

‘Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino’ brings Arctic Monkeys into new era

The Arctic Monkeys released their divisive sixth album “Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino” last Friday nearly five years after releasing “AM,” the album that brought them onto the U.S. music charts.

“Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino”’s lounge-y feel brings a new, fresh depth to the Arctic Monkeys’ style. While it is completely different from the guitar-heavy albums of the past, fans familiar with *The Last Shadow Puppets*, lead-singer Alex Turner’s band with English musician Miles Kane, should not be surprised by the focus on Turner’s vocals and more complex and mature sounds.

This new concept album takes place in a hotel piano bar on the moon and showcases the Arctic Monkeys’ — or Turner’s, as “Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino” was practically a solo album for the lead singer — creativity, growth and ability to create a complete piece of work instead of the more commercial alternative rock of the “AM” era.

The album as a whole is stellar, and the songs stand best together, which could be why the band chose not to release any as singles before the album as compared to the four released with “AM.”

The album starts off strong with “Star Treatment,” which is vastly different from the opening songs from the rest of the Arctic Monkeys’ discography. It was not the exciting start many would have expected, but it perfectly sets the mood and scene for the rest of the songs.

The album follows with “One Point Perspective” and “American Sports.” Even though “American Sports” is the shortest track on the record, it is by far the best of Turner’s vocals and the most important to the concept of the album, from the sci-fi sounds to introducing Turner’s social commentary.

“Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino,” the song the album takes its title from, is one of the most disappointing songs the first time listening, but it continues to get better every time only if looking past Turner’s lackluster vocals in the first half of the song.

The album peaks with the David Bowie-esque “Four Out of Five” — which is about a rooftop taqueria — perfectly blending the old and new Arctic Monkeys’ sounds. This song also has the first music video from the album, which seems to take influence from Stanley Kubrick and hints that it’s time to say goodbye to the old Arctic Monkeys.

One of the last tracks on the album, “She Looks Like Fun,” has less of a focus on piano, and it feels like Turner’s compromise with “Humbug” fans that would be turned off by the new direction of the band.

The Arctic Monkeys close the album with “The Ultracheese.” While it is a fine song and a nice resolve to the slightly darker tone of the album, it could have easily been left off the album and not missed. Many of the “Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino” songs feel nostalgic and like a nod to retrofuturism, and this song completely departs from the rest of the concept album with the exception of lyrics alluding to space.

While this album is not as upbeat as the first five, its tranquil tone makes it a nice change from many of the drum and guitar-lead songs that took the stage in all of their albums of the last 12 years. It may not be many fans’ favorite album, but it is still sprinkled with the same moodiness and Alex Turner wit. “Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino” is one of the most interesting and compelling Arctic Monkeys albums to listen to all the way through, and it is by far their best album this decade.

My rating: Four stars out of five