

**ALBUM REVIEW**

# FOUR STARS OUT OF FIVE? NOT REALLY, NO.



WASIQUE HASAN

Five years after the critically successful *AM*, the Arctic Monkeys have finally dropped a new album. To say that this new album, "Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino", was different would be an understatement. Sometime during this five-year hiatus, Alex Turner has forsaken his guitar for a piano. But does this new set-up suit the band?

Right off the bat, you'll notice some significant differences in sound. Turner says, "It's got more chords. And space sh\*t". The songs are much slower than what you'd expect from an AM album. More than anything else, it sounds like 60s or 70s lounge pop/jazz. This promises much, right from the first line: "I just wanted to be one of The Strokes, Now look at the mess you made me make" which draws you in and teases greatness. Unfortunately, the promising start fizzles out at the halfway mark. For a five-and-a-half-minute song, which is the first track of an album, it doesn't set very high standards.

This seems to be a recurring theme with this album, of starting strong and losing momentum in the middle. Which is a shame, because this album had real potential. Most of the songs struggle to bring the instruments together in harmony. When they do, Turner's vocals are a let-down. His voice cannot pull off falsettos to fit this type of music. Let's turn our attentions to his song-writing. People at a hotel and casino on the moon talk of things like science, technology, and religion in the setting of this very unique album. In typical AM fashion, the lyrics are winding and metaphorical. This time, however, they seem to drone on instead of being impactful. Turner's singing is more smug than soothing, and often on a different planet compared to the rest of the band.

It isn't all bad, however. The bass provides good rhythm, and some of the guitar riffs are big and bold with a crunchy tone. Besides this, there are also some masterpieces in the form of "Four Out of Five" and "The Ultracheese". The former is the song featured in the teaser and is the most complete song of the album by far. The riff is groovy, the lyrics vaguely remind me of Hotel California, and the instruments feel like they are working together instead of trying to drown each other out. I can already hear the chants of "Four stars out of five" in packed arenas, 5/5.

"The Ultracheese" is, true to its name, very cheesy. And I loved every second of it. Laid back and letting the piano and Turner's vocals drive the unhurried pace, this perfectly fits the theme of nostalgia and days gone by. The tempo change and Pink Floyd-esque piano-guitar harmony at the 2:30 mark ensures the track and album end on a high note.

Overall, this album from the Sheffield boys felt more like an Alex Turner side project. Which, well, it is. He came up with the piano demos at first and then involved the band, who weren't entirely keen on this. Even then, I must give them credit for not being pegged down into one style or genre. Sadly, the experimentation didn't pay off this time and the album could neither live up to its potential or the Monkeys' lofty standards. Let's hope the band retain the positives from this one and five years down the line we'll have a more complete album.

# An evening of music and comedy with The Mic Peeps

ASIF AYON

While Dhaka may seem to lack shows where people can go and socialise at, "The Mic Peeps" have been offering a great solution.

Starting its journey on February 1, 2018 at Banani's Gourmet Bazar, The Mic Peeps aims to help people showcase their talents in music, comedy, and any other form of performing arts. So far they've collaborated with the venue to host seven shows, with the most recent one taking place on May 10. I got the chance to visit the event and see what it was all about.

The show kicked off with stand-up comedy and musical performances by people of different ages and professions. The seats were filled with an enthusiastic audience; many sat down at a table eating the variety of food served at the cafe within the premise. We got a chance to talk to Adib Raiyan, who was one of the many performers. "My main focus was to find a good platform for my art and to connect with other musicians," he said.

"This is the main goal of The Mic Peeps for the future," said Anika Azam, founder of the show, "The open mic is a wonderful opportunity for talented individuals to become acquainted with directors, producers, and organisers. We act as mediators in this regard."

Alongside solo artists like Adib, the stage was also graced by Tahmid Rahman and Shayantani Twisha from the band Uncertainty Principle.

"We have five members in our band, but the two of us have been performing at open

mic sessions since last year. We are also working on an album, and The Mic Peeps allows us to engage with the audience we want to reach. We are also having our album launch here soon," mentioned Tahmid.

Although there are other places that host similar events, what sets The Mic Peeps apart from the rest is this environment which treads on being light-hearted while still having a very professional flow about it. This is possible because of the role Amin Hannan Chowdhury, Project Coordinator of the show, plays on and off stage.

Alongside keeping track of around 30 performers each night, he hosts and performs his own stand-up comedy set. The teamwork and mutual respect between the coordinators and performers is why The Mic Peeps have gained so much traction on social media as a great platform.

The setting of The Mic Peeps was favourable for the exclusive retail store as manager Habibur Rahman said, "The Banani branch was made while maintaining a cultural theme about it. Alongside open mics,

we also give space for various seminars and discussions."

As The Mic Peeps keep on serving as a core theme for the aesthetic appeal of Gourmet Bazar, more and more people keep on learning about the place and keep on associating it with a place of art and culture alongside a place to get healthy goods.

You can visit The Mic Peeps show every other week and learn more about them on their Facebook page where you can also find details about registering as a performer.

