

THE AUTOMATIC biography

The archetypal rock 'n' roll story goes a little something like this: four friends want to escape teenage boredom, so they form a band. They spend a few years learning how to play other peoples' songs, but after a while, they begin writing their own. The songs are so good that they decide this is what they want to do with their lives. They practice day in and day out, gig their asses off, write some killer songs and – just when real life seems ready to snatch away their dream – they get signed and craft the kind of record that would have reminded their teenage selves that there's more to life than mind-numbing routine.

“Our name is a commentary on the way people carry on as society expects them,” drummer Iwan Griffiths explains. “They trundle along on autopilot: Work, work, work, eat, sleep, work, play. Five days on and two days off; week after week. It's the opposite of what we are. We always knew that it could never be like that for us.”

Iwan, along with singer/bassist Rob Hawkins, guitarist Frost and keyboardist Pennie need not worry. Their high-octane debut, *Not Accepted Anywhere*, is chock full of the kind of juggernaut riffs and anthemic choruses that guarantee they'll be accepted everywhere for a long time to come. The Automatic have melded the rocket-fuelled energy of punk and the pogo-worthy rhythms of hardcore to über catchy melodies and threw in some electronic skullduggery for good measure. Their headspinning sound has already earned them legions of fans in the UK, where *Not Accepted Anywhere* has gone gold and their single “Monster” has become a massive hit, peaking at #4 on the singles chart. And to think that it all started out as such a classic story...

While growing up in Cardiff, Wales, Iwan and his childhood mates--Rob and James--always wanted to be in a band. The three of them started messing around with their instruments during the British equivalent of junior high together. The trio decided early on that learning Britpop covers of Radiohead, Blur and Manic Street Preachers was the best way to fill the dull hours between their more scholarly obligations. As they grew up, they started discovering music from beyond the English shores, adding LPs by At The Drive In, Nirvana and Green Day to their collections.

But all their messing around was just that, until school friend Alex Pennie saw them playing an all ages show with the now wince-worthy name “Teen Spirit.” Soon after the show, Pennie started rehearsing with the guys and, like the mythic rock 'n' roll tale goes, hit it off instantly. “It just felt like we felt the right mixture,” remembers James. “It finally felt like a real band.”

The first song they learned to play together was ATDI's "Arcarsenal," but soon thereafter, their own songs started coming to them. "The first one that really clicked was 'Monster,'" Rob recalls. "It just sounded so huge." It is indeed a, well, monster of a song, featuring the kind of chorus that demands to be yelled at the top of one's lungs. "There's not much to do in the town where we're from, but there's a lot of pubs, so people just drink" Rob tells us to explain the songs origins. "It's about when you get so drunk that you become someone you don't really like."

Just as things were gaining momentum though, the foursome had to make a big decision about their future. They were all set to go to different universities spread across Britain when they decided to take a gamble and a year off to devote to the band. It's a good thing they did, because a month before classes were to start, they got signed. So much for predictability...

Songs started pouring out at that point, including "On The Campaign Trail." All full of angular guitar chops and tight jerking rhythms, its title is a backhand reference to Hunter S. Thompson. "A politician goes out and seeks votes the same way we go out to sell records," Iwan explains. "Politicians have rallies, we have concerts." The bounce-worthy catharsis of "Seriously...I Hate You Guys" and "Team Drama" borrow inspiration from the annoying people in all our lives who feel like they have to force their issues and problems on you. "Those are songs that are dedicated to the people you just want to tell, 'I don't care, so stop bothering me,'" says Rob. "We're lucky, because it's sometimes easier to say something like that in a song."

"Raoul" takes its name from the sandwich seller across the street from the studio where *Not Accepted Anywhere* was created. "But he's just a metaphor for that escape from mundane activity," reveals Alex. "When you're working in an office, you need to feel like you have an escape, whether that's a cigarette break or a drink after work. Raoul is that thing you do to get away."

The title, *Not Accepted Anywhere*, is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the band's growing pains. As they were coming up in Cardiff, they played with everyone from indie to emo to metal bands, finding themselves on bills where they never felt that they truly fit in. "Our stuff has so many disparate influences," Iwan declares. "Even though a lot of heavy bands in Cardiff weren't doing it, we wanted to include an element of electronica in our music," Pennie adds. "We wanted to blend in those elements the same way Nine Inch Nails and The Cooper Temple Clause do." The Automatic may not have fit in anywhere, but only because they were blazing their own path.

So here ends the story thus far, though there's more to be told for sure. Classic stories like this one only come along once in a while and it's always interesting watching the twists and turns. In the meantime, *Not Accepted Anywhere* is a 12-

song snapshot of a band that just wants to make you step out of ordinary. All you have to do is turn up the volume.

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