



DANDIEGO RECORD OF THE MONTH



January 2026

Gregorian Greeters and Resilient Resolutioners,

Here we are again – another year at the helm. This time last year I spoke highly of my personal efforts and progress - claiming clarity, acceptance, and inner peace. I had plans of *upgrading*, and truly believed them. I had high expectations, but was humbled pretty quickly and extensively. And repetitively. Over and over again. A lot of times. They say if you want to make God laugh – tell him your plans. But hey, they can't all be winners! Hard to appreciate the sunshine without the frigid imprisoning arctic tundra and all that jazz. While last January may have been one of my better album write ups, I'm choosing not to set any expectations for this calendar year. I'm not really sure where life is taking me, but I'm along for the ride whether I like it or not. Someone once told me that being happy is as simple as choosing to be so. The world has told me otherwise. There's so much wrong with it, you can't just simply overlook it to find the positives. Sure, the negative and positives both exist, and if you look hard enough for either – you'll find them. So rather than throw that turn of phrase directly out the window – I'll offer a rewording.

Be the change you want to see in the world.

It's not about choosing happiness over something. It's not about ignoring the realities of a cold world. It's about standing for something. It's about rising above, *because* of what's below. It's about working through adversity, to find what you truly value, what *you* find important. What you will quite literally risk it all for. While last year didn't shake out the way I wanted it to in many ways, I stood for a cause I felt genuine. I battled, I endured, I suffered for the things I believe in. These very modules have shaped the person I am writing this celestial greeting right now. It's hard to be proud of yourself when you aren't tangibly holding the things you want. But there is honor in the work. Check back next January to see if I'm still singing the same tune (this band does).

Ok, now that that's behind us – this one should be pretty fun. To start off 2026, we are exploring **alt-J's *This Is All Yours***. It always seems when I decide which band or artist I want to cover, many of the songs I'd like to share are spread across several different albums. As always, I weighed several options, but ultimately settled on the middle child album. alt-J has in my opinion, three discography-defining albums: an *Awesome Wave*, *This Is All Yours*, and *RELAXER*. They're still making new music, but the albums don't really have that album feel anymore – as is a general trend across music these days. They do get remixed a lot – understandably so. They've got a lot of well known singles throughout, such as *An Awesome Wave's* (2012) *Tessellate*, *Matilda*, and *Taro* *having second thoughts about my choice right now*, as well as *RELAXER's* (2017) *In Cold Blood*, and *Adeline*. So I would strongly recommend the reader indulge in these as well. But I've decided *This Is All Yours* will take my cake and eat it too.

My top tracks on this album are *Every Other Freckle*, *Bloodflood Pt. II*, and the track that actually introduced me to the band in the first place – *Hunger of the Pine*. They've definitely got a pretty unique, unmimicable sound. They're like if The Chieftains and Talking Heads had a child



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together but then fell out of love but decided to stay together for the child and did a good job in doing so. I don't find much pain in their lyrics. Not much love either. But they know how to feel. It seems like their perfectly content exploring what the world has to offer, no matter how it turns out for them. Which is something I admire.

While the lead's distinguishable voice sounds monotone at times, I certainly wouldn't actually call it that. The harmony he delicately places in our ears rings full. There's essence of chant, spirituality, and wholeness that they effortlessly string together, one after another. The album flows well, one track to the next – though doesn't need to be played in succession to be enjoyed. The album opens with quite a colorful Intro – greeting the listener with a futuristic and liberating feel right off the bat. It flows from this intro track through *Arriving in Nara*, and into *Nara*. *Nara* is a tribute to the wild deer of Japan, who roam freely throughout the city, and are often revered as sacred messengers of Sinto gods. I'm not sure the band sees themselves as sacred messengers from the gods to our ears, but this does seem to support several recurring themes of freedom, release from expectation, and creative exploration (yeah, I was going somewhere with all that *jazz*).

I find the album, and the band in general, incredibly peaceful, empowering, and engaging – an unlikely combo like Crazy Eye's peanut butter and gumballs. For such a fan of Mr. Deeds, I've never actually tried a PB&GB slice, but the entire calendar year is still ahead... I hope the listener indulges in the layers of pop-infused rock gospel this band has to offer, can release themselves from expectations, and find solace in whichever form of exploration best suits them this new year. Peace be, keep it surreal, and most importantly

Don't Trip,

∞ *Dan Diego*

You all know I love my Tiny Desk sets – and alt-J has actually been featured *twice*.

Hit the link(s) to see

Set 1(2013): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKdp5uI8AC0>

Set 2(2018): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zHdLF3-coA&list=RD8zHdLF3-coA&start_radio=1



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Past ROTMs:

November 2023: Desire, I Want to Turn Into You – Caroline Polachek

December 2023: Depression Cherry – Beach House

January 2024: MTV Unplugged Live from New York – Nirvana

February 2024: Actual Life 2 – Fred Again..

March 2024: Music from the LOTR Trilogy – The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra

April 2024: Greatest Hits: Volume 1 – James Taylor

May 2024: Hybrid Theory – Linkin Park

June 2024: Ursa Major – Third Eye Blind

July 2024: Live 1997 – Daft Punk

August 2024: White Ladder, Live in Austin – David Gray

September 2024: Tidal – Fiona Apple

October 2024: Kid A – Radiohead

November 2024: Alive 2007 – Daft Punk

December 2024: Ten – Pearl Jam

January 2025: Balloonerism – Mac Miller

February 2025: Ceremonials – Florence + The Machine

March 2025: Narrow Stairs – Death Cab for Cutie

April 2025: Pang – Caroline Polachek

May 2025: 4:44 – Jay-Z

June 2025: Third Eye Blind – Third Eye Blind

July 2025: Live from Joshua Tree – Rufus Du Sol

August 2025: Magic – Bruce Springsteen



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September 2025: Push the Button – The Chemical Brothers

October 2025: Mac Miller – NPR Tiny Desk

November 2025: LEAVE OF ABSENCE

December 2025: Your Top Songs 2025 – DanDieg0

January 2026: This Is All Yours – alt-J