



## Song Analysis: *Arctic Monkeys - Brianstorm*

Brian

Top marks for not tryin'  
So kind of you to bless us with  
your effortless  
We're grateful and so strangely  
comforted

And I wonder are you puttin' us under  
Cause we can't take our eyes off the t-shirt and ties combination  
Well see you later, innovator

Some want to kiss some want to kick you  
There's not a net you couldn't slip through  
Or at least that's the impression I get cause you're smooth  
and you're wet  
And she's not aware yet but she's yours

She'll be sayin' use me  
Show me the jacuzzi  
I imagine that it's there on a plate  
Your rendezvous rate means that you'll never be frightened  
to make them wait for a while  
I doubt it's your style not to get what you set out to acquire  
The eyes are on fire  
You are the unforecasted storm

(Brian)  
Calm, collected, and commandin'  
(Top marks for not tryin')  
You made the other stories standin'  
With your renditions and jokes  
Bet there's hundreds of blokes that have wept cause  
you've stolen their  
...thunder  
Are you puttin' us under

Cause we can't take our eyes off the t-shirt and ties combination  
Well see you later, innovator



### Let's Go Indie!

The Arctic Monkeys have burst to fame. However, they did so in a not so ordinary way. Starting in 2002 in a suburb of Sheffield, the band shot to fame not by begging record company execs or by being spotted by a talent scout. No. Alex Turner (vocals & guitar), Jamie Cook (guitar), Matt Helders (drums & backing vocals) and Andy Nicholson (bass guitar, his place is now taken by Nick O'Malley) made their way to fame by the Internet. It was file sharing and devoted fans that kept spreading demo tapes that made them famous. They are the first of their kind.

Nonetheless, no one can help but to compare them and most people group the Arctic Monkeys with Indie bands like Franz Ferdinand, The Libertines and other guitar bands. With lyrics that lean on social realism and a stage performance that is all about having fun, they certainly distinguish themselves from most bands out there.

Their music has been met with criticism. Their EP release was described as money grabbing by some amongst others. Their hit singles *I Bet You Look Good on the Dance floor* and *When the Sun Goes Down* were number one in the United Kingdom, where their debut album was also the fastest selling debut album of all time. Their new album *Favourite Worst Nightmare* proved to be another smash hit: it climbed straight to the top spot of the British charts. It seems as if the Arctic Monkeys are only just getting started.

By Maaïke van de Sande

For more information, please visit:  
<http://www.myspace.com/arcticmonkeys>  
<http://www.arcticmonkeys.com/>

## An Interpretation of the Lyrics

This song is about an American fan named Brian, who, when the Arctic Monkeys were on tour in Japan, had made it into their dressing room. He was wearing a T-shirt on which a tie was printed and the band members found this particularly interesting.

They relate: "After about fifteen minutes, we wondered when his storm of talk was going to end, as he seemed only to listen to himself."

The lead singer Alex Turner, who writes most of the lyrics, explains that he could have never written a song like this in Sheffield, their home town, as they would probably have not had this experience there.

The overall tone of the song is quite sarcastic and the lyrics are rather straightforward. This is something the Arctic Monkeys are known for: almost all of their songs are short narratives. "We're grateful and so strangely comforted" obviously is about the weird feeling they experienced whilst listening to the ranting of this mad fan. "We'll see you later, innovator" could be a pun on "see you later, alligator", but here it probably also refers to Brian's 'innovative' T-shirt.

"Some want to kiss some want to kick you" can be read as 'to love him or to hate him'. "There's not a net you couldn't slip through" is about Brian's ability to get into the Arctic Monkeys dressing room.

But who then is the 'she' in this song? "And she's not aware yet but she's yours", "She'll be savin' use me". Perhaps an imaginary girlfriend Brian'll impress with his story of how he chatted with the band?

"You are the unforecasted storm" now makes sense as to how Turner said that he would never have had an experience like this back home. This particular event was unpredictable and most fanlike behaviour is unpredictable. You never know what wacko you might attract with your music.

"Are you puttin' us under" in the most literal and common translation means 'trying to bankrupt someone'. Here it could also mean 'to play a trick on someone', which complements the literal translation. Is Brian putting the Arctic Monkeys under by yapping for so long or does he want a genuine conversation? Is it mockery or sincere interest?

Due to the sarcastic tone of the song, a friend of mine thought it was 'about a manager who does sod all'. Nice one, he was talking loco and I like it!

By Judith Laanen

## Alex Turner's Accent

According to our popular, reliable and yet not academically responsible friend Wikipedia, the Arctic Monkeys' lead singer Alex Turner sings in a strong Yorkshire accent. As the band originates in Sheffield, which is in South Yorkshire, this makes sense. Indeed, his accent is so remarkable that it is a much debated subject on the web. You can find comments like "the horribly over-iterated Yorkshire accent", or praises: "such authenticity [i.e. a clear non-standard accent] is rare in British mainstream pop/rock. Already, Turner is wary of what his accent means to others. 'There's words that people not from Sheffield wouldn't be able to do,' he says, 'and that brings up different rhymes and stuff. But you don't wanna overdo it.'"

When listening to *Brianstorm*, it is not immediately clear what the fuzz is all about. For one thing, no obscure Northern slang is to be found in this song, unlike for instance in previous songs like *Mardy Bum*. The most exotic words are probably *jacuzzi* and *rendezvous*, but those aren't really Yorkshirean. (Did you know that a jacuzzi gets its name from the Jacuzzi company).

And even the pronunciation isn't what you might call extremely non-standard. Which does not mean, however, that there aren't things to say about the pronunciation. In many words ending in *ng*, there is only an [ŋ] (as the spelling also indicates). For one, this makes *trying* rhyme with *Brian*, but in other words ending in *ng*, Turner also only has an [ŋ]. Overall, Turner's *t*'s are very clear, but he also has some glottal stops instead of a [t], as in *puttin'* and *not a net*.

Some of Turner's vowels are clearly different from the RP vowels. The *strut*-vowel has a different quality, more back than in RP. You can hear this in words like *unforecasted*, *wonder*, *other* and *under*, which sounds more like [ɒ] or [ɔ] than [ʌ]. The vowel in *commanding* is not RP *bath*, but a shorter vowel, and probably also somewhat higher (in the direction of [e] or [æ]). The same goes for *standin'* (not surprising because they are supposed to rhyme).

By Gea Dreschler

P.S. No, the pronunciation *Brianstorm* has nothing to do with Turner's accent. Those are the actual lyrics. See the literature section to the left for a further explanation.



## The Etymology Section

Why is t-shirt actually called a t-shirt? According to the OED it's because it has "the shape of a letter T when spread out flat". That sounds very straightforward, and in fact any nitwit could have come up with that explanation. However, there are some words in English which require a deeper in-depth analysis and knowledge of faded glory and decayed culture.

Take for instance thunder, first recorded as *Thunor* in c725 in the *Corpus Glossary*, from *Thunor*; the Anglo-Saxon god of thunder, cf. Swedish *tonör* from *Thor's din* (*Thor* being the Old Norse counterpart of *Thunor*). The *d*, which is represented in the spelling and pronunciation in PDE, possibly results from a reinterpretation of a syllable initial *n* as an *-nd-* cluster. Such ruminations, however, fall outside the scope of this discussion.

Incidentally, the well-known statement 'to steal (someone's) thunder' is derived from the utterance of John Dennis (1657-1734), when he heard that the stage thunder produced by a method designed for his own play of *Appius & Virginia* was also being used for a performance of *Macbeth*. He was of course mad and exclaimed: "Damn them! ... they will not let my play run, but they steal my thunder!"

The etymology of *impression* – from the 13th century French *impression*, modeled on the Latin form *impressionem* – may not be all that interesting. However, surprisingly enough, the semantic meaning proves to be very interesting. In PDE,

*impression* 'simply' means "the action or process of impressing, in various senses", and related meanings. Yet, a few centuries ago it could denote "charge, onset, attack, assault" (c15th-18th C), "oppression" (15th C, from Old French *impression*) or "a stress, emphasis" (17th – 19th C) in elocution or metre.

There are also obsolete meanings that clearly show some kind of similarity with the modern connotation: in the 17th Century *impression* could mean both "mark, trace, indication" and "stamp; creation; hence, rank". Finally, from the 15th until the late 17th Century, it could have the specific meaning of "[a]n atmospheric influence, condition, or phenomenon". And the changing of the meaning has not stopped developing yet, since currently the connotation of "the process of printing" is in the process of becoming obsolete.

You can find more on these, and other, words in the oracle called the OED.

By Tessa Obbens

Many thanks to Beata Moskal, and my anonymous reviewers, n.d.

Görlach, M. (1997) *The Linguistic History of English Houndsmills, Basingstoke and London: Palgrave Macmillan.*

Harris, J. (1994). *English sound structure.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Oxford English Dictionary Online, 29 April 2007

## LEF Performance Coming Up

This year's play is *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, by Ann-Marie MacDonald, a modern Canadian playwright.

Constance Ledbelly is working on her PhD thesis, in which she claims that Shakespeare stole the story lines of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* from another author. Constance claims to have found this author's manuscript, but unfortunately it is in a code.

Magically, Constance ends up in the plays she is researching, and starts interfering like the fool she is—or is she the wise Fool? Her quest: to relocate the lost manuscript and to find its author. Is the Fool the author? What happens when somebody tells Othello not to listen to Iago? What if Tybalt had known that Romeo was his cousin by marriage?

As in a true Shakespearean comedy, love-at-first-sight and mistaken identities add to the fun.

Performances on 26, 28, 29 and 30 June in the Theater Ins Blau (Haagweg 4 theatre).

Directors: Martina Noteboom and Egbert Langras (*who also wrote this synopsis*)

Cast: Anthe de Witte, Peter van Dolen, Sander van der Winden, Jennifer Huizer, Mieke Kaehler, Eva Yap, Micah Westera, Jan Siglé, Kees Versseput, Inge 't Hart, Katje Perevedentseva and Lara Stanisic