

1883

magazine



A T E E Z

ARTIST



SAN

PHOTOGRAPHY
BOOBAGRAPHY
STYLING
JU HYUN




MINGI

ATEEZ ARE A
FORCE TO BE
RECKONED WITH.
FRESH FROM THE
RELEASE OF THEIR
SECOND STUDIO
ALBUM *THE
WORLD EP.FIN :
WILL*, THE BAND
SPEAK TO 1883
ABOUT CREATIVE
REINVENTION, THE
SUPPORT OF FANS
WORLDWIDE, AND
THEIR JOURNEY TO
ACHIEVE
GREATNESS.

It's hard to fathom the fact that ATEEZ is still a relatively new band. Remarkably, members H O N G J O O N G , SEONGHWA, YUNHO, YEOSANG, SAN, MINGI, WOORYOUNG and JONGHO range between the ages of 23 and 25. In the mere five years since their inception, they already possess a portfolio of achievements that would be deemed respectable enough for artists twenty years their senior. ATEEZ cracked the Billboard 200 Chart top 10 on their previous three releases: No. 3 with *THE WORLD EP.1 : MOVEMENT*, No. 7 with the *EP SPIN OFF : FROM THE WITNESS* and No. 2 with *THE WORLD EP.2 : OUTLAW*.

But it was their latest album, *THE WORLD EP.FIN : WILL*, led by dancehall and afrobeat-inspired 'Crazy Form' (미친 폼), that finally granted them their first No. 1. on its December release. It marked only the fifth time a male Korean group has achieved the spot. To round things off, it's recently been announced that they'll perform at the apex of this year's Coachella bill.



The unprecedented climb of the Korean 8-piece is more than warranted, though. Backed by KQ Entertainment, ATEEZ (short for A TEENager Z) hit the ground running in 2018 with the release of their first EP, *TREASURE EP.1 : All To Zero*, accompanied by their sold-out introductory 'The Expedition' world tour just four months after they debuted. Almost immediately, an expansive global fan base followed right behind them. One of the most important things ATEEZ wants you to know about them is that their relationship with those fans is at the core of everything they do. Fulfilling enjoyment for ATINY, the moniker given to the group's loyal following, is considered in every decision the band makes, from their intricate ideation of each album to the development of their jaw-dropping on-stage theatrics.

ATEEZ must, however, be given the most credit for their part in this unprecedented success. Having worked tirelessly (and most importantly, innovatively) to cement their standing as one of the leading groups to emerge from South Korea in recent years, there is a certain fearlessness that they possess in their artistry. The global music industry can be, at times, formulaic; guilty of nurturing repetitive sounds or creatives in its endless quest for virality. The output of ATEEZ, though, does anything but. Fed by an elaborate overarching concept where the eight members exist as pirates in search of their treasure (leader HONGJOONG is officially known as Captain), they've created an expansive universe that explores themes of fixation, discovery, being outcasts, ambiguous morality, obsession: all themes that transcend the barriers of language to resonate with people worldwide.

ATEEZ soars where many have failed: they take a seemingly simple bedtime story concept and turn it into an immersive, adult musical experience. The visual aesthetic of the band makes it even easier to get swept up in: high-end, runway looks capture the spirit of their fictional world without ever seeming cheap or undercooked. The chameleonic charm of the members allows them to adorn any get-up with legitimacy: on their previous EP, *BOUNCY (K-HOT CHILLI PEPPERS)* even took them to the Wild West, fitted out in cowboy hats and dressed down as beaten-up boxers. Such versatility has even attracted the attention of prestigious fashion houses, prompting an invitation to attend Paris Fashion Week last year at the pleasure of Olivier Rousteing's BALMAIN. The fashion world would be missing a trick if more offers like these don't follow.



SEONGHWA



WOORYOUNG



Another of ATEEZ's strengths, if not their biggest, is their live show. I first saw ATEEZ in Seoul back in 2022 at their 'The Fellowship: Break The Wall' tour and was taken aback at the magnitude of their production then. At the same venue this weekend for the first in the 'Towards the Light: Will to Power' world series, that production had grown tenfold. What the band offers now is more like a thespian show: one where there is so much to drink, so much to indulge in, you almost don't know where to look. Live guitar solos, a 16-meter tower built to the roof, and plot spin-offs that feel like mini episodes allow solo and unit tracks to shine. The same venue, — just over a year apart — suddenly felt too small for them; so it is only fitting they make a stage debut as big as Coachella this year. The live experience ATEEZ has now cultivated is too large for the constraints of an indoor arena.

The band has journeyed far, but as far as the members are concerned, they're just getting started. In their own words, there are no limits to the goals they have set themselves. Flanked by an ever-growing fan base determined to propel them even higher, 2024 is surely set to be the year of the pirate.

Could you talk us through the concept of *THE WORLD EP.FIN : WILL*? How does it tie into the narrative of your previous releases like *THE WORLD EP.2 : OUTLAW* and the *FEVER EP*s? **SEONGHWA:** Actually, as ATEEZ, we've connected everything through one overarching storyline since our debut. The *TREASURE* series and *THE WORLD* series have studio albums released in each of them with storylines that take place in dimension Z. The *FEVER* series though, acts as the prequel that carries us from dimension A to dimension Z. This is actually why the *FEVER* series doesn't include a studio album.

How did you come to decide on experimenting with dancehall and Afrobeat sounds on the album's lead track, 'Crazy Form'? It's quite different from the sounds you've experimented with before. **HONGJOONG:** ATEEZ has always taken on new challenges in terms of sounds and genres throughout the various albums we've released until now. Honestly, I think we've enjoyed challenging ourselves to try new things because there's no need to confine ourselves to a specific genre if the music can highlight and bring together the strengths of the individual members. While we've had songs where we focused on a more cinematic and dramatic style to follow a storyline, we also understand the joy of the entertainment that can be found in the music itself. This track brings this to the forefront, even bolder in sound and creative in the blending of each member's unique abilities. I'm excited for us to be able to continue to showcase ATEEZ's distinct identity within a framework we create for ourselves through various musical challenges and performances.

THE WORLD EP.FIN : WILL features three new unit tracks — could the members involved in each talk us through the creative process of working in units, rather than as a group of eight? How did you decide on these tracks and go about bringing them to life? **EDEN** (Main Producer of EDENARY, the music production team behind ATEEZ): It's important to take note of the ongoing

narrative that ATEEZ has built since their debut when considering the creative process behind the albums. The tracks in this latest album, up until the interlude song 'Crescent Part 2' were developed with dimension Z from the storyline as the background. In fact, 'Crescent Part 2' takes the story from dimension Z back to dimension A. From '꿈날 (Dreamy Day)' on, all the songs take place in dimension A. The next series of new albums that come after this are set to follow the story that unfolds in dimension A. The unit and solo tracks in this album act almost as a prequel to that new series to come,

allowing the eight members to showcase themselves as individuals with their own respective narratives within their close family-like bond as friends. On the whole, the unit tracks were an opportunity for the members to work together on a closer level in line with the respect they hold for each other. For JONGHO though, we decided on a solo song for the album because it's a great opportunity for him to showcase his talent in pulling through with a full track as a main vocalist on his own.



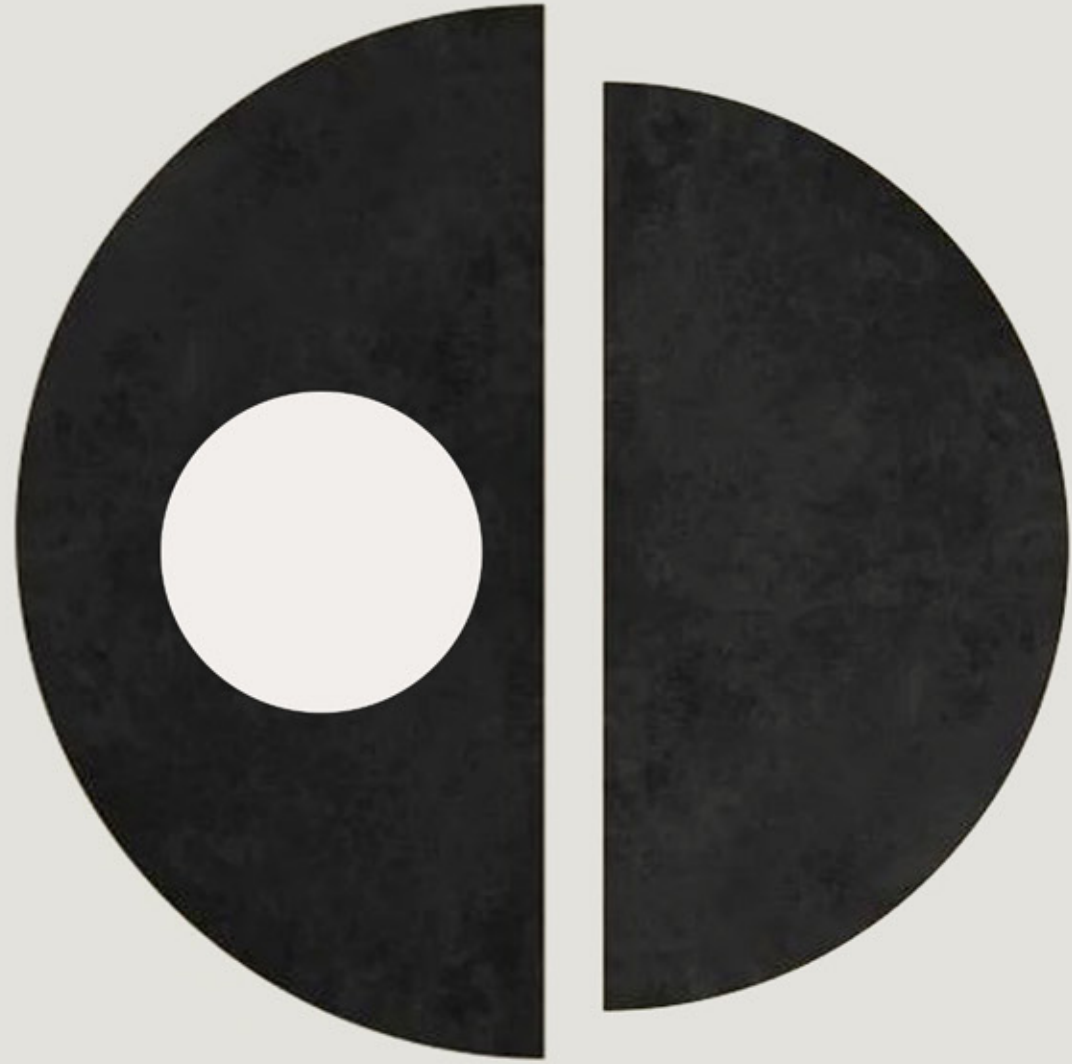
YUNHO



YEOSANG

UNIT 'MATZ'
(HONGJOONG
+ SEONGHWA) HONGJOONG: Relatively speaking, ATEEZ as a group hasn't released a unit or solo track for a very long time, so the decision to do so came along naturally. For this second studio album, we wanted to showcase each of the members' individual voices more as well as find growth in new projects together. The unit track 'MATZ', is a song that I started to work on after a long conversation with SEONGHWA. It was such a joy to work on this track because it was interesting seeing SEONGHWA's growth both in terms of his musicality and his ability to push his personal limits by his side. In terms of bringing this unit song to life, I think it had the most track and topline revisions among the songs I've worked on recently. In the later half of the song after the narration part, there's a melody in the driving part of the composition that I worked on day and night for about a week revising. On the other hand, the pre-chorus part that goes like 'Oh my, they're...' went into the final version of the track exactly as it was from when I first organized it with the same topline guide.

SEONGHWA: We wanted to experiment with something new and because this is an album that fans have long waited for, it seemed only natural that we go forth with unit and solo tracks. I was absolutely ecstatic when it was first decided that I would do the track with HONGJOONG. I've wanted to work with HONGJOONG on a track like this for a while, so I'm happy we got the opportunity to do so. As we were recording the track, I once again got to see HONGJOONG and his amazing work as a producer. He really knows the members well and has a high level of understanding for each of us. There were strengths that I didn't even know I had that I was able to realize while working on this track. I have an even stronger attachment to the song because of that, and it was an absolute honor to work on it with him. When we were in the recording studio, there were points when I felt like I had done my best and could do no better, but HONGJOONG's directing helped push me to overcome what I had set for myself as the limits to my abilities, resulting in a final product that's better than anything I could have ever imagined. Not to mention, this was also my first time writing lyrics, and working on it made me realize just how difficult a job that is. There's a lot of thought and effort that goes into it, and while I have written lines on the more emotional side, writing something so witty and unique like this for a track on the album was a complete first for me. It was thrilling being able to work on so many aspects of the track and though it was a bit awkward for me at first with so many new challenges, the song is absolutely wonderful thanks to HONGJOONG's direction and the EDENARY team's help.



UNIT 'Youth' (YUNHO + MINGI)

YUNHO: As friends who are as close as family, it was interesting to work together on a track together while sharing our opinions with just each other rather than in a group setting. There's actually a part in the track after the bridge where I sing along with MINGI that goes something like 'all alone, the breeze of my twenties' and though the original guide track was set for that part to be MINGI's, I was curious about how it would sound with both our voices so I tossed the idea forward and it came out great, so we decided to keep it with both of our vocals. I was so happy working on this project, and it was all the more meaningful to me to have worked on a unit track with my longest friend.

MINGI: Well when I was writing our unit track 'Youth', I worked on expressing the pains and emotions that we're bound to feel in our adolescence as time passes. It's a track that I was set on doing with

YUNHO, so I felt so surprised and happy when he listened to the guide track and said he liked it right away. I wanted to create the bridge part of the song in a way that I thought would really showcase and let YUNHO's vocals shine, but then he threw us in for a loop and surprised us when he sang it in a completely new and different way from the original guide track that we went back in with my songwriting team to re-record that part of the song. 'Youth' is a song that is expressed well with YUNHO's vocals.

UNIT 'It's You' (YEOSANG + SAN + WOOYOUNG)

YEOSANG: I know a lot of fans look forward to unit performances and music, so it wasn't hard to come to this decision. Our unit track 'It's You' features three of our members, including myself, meaning there's more lines and parts that are split among a smaller number of members. Since it's a lot more than what would be set in a group track,

and though it's something I always do, I was particularly mindful and focused during the recording of this track. I'm so happy because it was an absolute blast to record and I feel like the fans will enjoy watching the performances later.

SAN: Though we're always working together as a larger group of eight, it was so interesting to see how the dynamics change in a smaller setting. We're very close, so it wasn't hard to see that this was going to be a fun project, but we got along so well that I was honestly surprised. Not to mention the fact that we're all the same age and sharing our thoughts and opinions came naturally. Every part of the process in working on this track together went very smoothly.

WOOYOUNG: It was actually my first time writing lyrics, and though it was difficult, I found it to be such an interesting and fun experience. We've always worked as eight, so the weight of working as only three



JONGHO



HONGJOONG

was a lot of pressure, but we got along very well, so this didn't become a problem at all. In fact, I think the song came out well because there was an ease in helping each other out throughout the process since we're all close.

SOLO 'Everything'
(JONGHO)

JONGHO: Originally, I was set to partake in a unit track as well, but when the suggestion to do a solo track was brought forth, it came upon me as an opportunity that I was really looking forward to despite the weight of the pressure tied to it. To be honest, that weight of the pressure behind it is what may have helped push me to

really prepare for this project and release a good song. It was also my first time writing lyrics for a song, so I can recall all the moments working on it — alone by the Han River on a rainy day, lying down at home, and sitting in front of a computer.

You've said that in 2024, you plan to target even bigger accomplishments. Of your achievements in the last year, what would you say has been the most important, or stands out the most for you?

SAN: Our goals may always seem simple in striving for more awards and performing on even more stages every year, but they're all in earnest

yearning to stand before our biggest supporters, our ATINY. We had the chance to meet so many fans on different stages around the world and see our music reach even more people. The past year with them has been amazing, and I hope that in 2024, we can reach new heights, so that when people ask, "Who is the coolest artist of the year?" our name will be the first to come up, making our ATINY proud.

You've had an incredible five years already since your debut - you have cracked charts across the world and toured in each continent. What else do you want to achieve next year?



WOOYOUNG: I hope we can perform on bigger stages in front of even more people. We're always striving to improve ourselves with every project and every year that passes, so I'd like for this new year to be one in which I can grow further than I did in 2023. A year in which we can prove ourselves!

Speaking of those five years, I'm interested in what you think has been the most valuable lesson you learned since your debut? Maybe you could share some advice for your fans who also have a dream they want to pursue.

YEOSANG: Honestly, if you're very serious about

your dream and you work hard for it, know that you can do absolutely anything. I'm always rooting for you!

You have achieved so much together as a group, but I wonder if the members have any individual goals they'd like to achieve over the next few years? Perhaps not even related to music.

YUNHO: I honestly want to continue to make wonderful happy memories with our ATINY from all over the world. My simple wish is for us to be together for a very long time.
SEONGHWA: Although we've achieved a lot, I hope we continue to rise and take on new challenges without

fear, both musically and performance-wise. In terms of a personal goal though, I'd really love to go to a fashion show as well as do more magazine photo shoots.

WOOYOUNG: There's a lot of things I'd like to achieve in the next few years, so I'll sum it up by saying that I want to grow even more than I did in 2023 or any of the previous years in all aspects. This includes me as an artist and everything involved in being an artist, from music, to performances, fashion, and more.

You recently finished up on your huge 'The Fellowship: Break The Wall' world tour – with over one year on the road together. This must have been difficult at times. How did you overcome any difficulties during this period?

MINGI: It's so amazing and we're so happy that we get to travel and perform in so many countries before our fans from all over the world, experiencing various cultures and seeing the different cities. The world tours are really memorable for us, but it wouldn't be the complete truth to say that it's always fun without any difficulties along the way. Staying for long periods of time in hotel rooms wasn't the most comfortable, but such moments are overshadowed by our time spent enjoying and experiencing the countries or exercising during our free time.

What would you say is something each of you has learned about yourselves, or each other, during the making of this record and throughout the tour?

JONGHO: There's a sense of leisure that I'm able to afford in my work now, but I wouldn't say it's something that became apparent from just our most recent album or tour. It's a culmination of all the albums we've worked on and the tours we've had. I think it's difficult to have the ability to be relaxed on

stage or afford the space in your mindset in the recording studio to bring out the best of your abilities if you don't have much experience or you lack confidence. I've gained so much experience with each project we've done, that this sense of leisure has only grown throughout the years, allowing me to put forth my best each time.

Previously, ATEEZ was the only group with KQ Entertainment. But now, you have xikers who recently debuted at the label. It must be nice to have a new group in the KQ family. Can you speak a little about what it's like now you have other artists looking up to you?

SAN: We're so thankful and happy to know that many people are watching over our juniors, just as they have with us. While there are only so many words of thanks that we can say, we look forward to showing everyone better things in the future from both of our groups!

What does the next musical chapter look like for ATEEZ? Are there any particular new sounds or styles you would like to try?

MINGI: Overall, next year, we'll be working on music a lot so that we can show everyone numerous new styles. In particular, though, I actually want to try working with sounds in the emo rock or emo hip-hop genre when writing music.

Finally, what do you hope to have achieved this time in 5 years as a band?

YEOSANG: As a band, there's no limit to the amount of effort we'll invest in order to achieve the goals that we've set for ourselves. We've come so far, supported by our fans the whole way, and when we consider the next five years, there's so much to consider. The summarized goal though, is to climb even higher and bring forth even better results.

THE WORLD EP.FIN : WILL is out now and catch ATEEZ performing at Coachella this April 2024!

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