NOT* (DOMINO)

Bitter Without Bite

The Arctic Monkeys are disgusted by you and your idea of a good time, but don't hand them Johnny Rotten's torch just yet.

By Keith Harris

Alex Turner is one bitter little twit. That's an observation, not a judgment, and it's one of the big reasons the Arctic Monkeys' *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* has convinced an excitable faction of the music press to find hope yet again for the future of rock 'n' roll—that and the fact that it's the fastest-selling debut album in UK chart history. The singer's bad attitude places him in quite reputable company, after all—the British pop pantheon abounds with bitter little twits. Johnny Rotten, Elvis Costello, Morrissey—each reinvigorated the music with the same sort of sarcasm, contempt, and righteous outrage you might hear echoed in Turner's detailed indictment of Sheffield nightlife. Their double-edged wit, though—that maybe not so much. Turner's critique is joyless, single-minded, and reportorial, falling so far short of visionary that it may well signal the beginning of a disheartening new era in the BLT tradition.

Turner's eye is undoubtedly sharp. The album's lead cut, "The View From the Afternoon,"

Arctic Monkeys, Spinto Band

WHEN Sat 3/18, 7 PM

WHERE Metro, 3730 N. Clark

PRICE \$12, sold out
INFO 773-549-0203
or 312-559-1212

MORE For a different take on the Arctic Monkeys, see the Treatment in Section 3.

deposits us on his home turf, a Northern England where the anticipation of Saturday-night thrills inevitably dissolves into a dumb, drunken blur of cash-gobbling fruit machines, maudlin late-night text messages, and lascivious taunts from wicked women leaning out limousine windows "in bunny ears and devil horns." And the band's tight, knotty postpunk, with its volatile, irregular rhythms and its tuneful guitars raking sour turns, is an ideal vehicle for his uncomfortably detailed observations. The

Monkeys tidy up the Libertines' slovenly jumbles, which shouldn't work—imprecision is that band's essence, with tunes emerging from the accidental cohesion of haphazard riffs. But *Whatever* replaces thrilling carelessness with an aggressive tension that keeps the sound lively. Its hard, jittery grooves are as unforgiving as the lyrics.

Turner spares no target, no matter how easy. He unnecessarily skewers long-dead delusions of a *West Side Story*-style working class on "I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor," overstating his case with lines like "Oh there isn't no love, no Montagues or Capulets / Just banging tunes in DJ sets and / Dirty dancefloors and dreams of naughtiness." A nice touch, that last bit, aimed squarely at any club hoppers pretentious enough to imagine they're somehow subversively decadent. "All this drinking and fucking," Turner seems to say, "it's just stupid children being *naughty*." But like so many malcontents before him, he soon brings the brunt of his frustrations to bear on women. "Still Take You Home" is downright rancid spew, mocking the fake tan and tawdry allure of an anonymous party girl and then accelerating to the payoff: "What do you know? / You know nothing / But I'll still take you home." Though Turner's bile is heartfelt, it's also impersonal. Lacking the cruel intimacy of Costello or (to choose a closer antecedent) Graham Parker, it cuts less deeply.

Turner does recognize that he's as contemptible as he is contemptuous—he could very well be the "sexy little swine" of "Dancing Shoes," all dressed up for a night out but petrified of the women he longs to bed. His self-loathing might've rooted him in the real world, where everyone is flawed, and made him easier to identify with—but because no actual human beings are allowed to intrude into his songs, it merely reinforces his solipsism. Though the band sometimes shoves him



Arctic Monkeys

past self-pity, playing too fast and bristly to let him get bogged down dwelling on things, even then he's unremittingly literal, unable to see beyond his immediate surroundings.

As working-class snapshots go this is *Saturday Night Fever* with Holden Caulfield in place of Tony Manero, so preoccupied with grumbling about phonies he never bothers to dance. It takes a special man to get me to root for overzealous bouncers and rude

cabdrivers, but Turner pulls it off with his anticharismatic complaining. The anti-music-biz tirade of "Perhaps Vampires Is a Bit Strong But..." is so strident it even makes me sympathetic toward industry lowlifes—and should the Monkeys' hype pan out internationally, we can expect plenty of sequels, plus acutely observed gripes about dumb groupies, unmet tour riders, and the barrenness of hotel rooms.

If on the other hand it all goes

south, Turner can always settle down and compose vicious letters to the editor about car alarms and babies crying in movie theaters. All bitter little twits must someday age into cynical old farts, and our man's got a good head start. Fortuitous that is, too—Turner's contempt for mindless pleasure ought to correspond neatly with that of certain middle-aged rock fans in search of "real" music. (Young Americans may be a harder sell—why import

Chicago Bauhaus Academy

Woodworking and furniture design

Early summer courses:
week of May 22 thru week
of July 17

Beginning through
advanced levels

Call now:
(773) 338-1746

ChicagoBauhaus

Chicago Bauhaus Academy, NFP
6525 North Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60626
www.chicagobauhaus.org

GRAND OPENING SPECIAL
MERCY ACUPUNCTURE
& MASSAGE CENTER

BODY MASSAGE
ASIAN STYLE -
THE VERY BEST

Downtown: 312-201-9123
Chinatown: 312-225-4822
www.mercyacupuncture.com

CLOSED
for
vacation + restocking

Reopening
April
1st

where there is nothing from Mexico
the
Mexican
Shop

847-475-8665
801 Dempster Evanston

FACIALS | HAIR | NAILS | MASSAGE | WAXING

thairapy^{plus}

4247 Lincoln Avenue
773 | 248 | 5353
www.thairapyplus.com

Beverly Hills Salon

It's a crazy promotion!
\$20/Hour Massage

\$29 Mani & Pedi
combo w/Chair
Massage

Offers expires 3/31/06

Why Wait?
Walk-Ins Welcome
Weekdays

1117 N Dearborn St
Chicago, IL 60610-2701
(312) 943-4455
Mon - Sat, Sun by appointment

**CO-ED
Furniture Making Class**

- ❖ Safely learn basic hand & power tool skills
- ❖ Build three take-home class projects
- ❖ Classes are limited in size
- ❖ 10 week course / one 3 hour class per week

**WOODSMYTHS**1835 West School St.
Chicago 773-477-6482www.woodsmythschicago.com

a twitchy ball of angry self-loathing with convoluted woman issues when there's already so much emo?) Whether Turner's conscious of it or not, his songs feed off a widespread suspicion that we've all been gypped, that 60s pleasure politics have dead-ended in commercialized hedonism, and that anyone who's convinced he's enjoying himself is to blame—an attitude you're more likely to encounter among folks who remember the 60s, at least in the States.

Anyone singing that old tune is practically guaranteed an audience in the UK, of course, where mindless fun has been arousing suspicion at least since the rise of punk. But today's wet-blanket bands lack the historical perspective, political commitment, or arty wit to imagine any alternative. Sometimes it seems they can't imagine fun at all, mindless or otherwise. That failing was exemplified last year by the Kaiser Chiefs' "I Predict a Riot," which cast London as a lurid postmodern Gomorrah, overrun by track-suited goons and half-naked women—it was practically a parody of suburban paranoia about the evils of the big city. Turner inhabits just such a scene, and in the title of one Arctic Monkeys tune he declares that it's missing "A Certain Romance." In fact he uses the R word repeatedly throughout the album, though only to denote a vague concept he seems to define as little more than what drab everyday life lacks. The Monkeys flesh out that dissatisfaction with their thrashing, vigorous sound, and that may very well be good news for the future of rock 'n' roll. But that's as far as the band gets—Turner can't find a better use for his acute self-awareness than insisting he's the smartest asshole in the pub. **Ⓜ**

**AMIGOS AND LIS
HIPPIY BOUTIQUE
& SMOKE SHOP****NEW LOCATION
SAME GREAT STUFF,
JUST MORE.****COME SEE OUR NEW
HOT HEMP LINE!****3162 N. CLARK
773-281-1812
CLARK & BELMONT****WRITERS
THE LOFT**

Workshops for beginning, intermediate, and advanced writers. Focus on story theory and technique (plot, character, dramatic movement) plus creative flow (unblocking, maximizing output, managing doubt, fear, panic).

**A PROFESSIONAL WRITER IS AN
AMATEUR WHO DIDN'T QUIT.**Classes begin April 6th**773-348-9900**www.thewritersloft.comAre you
open
to cremation?**We have an open door policy
because we have nothing to hide.****Yes, we return ALL the ashes***Our exacting standards ensure the integrity of the entire cremation process.***24/7 Cremation***For your convenience we are available every day and we accommodate special requests and schedules.***"Whose ashes are in the urn?"***We personally perform the cremation so we know. Also, all cremations are done on-site, so your loved one never leaves our care.***"What about a memorial service?"***We can help your family plan an appropriate Life Celebration, from the most traditional to the most creative of events.***No hidden charges***Embalming is not required for cremations and we provide on-site refrigeration at no extra charge.***So if you think you're open to the idea of cremation,
call us—we can answer any questions you may have.**I'm interested in learning more
about cremation and membership.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____ 9 Northern IL Locations**CREMATION SOCIETY
OF ILLINOIS**736 W. Addison
Chicago, IL 60613
773-281-50581374 E. 53rd St.
Chicago, IL 60615
773-752-6400www.cremation-society.com**Final Clearance
NOW thru March 31ST
44% to 60% OFF****when you take an additional 20% off
previous clearance prices.****Selected items for Men
and Women include:
Insulated Jackets; Ski Parkas
and pants.****Shirts, sweaters, pants and fleece.
Boots, shoes and sandals.****For KIDS- Jackets, skiwear, and fleece****SUPERIOR
EYE CARE**
"HIGH QUALITY AT LOW PRICES"**We Beat All Prices by 10%****Complete Pair of
Boutique Eye Glasses
only \$159^{95*}****1 pair of bifocals plastic
only \$60*****TWO PAIR SALE****2 pair of High Fashion Metal
Frame Eye Glasses \$79^{95*}*** CR39 Lens, Single Vision,
Limited Selections**CONTACT LENS SALE**Six month supply
Disposable w/Exam and fitting.
only**\$100⁰⁰**We beat all prices on
contact lens mail orders
Call toll free
1-888-290-0040Eye Exam performed by a registered
Doctor of Optometry**We accept all major insurance and
Medicaid plans!****3164 N. Broadway
(773) 525-1601
2451 N. Lincoln
(773) 244-0909****erehwon**
mountain outfitter**CHICAGO 1000 W. NORTH AVE.
312.337.6400**