

HOLD ON

ALABAMA SHAKES

APPEARS IN
ROCK & POP
2018

⚡ Released: 2012 ⚡ Album: *Boys & Girls* ⚡ Label: ATO Records, Rough Trade Records

ABOUT THE SONG

'Hold On' was the lead single from the album *Boys & Girls*, released by American blues rock band Alabama Shakes in 2012. It topped the Billboard Adult Alternative Songs chart in the US and was nominated for three Grammy awards. *Rolling Stone* named it the best song of 2012, saying: 'In a year when most divas couldn't get beyond post-Gaga spectacle, along came Brittany Howard, a twentysomething from Athens, Alabama, who reincarnated the ghost of sixties rock and soul'.

The song's riff was written by bassist Zac Cockrell and guitarist Heath Fogg, and the song ultimately came together during a live set at The Brick in Decatur, Alabama, where Howard ad-libbed the melody and lyrics.

RECORDING AND PRODUCTION

Boys & Girls was recorded in Nashville in 2011. It was produced on a small budget by Andrija Tokic at his studio Bomb Shelter, located in his house. The band had cold-called Tokic after seeing an advert for the studio and checking out his work online. The album was recorded on tape over several short sessions - the first six songs were laid down in just two days. Tokic worked with the band to capture their raw power and classic rock feel by tracking most of the album live, with overdubs only used when they added something. On 'Hold On' the distinctive fuzz heard towards the end of the song was a tube preamp turned up too loud that was overdubbed.

COMPOSITION

'Hold On' features Brittany Howard's powerhouse vocal, which *Rolling Stone* described as 'a husky moaning-in-the-moonlight drawl'. The song is a gritty mix of soul, blues and rock, with a laid-back groove. Howard explained the lyrics of the song, and particularly the words 'didn't think I'd make it to 22 years old', are about growing up and wanting better things to happen more quickly.

“BLESS MY HEART, BLESS MY SOUL
DIDN'T THINK I'D MAKE IT
TO 22 YEARS OLD
THERE MUST BE SOMEONE UP ABOVE
SAYING COME ON BRITTANY
YOU GOT TO COME ON UP
YOU GOT TO HOLD ON”

'YOU KNOW WHEN YOU'RE YOUNGER AND YOU CAN'T
IMAGINE YOURSELF EVER BEING GROWN? YOU'RE
HOLDING ON BUT AT THE SAME TIME YOU'RE TIRED
OF WAITING FOR THINGS TO GET BETTER.'
BRITTANY HOWARD, NME



THE VIDEO

Filmed live at Shirk studios in Chicago, the official video for 'Hold On' was released on YouTube in March 2012 and has since clocked up more than 26 million views. The video was directed by producer, engineer and studio owner Stephen Shirk and filmmaker, photographer and musician Chris Hershman.

Some other future Alabama Shakes' music videos also followed the live studio performance format, such as 'Over My Head'.



THE ALBUM

Alabama Shakes' debut album *Boys & Girls* was written and recorded in 2011 while the band was still unsigned. Recorded in Nashville, Tennessee, the band paid for the recording sessions themselves and often had to drive back to Alabama overnight to get to their day jobs. Online buzz about the band led to them signing with ATO Records, who released the album in April 2012 in the US (Rough Trade Records released it in the UK). It was well received by critics and peaked at No. 6 on the US Billboard 200 and at No. 3 in the UK Albums Charts. It made No. 34 on *Rolling Stone's* list of the top 50 albums of 2012. *Sound & Color*, Alabama Shakes' second album, was released in April 2015, debuting at No. 1 on the US Billboard 200 and eventually winning three Grammys.

'A SERIES OF GREAT, SWAMPY SOUL GROOVES, FRONTED BY THE MOST ARRESTING NEW VOICE YOU'LL HEAR THIS YEAR, AND THE KIND OF NATURAL SONGWRITING THAT SEEMS TO CONTAIN THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF SOUTHERN MUSIC WITHIN ITS STAVES.'
THE INDEPENDENT

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Alabama Shakes formed in Athens, Alabama in 2009 and spent their first two years as a band touring and performing at clubs and bars in the area while they wrote songs and honed their sound. Lead singer and guitarist Brittany Howard filled her high school days learning to play instruments, writing songs and jamming with other students. She met bassist Zac Cockrell in her psychology class and the pair started to listen to albums, learn to play the songs they liked and eventually write their own. After high school, Howard and Cockrell got jobs, with Howard initially working as a truck driver. They continued making music and soon met drummer Steve Johnson, also a truck driver. The trio formed a band, calling themselves The Shakes. Lead guitarist Heath Fogg, who had gone to the same school as Howard and Cockrell, joined the band after hearing an early demo. He was working as a house painter at the time. In 2011, they were spotted by LA music blogger Justin Gage. He contacted Drive-By Truckers lead singer Patterson Hood, who saw them play in a record store and immediately called his managers. The band, who only changed their name to Alabama Shakes when they were negotiating their record deal, suddenly had an avalanche of offers. The band have amassed a number of celebrity fans including Adele and Jack White, who they toured with in 2012.

MORE TO EXPLORE

Songs: 'Over My Head', Alabama Shakes (2015). **Albums:** *Boys & Girls*, Alabama Shakes (2012), *Sound & Color*, Alabama Shakes (2015). **Artists & collaborators:** Andrija Tokic, Drive-By Truckers, Jack White, Justin Gage, Patterson Hood. **Trinity Rock & Pop syllabus:** Drums, Initial, Guitar, Grade 4, Keyboards, Grade 1.

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