British indie rock band Arctic Monkeys’ fifth album, “AM,” finds the band reconfiguring elements of their— and the rock genre’s— past. It is tempting to say there is nothing new. This band has staked its claim for a particular patch of pop music, and it seems to be its intention to stay within that place and explore and expose every bit of it—in contrast to the expansive approach of, say, John Mayer, whose “Paradise Valley” I reviewed a couple of weeks ago. Yet, this is the strength of Arctic Monkeys. Its music has depth of a tradition, and its changes are subtle. “AM” is just the same but brand new, which is great. The sound attracted me most to this album. Like the 2009 release “Humbug,” “AM” is full of rich low-end sound. Bassist Nick O’Malley and drummer Matt Helders underpin each track with thick, deep, thumping presence, set against prevalent falsetto backing vocals, a new feature that gives this album a club-like feel. This seems like the sort of album that should be played when it’s dark outside. However, it does not possess that creepy quality that characterized “Humbug” and, to a lesser extent, “Suck It and See.” Certainly there are plenty of chordal and structural surprises, but there are few off-kilter, spidery chromatic lines. In that sense, it sounds more like the band’s first two LPs. As with “Suck It and See,” Arctic Monkeys is more consciously classic in “AM.” A lover is described as having a “’70s face.” Mention is made of the Rolling Stones’ psychedelic song “2000 Light Years from Home” and “Mad Sounds” is a kissing cousin to “You Can’t Always Get What You Want.” The band channels Led Zeppelin in “One for the Road” and the Beatles in the sluggish ballad “No. 1 Party Anthem.” With its electronic drums and darting bass line, “Fireside” has an ’80s feel. There is no guitar sound here without a precedent. Most often, guitarists Alex Turner and Jamie Cook employ their usual brand of fuzzy, mid-range playing. There is a guitar motif, this moody line that shows up more than a few times in these songs. The motif compliments much of Turner’s lyrical content, which has to do with modern romantic struggles. As always, Turner displays the shades of these struggles, from regret in “Knee Socks,” to condescension in “Snap Out of It,” to likely comic obsession in “I Wanna Be Yours.” Musically and lyrically, Arctic Monkeys dig deeper into their territory. As far as I’m concerned, they can stay as long as they want.

By Emily Wichmer

NOTEBOOK COLLAGE

What you’ll need:
- 5-subject spiral-bound notebook
- Mod Podge ($4.50 from Wal-Mart)
- Scrapbook paper or pages from your favorite magazine
- Glue stick ($0.50 from Wal-Mart)

Cut equal-sized triangles out of the scrapbook paper or magazine pages and arrange them in a pattern that covers the entire cover of the notebook.

Using the glue stick, paste the triangles onto the cover of your notebook. Let dry.

Apply one thin coat of Mod Podge over the cover, making sure to coat the paper triangles.

Next week’s Crafty Dog: Striped Tee

TRUMAN THREADS

By Maddy Eiberger

Freshman

Fashion tip: “Wear clothes you like, but are also comfortable.”

bright, striped top

skinny jeans

contrasting TOMS

Photo by Calie Holden

How’s your college in the big city?

Oh, it’s fantastic!

THE OTHER END

Nell I’m at a liberal arts school, so it’s basically like high school—except the people I live with aren’t biologically inclined to love me.

What will you need?
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- Glue stick ($0.50 from Wal-Mart)