

music

# SXSW 2006

Clips and Quips  
Direct From Austin,  
TX and The World's  
Biggest Music Festival  
> by donny kutzbach

## Monkeys Business

The hands-down most-touted SXSW event of the week was the appearance of Sheffield, England's **Arctic Monkeys** at La Zona Rosa. Currently the biggest thing in England, the band proved the hype is also on Stateside a few weeks back when the band's debut album, *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* (Domino), shuffled almost forty thousand copies in the first week and landed on the Top

It's become like a rock and roll Mardi Gras—this South by Southwest (SXSW) Festival. The streets of Austin, Texas fill with a worldwide audience of music lovers, some there for business and others for pleasure, who gaze at scraps of papers, unfold guide booklets from their jeans and scroll through schedules downloaded to iPods. These festival goers huff up and down Texas' bustling capitol, moving from club to club, hoping to see something great or, in some cases, just hoping to get in.

Were it not enough to have over fourteen-hundred bands playing at the dozens of official venues for four solid nights, each day is crammed with "unofficial" day parties, from low-key backyard get-togethers to posh, corporate-sponsored events. Spread over four days, it's a smorgasbord of live music. Here's just a few glances:

### Take A Look At My Life

Legendary rocker **Neil Young** was SXSW's keynote speaker. At his packed panel,



**BRAKES**

photo by Bruce Weimer



**BAND OF HORSES**  
photo by Bruce Weimer

Young discussed his place in music history, his creative process, what inspires his work and his latest project, *Heart Of Gold*, a film with director Jonathan Demme who was also in tow for the panel. Young was spotted a day later at an afternoon party catching the Demme-recommended Chicago band **The Ms.**

### SXSWestern New York

Buffalo's dream-pop journeyers, **Odiorne**, made a statement with their showcase slot at Nuno's on Friday. Flatstock, SXSW's contingent of the world's greatest rock poster artists, was graced by Buffalo's **Hero Studios**, whose Johnny Cash print was ooh'd and ahh'd at by all passers-by. Queen City ex-pats highlighted at the fest include former Baseball Furies frontman Odie Wilson introducing the world to his new outfit **Live Fast Die**, a Stooges-y brew of in-the-red guitars and in-er-face punk

30. Of course, the group has yet to hit its biggest hurdle: can they overcome their unabashed Englishness (see: Small Faces, Kinks, Blur) to really break wide in America? Still, the band strutted around the SXSW stage with a cocksure swagger and presented a fantastic and fun mix of fast, angled and obscenely-clever pop fission.

### One Man's Trash...

**Carl Barat** was standing next to me at that feted Arctic Monkeys gig and I commented to him how much I enjoyed his set the night before. His response: "We were rubbish, but thanks!" The former Libertine and his new band were anything but. Barat led his new boys, **The Dirty Pretty Things**, through an explosive workout of carefully crafted but nonetheless charged punk before being hauled off by security for running over the fest's stringently set time limit. Very brash, very rock and roll.

### Hitting The Brakes

In a mere 30 minute set, Brighton band **Brakes** proved that punk is alive and well.

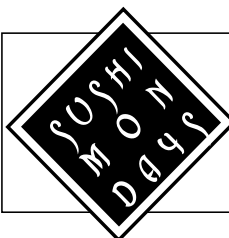
### Yeah, That's Great

Brooklyn's thoroughly hyped abstract pop artistes **Clap Your Hands and Say Yeah** wowed the audience at 6th Street club Eternal in understated elegance. The band's singer/songwriter Alec Ounsworth seems to magically bend notes with his wonderfully clipped and emotive yipping.

### We'll Meet Again Texas

**The New Pornographers** had recently been touring behind 2005's *Twin Cinema* without vocalist Neko Case. Crossing paths in Austin meant a powerhouse reunion for the red-haired wonders Case and A.C. Newman at Wednesday's Matorador showcase at Stubb's.

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**Early Night Final**

With a voice something like a cross between Scott Walker, Nick Lowe and Sinatra and the rare grace and panache of all three, *Artvoice* fave **Richard Hawley** ran through songs from his four albums, kicking off two different showcase slots on separate nights.

**Loudest Moz Bomb Causes Panic On The Streets Of Austin**

In his SXSW interview panel with journo David Fricke, former Smiths singer **Morrissey** shocked a packed house of adoring—and at least a few flower-bearing—worshippers with the revelation that his legendary late band was offered \$5 million to re-form and play the upcoming Coachella 2006 festival in Indio, CA which they turned down. I doubt Smiths members Mike Joyce or Andy Rourke were the ones turning up their noses at the potential payday.

**A Day That Will Live On In Indie-Infamy**

The twin powerhouses of American independent rock Sub Pop and Merge combined their powers for an unofficial day party at Poke E Joe's BBQ that was arguably the week's finest of its kind. Newcomers **Band of Horses** wowed with their expansive sound. **The Essex Green** and **Camera Obscura** each showcased different sides of the co-ed pop coin. **Spoon's Britt Daniel** played a four-song acoustic set to a crowd pleased to sit in the sandy yard. Finally, a man some call "The Captain" made the crowd say "Guided By Who?" **Robert Pollard**, complete with a muscular band that included power-pop guitar god **Tommy Keene**, with an inspired set primarily made up of tracks from his latest, *From A Compound Eye*. The club is indeed still open.

**Looking Forward in '06**

Some bands gave a peek at forthcoming albums that are bound to rate among the year's best. Watch out for **Glossary's** *For What I Don't Become*, Sam Roberts' journey into fuzzy psych called *Chemical City*; **Two Cow Garage's** third—tentatively titled *Control-Alt-Country-Delete*; a rock-perfect fourth record from **Grand Champeen** and debut from some of the former Slobberbone members' new group, **The Drams**. av

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