

# Something for the Weekend



BY CHRIS SWEENEY

## People are seeing my music as fresh

**MYSTERIOUS new sensation ALA.NI knows the music business is no joke.**

She was pals with Amy Winehouse, *inset*, and tried to help her old schoolmate with her tragic struggles.

ALA.NI is now solo — after being a backing singer for Damon Albarn, Mary J Blige and opera king Andrea Bocelli.

She said: "It's scary. I went to school with Amy and you get to see how that happens. If you don't have things set up around you, it can be very self-destructive."

"I was exposed to rock 'n roll with Damon and Blur, Andrea Bocelli had a big choir and then with Mary J Blige — I learned an immense amount. All that experience has helped me to be able to do what I do now."

Opening up about Amy's tragic death in 2011, she added: "I knew her at school, we had mutual friends. I saw her once or twice at studios after that."

"I remember trying to contact her on Facebook, we messaged back and forth."

"I just got scared for her, I could see it. A friend of mine went out with her and I used to say to him, 'How do we get through? Can't you talk to her?'"

"But you just can't. They are protected as people are making money out of someone's misery and if you're not solid enough to be able to detach yourself, then it's destructive."

She was living what she was singing about."

Despite having lots of big name connections, ALA.NI has kept a low profile. She's no fan of social media or personal details.

The singer said: "It's not necessarily intentionally done that I want to be mysterious. I'm not great with social media."

"I'm a keen photographer but I don't like to use digital, I use film."

"Even taking a picture, I ponder it, I consider it, as I've only got 35 attempts."

"I prefer a slower pace in my world to appreciate things. I've got to be myself and think of it as quality, not quantity."

"I could easily spend the day posting or I could spend it writing a good song. That's the kind of artist I am. I direct all my own videos, so it's intimate and personal — they don't need to know what I ate for breakfast."

"That's a stronger message to me."

What isn't a secret is the big reaction to her current single *Cherry Blossom*. It's a slow, jazz number. And it's part of her plan which will see four EPs released this year, one in each season.

The Londoner explained: "You don't want to get caught up in the reaction but it's quite nice to see I've done something and people are getting it."

"People are seeing it as something fresh and that's nice. I wrote one of the first

songs four years ago. It's taken me a while to grow into it."

"From the beginning, I was very conscious I didn't want it sound like a pastiche."

"I went to stage school and all that, so I had to be careful — it was a thin line."

"The best way to do that was to keep it simple."

"With the whole thing, I was trying to write about a love affair and then it made sense to put it in the context of a year and the seasons."

"I had 12 songs and they worked splitting them up."

"If you get all the EPs together, you could listen to them and it makes sense."

"But individually the songs stand on their own."

ALA.NI, below, also revealed she's got Scots roots.

And even though she's appeared up here on stage with her famous mates tomorrow night will be her first solo show, at Glasgow's Broadcast.

She explained: "My surname is Hutchinson. It's on my grandmother's side. Two brothers from the Isle of Skye travelled out to Grenada and made my family I guess."

"So I've got my roots in Scotland."

"I love that it's all connected."

"I'm black but I've got Scottish in me."

"I've spent quite a bit of time in Glasgow, it's a buzzing city."

"And I'll need to connect some dots and maybe get up to Skye to show them my music some time too."

● Listen to *Cherry Blossom* at: [www.ala.ni](http://www.ala.ni)



## NEW MUSIC

By Jim Gellatly

### SONIC TEMPLARS

**WHO:** Stewart Bryden (vocals/guitar), Stephen Crawford (guitar/vocals), Fraser Malcolm (bass/vocals), Scott Tonner (drums).

**WHERE:** Irvine/Glasgow.

**FOR FANS OF:** Queens Of The Stone Age, Muse, You Me At Six.

**JIM SAYS:** Maybe I'm just being lazy, but it's tricky not to reference Biffy Clyro when talking about any rock band from Ayrshire.

I suppose it's the curse of having one of the biggest bands around hailing from the same part of the country. Sonic Templars have managed to dilute the Biffy factor by gigging with artists as varied as The View, Alabama 3, Ocean Colour Scene's Steve Cradock and Mark Morriss from The Bluetones.

There's no denying Sonic Templars are very much a rock band though. By default they have more in common with Biffy than these acts.

Stewart told me: "I think any rock-based acts will always at first be likened to them as they are arguably the biggest alternative rock band to come out of Ayrshire."

"Simon Neil has a unique vocal style though, so I don't think anyone is ever going to sound quite like them."

A lot do try though. There are plenty of Biffy clones out there, but Sonic Templars head out under their own steam. Stewart and Scott initially got together in 2011 after playing in other bands including The Contra Band and The Usual.

Stewart said: "We then brought



in Fraser after his band The Tenants split up. I had known Stephen from when he played in Citizen but he had been out of the game for a while. I was aware of his abilities so drafted him in to complete the current line-up.

"Everything gelled, and we found the right chemistry to take us forward."

So far the band have issued three EPs. Their most recent, *Weapons of Mass Distrust*, came out at the end of last year. Mixing up big riffs with impressive harmonies, they also have a more sensitive side, as demonstrated on EP stand-out track *King Of The Ocean*. It still rocks, but it's maybe no coincidence that they cite Jeff Buckley as an influence.

Stewart explained: "We like to push ourselves musically and take influences from a wide variety of genres we listen to."

Another of the dominant tracks on the EP, *Trigger*, is set to be unleashed as a single in its own right next month.

Stewart said: "It's driven by a grinding bassline and its centre-piece is the twin harmonies of myself and Stephen. It highlights the more melodic side of the band."

Sonic Templars launch *Trigger* with a gig at the Hard Rock Café in Glasgow on March 13 with support from Whispery Club, Static Rock and Thula Borah.

More: [www.facebook.com/sonictemplars](http://www.facebook.com/sonictemplars)

● Jim presents *Drivetime* on XFM Scotland, Monday to Friday 4-7pm.

[www.xfm.co.uk](http://www.xfm.co.uk)  
[www.jimgellatly.com](http://www.jimgellatly.com)

## ONE2HEAR



**THERE'S** more to Dorset than hit TV series *Broadchurch*. Crooner Roo Panes is flying the flag with pride.

His new single *Home From Home* — released on March 16 — shows off his impressive set of pipes. It's a powerful track and one to puff your chest out to.

You can check it out now at: [www.facebook.com/roopanes](http://www.facebook.com/roopanes)

## ONE2SEE



**ROCKERS** Young Guns have plenty of bullets to fire.

They're fresh off the Kerrang tour — and are going out again on a really big UK run across April and May.

They hit both Edinburgh and Glasgow. Get all the info at: [www.weareyoungguns.com](http://www.weareyoungguns.com)