



Hype Surrounds the Arctic Monkeys

The Arctic Monkeys Deal With the Hype That Followed Them to the U.S.

By **ARI BENDERSKY**

The Associated Press

- When you're a 20-year-old rock star whose album just became England's fastest-selling debut ever, the last thing you want to hear is that you're grounded.

"I feel like I should just flip out and do something crazy," Alex Turner, the scrappy-voiced Arctic Monkeys frontman, said by phone before a gig in Norwich, England. "It's boring when people tell me I'm really well grounded. I feel a little bit sensible I don't want to be that."

But chatting with Turner, you get the sense that he is, well, grounded. (The Arctic Monkeys have been referred to as the well-groomed Libertines, after all.) Despite being the hottest new act of the moment, with their album landing in U.S. stores this week, Turner and his mates Jamie Cook (guitar), Andy Nicholson (bass) and Matt Helders (drums) seem to have a grasp on what this newfound fame is bringing them.

And they aren't letting it get to them. At least so far.

"Hopefully the tabloid thing has peaked," Turner said from his home town of Sheffield. "It doesn't seem to be as big (to us) as what people might think it is. Maybe we are immune to all of it because of everything that's happened. Maybe in 10 years we'll realize what it is."

"It" is that their album, "What People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not," sold 360,000 copies its first week out. "It" is also their collection of hooky songs with searing guitars and snarky lyrics, like their infectious first single, "I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor." And "it" is that, amazingly, not one of the Arctic Monkeys had played an instrument before three years ago.

About a year after learning to play, Turner brought in songs he'd written. In 2004, they hit the road, passing out free CDs of their music. Word spread, especially over the Internet, and that's when the madness started.

Will the hype carry over to America? And will U.S. listeners connect with the band's Sheffield-centric lyrics?

"I like Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg, but I have no idea what it's like in Compton or Long Beach," Turner said. "You don't always have to be in the situation that you listen to in the song to like it or appreciate it."

While more than 550,000 copies have sold to date in England, only 100,000 units have shipped to U.S. retailers, according to Kris Gillespie, label director for Domino Recording Company's U.S. division.

"It'll never be the same as it is here," Turner said. "We'd been playing shows all over and it's been building up really slowly. We didn't even know we were doing it when we were doing it. It can never be the same, but we can have a good crack at it. We'll play the shows and if people like (them), great. If not ..."

At least one person one very important person likes what he's heard: Nic Harcourt, the influential music director of Los Angeles-based KCRW and host of the radio station's anchor show, "Morning Becomes Eclectic."

Harcourt first heard the band in early 2005 and began playing their music on air. When he hosted his show from England this January, many people asked whether the band could break in the States or if they were just a British phenomenon.

"I don't think it's hype. Hype to me is when someone is taking something and building it up," Harcourt said. "I think it's natural and organic and it's real. Do I think it will translate to America? Yes I do."

The band is about to embark on a sold-out, 11-date North American tour.

"We're getting a lot of (new) music together. It's all about our adventures at the moment," Turner said. "We don't see Sheffield much anymore it's a closed book. We're moving on and thinking about different things."

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