BACKSTAGE WITH KING NO-ONE

SARA FEIGIN / OCT 20, 2017 / MUSIC

It's a Friday night in London when I meet pop-rock band King No-One.

The Yorkshire foursome, Zach Lout, Joe Martin, James Basile and Alex Townsley, have known each other since their schooldays. But, if you had told all the guys at age 11, that at age 22 they'd be touring the country together making girls swoon, they probably would've given you two fingers and run off down the street. When guitarist Joe and singer Zach met, Joe hated Zach, in fact it seems like at one point or the other they all hated Zach. *"It was a love hate thing, I used to get a lot of shit from people, from pretty much all of my life,"* Zach explains to me *"a lot of them turned around and loved me, and that's what happened with this lot."*

"It was a thing where we all hated each other before we knew each other," James explains. The love hate relationship the band had before turning into best mates, could explain how they work so well together. There's the film troupe of hate turning into true love, and that troupe is more than proven with King No-One.

The guys have been playing music together since 2013, and they got their start busking around Leeds and Manchester. When that took off they began touring the country busking in all the major cities, and word of mouth grew from there. They're currently one of the most successful unsigned bands of their genre. Since playing in venues over past few years, they've very clearly been growing, as they've never played the same venue twice. Over the past year, they've headlined three separate venues in Manchester, all going up in capacity by 150 people per gig. They recently sold out Gorilla in Manchester which was a huge deal to them. This past summer they were the first unsigned band to ever play the Radio 1/NME stage at Reading and Leeds Festival which was a very career affirming moment for the lads.

With all the unsigned success they've been seeing and how successful other unsigned acts have been lately, such as Chance The Rapper; the question on my tongue is do they want to continue the DIY lifestyle, or is a record deal something they're chasing after. *"The goal isn't necessarily to get signed,"* Zach answers right *away "... we've taken things into our own hands and we're saying we don't need to get signed to make it work for us. What we've decided to do is take it to the next people and say 'look we're gonna make it work, whether someone big is going to invest any money in us or not, we're gonna make it work and we're gonna build this.' We pay for everything we're doing ourselves, which is a big reason why we still busk on the streets."* Zach explains.

Things are picking up for them, and they don't see why they'd need to give up the reins in order to continue to see success. A lot of bands start up nowadays with the idea that they need to get signed, and they pitch themselves to record labels before they even have a following. When things like that happen, ridiculous amounts of money are thrown at newer bands, but they never see results. Zach quips, *"We're just enjoying our current 'business plan' while we can see that it works. As of now there's no reason for us to jump into bed with a label straight away."*

Being part of a generation so obsessed with being noticed, King No-One aren't focusing on getting a major label backing them, releasing a full length album and touring the world straight away. Instead they're focusing on honing their craft, making their fans feel loved, and playing smaller shows to get the messages they want to spread out to the world. *"We never intended to use our platform to get a message out there, it always started with messages, it always started with expression and then the platform built,"* Zach says. While most artists nowadays just want to perform music, and once they realise their fans are buying the clothes they're wearing and getting their tweets tattooed on them, then they start to use their platform to spread good into the world.

King No-One were guys filled with ideas about politics, religion, feminism, you name it, these guys had views they wanted to share with the world. For example, Zach always wears an open shirt or a statement jacket without a shirt on under it and tape over his nipples. Zach does this as a sign of solidarity with women, *"if they can't I can't,"* he explains to me. "*The way I've grown up I've just been frustrated by everything that's not right, by that I mean something that I think is wrong. And one of the things is I've been brought up a pretty strong feminist. So when I'm on stage it feels good to cover my nipples, it feels wrong to show them. So that's why I started doing this, to bring light to the fact that I could show mine but it'd be wrong if a woman showed hers."*

It's important that the band stands so strongly for equality for women, as a large portion of their fans are female. "*Teenage girls is where it starts, they catch on first. I think teenage girls, we also do get a lot of boys, so more teenagers, they're looking for new artists and they're looking for somebody to be inspired by. To be honest with you, there's not much going around that's fresh that's inspiring. There's good music, don't get me wrong, but I feel like the reason our shows are grabbing so much is because we actually change people's lives a little bit when they come and see us. We're not just music, there's also that political statement there, and the attitude, and complete acceptance. It's something of a social moment when you come to our shows."* Says Zach.

King No-One have a powerful message, and I'm really keen to see how the fans react when they take the stage later tonight. And while their fans are interested in the messages they're spreading, they're also very interested in the boys in general. It takes us three tries to go out to the general area to do portraits as every time we step foot out of the green room, a different group of teens congregate out of thin air to try and get a selfie with the band. *"We always take photos with them after the show,"* James tells me *"we sell our own merch and we sign autographs and then we take photos with them outside of the venue after. We try not to be seen in our stage get up before we take the stage, but they're all so eager to meet us, which is so incredible, that we kind of have to hide until we take the stage."*

We finally get the bar room to ourselves, as their direct support have taken the stage and most of the people at the show are as into them as they are King No-One. We only have forty minutes left before the lads need to take the stage, and I can tell they're nervous for the live show. The venue has a strict curfew of 10pm, so they have to get on stage in record time in order for the set to go smoothly. Once we finish portraits, we rush back into the green room for the guys to finish getting stage ready, and before I know it, we're all in the venue and their set is starting.

The front row is filled with teenage girls and boys, brimming with excitement. The band has an electric energy, and Zach owns the stage like he was born to perform on it. He interacts with the crowd and with his fellow bandmates theatrically throughout their set. The highlight of the night though was before they play their most politically charged song, ‘Anti-Christ’, Zach gives a beautiful speech about equality and human rights. The crowd hoots and hollers and applauds for him after every word. When he finishes his speech, he stands on the stage like Jesus on the Crucifix as the crowd sings out their rendition of “Oh, Jeremy Corbyn!” It lasts about a minute and a half until the members of King No-One start to giggle from excitement. They then start the song and the crowd lose their mind. Their set is about 45 minutes long, and the whole time there’s not a single face in the crowd not smiling.

King No-One have music that can lift your spirits and change your views with just one spin of their EP.

If you know what's good for you, I'd follow the band on all forms of social media and add them to your Spotify Playlist, because if anybody's going to take over the world, it's going to be these guys.

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