

(un)Box the Oxford

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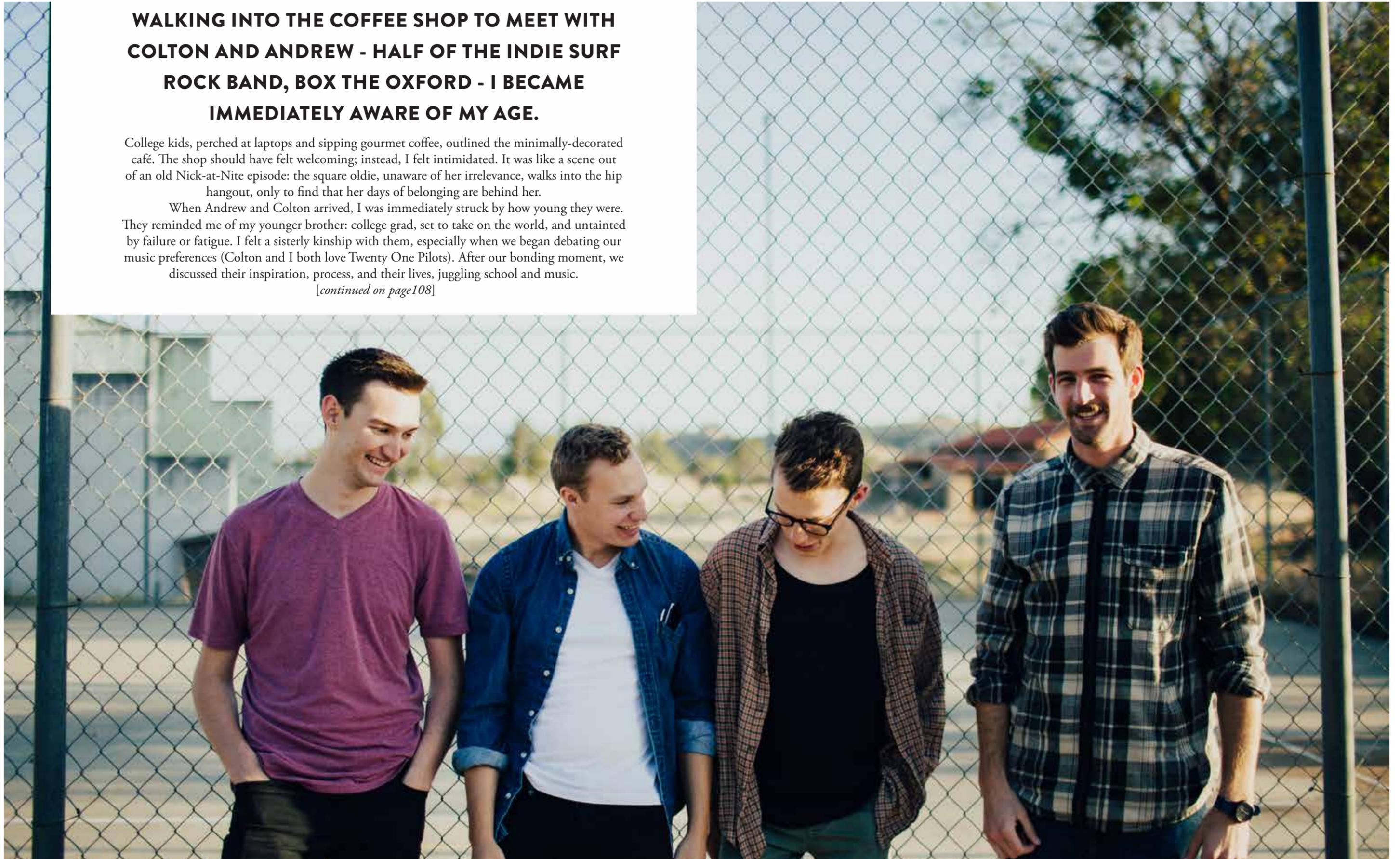
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Sarah Kathleen

WALKING INTO THE COFFEE SHOP TO MEET WITH COLTON AND ANDREW - HALF OF THE INDIE SURF ROCK BAND, BOX THE OXFORD - I BECAME IMMEDIATELY AWARE OF MY AGE.

College kids, perched at laptops and sipping gourmet coffee, outlined the minimally-decorated café. The shop should have felt welcoming; instead, I felt intimidated. It was like a scene out of an old Nick-at-Nite episode: the square oldie, unaware of her irrelevance, walks into the hip hangout, only to find that her days of belonging are behind her.

When Andrew and Colton arrived, I was immediately struck by how young they were. They reminded me of my younger brother: college grad, set to take on the world, and untainted by failure or fatigue. I felt a sisterly kinship with them, especially when we began debating our music preferences (Colton and I both love Twenty One Pilots). After our bonding moment, we discussed their inspiration, process, and their lives, juggling school and music.

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In releasing their debut album, *Wild*, in late 2016, Box the Oxford created an album that lives up to its name. The songwriting is genuine, and breathes life into a genre that's been somewhat overlooked since the golden years of the Beach Boys. To put it bluntly: it's catchy as hell, and makes

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good on the vibe unique to the Central Coast of California.

Andrew confessed that the band could only spare a few hours each week to practice together, so their talent and rise to popularity – though unsurprising – is admirable, and their debut album showcases what could be. Though they are young, they know who they are. They create their art as confidently as only those who have youth on their side can: unplagued by doubt or self-consciousness. There's room for growth, but the inevitable experiences of age will naturally bring depth and maturity to their music.

I had almost forgotten my original discomfort of feeling out of place when, halfway through our interview, the guys dropped a bomb. Colton, looking sheepish, admits, "Box the Oxford is breaking up." The band would be dismembering after the release of a few singles in September.

I'd be lying if I said my heart didn't sink at hearing this news. I'd spent many afternoons singing along with their debut album. One song in particular, "All is Well", struck an

emotional chord with my recent relocation to California:

"This is nothing like the home we had before /
It's every single time / Los Angeles is killing me /
I know that it's alright / 'cause California's temporary."

All four members of Box the Oxford – including Eric and Davis, who couldn't make the inter-

view – are set to graduate Cal Poly University in 2017, and start their respectable, non music-related careers, undoubtedly with great things in store.

What surprises me, though, is their responsible determination; I would have expected them to pursue their music careers. With their popularity rising and spreading across state lines and into the rest of the nation, they're on a clear path towards success – they released a respectable debut album, they opened for T-Pain, and toured the West Coast from San Diego to Seattle. But expectations are not reality. Each member is going their own direction, moving away from San Luis Obispo, and beginning their separate adult lives.

As our conversation drew to a close, Andrew said to me, "It won't be like school. We'll have way more time to make music once we start our jobs." My age and life experience, though only a few years ahead of them, made my stomach twinge with a premonition: I've lived this for myself, and I know that opportunity and passion don't always come in pairs. What these guys have accomplished with Box the Oxford is nothing short of extraordinary. I nod absently, in solidarity, but I'm hoping beyond

hope that they find what they're pursuing in the coming years. After all, much like the California they sing of, youth is temporary.

We parted ways, and I left the coffee shop with a feeling of sadness and finality. Not Andrew and Colton, though. They departed exactly how they arrived: energetic, joking, and making plans for the rest of their day.

Their carefree optimism was infectious, and I realized I was glad I got to know this version of these guys. I'd been a fan of their music since I found my way to their growing Instagram account. My husband and I frequented their local farmers' market performances when they were just starting out, and I still stream their debut album regularly on Spotify. Box the Oxford will be missed by, not just myself, but a majority of the Central Coast music scene, and they reminded me that, no matter who we are, we're in control of our lives and our choices; and it's the choices we make that dictate the lives we lead. 🎧

Listen for yourself at www.boxtheoxford.com, or stream their music on iTunes and Spotify.

