2AM primer!



From left to right: Jinwoon, Jo Kwon, Changmin, and Seulong

So! Up first, an intro video to get y'all excited about this primer because they're amazing. The second intro, to try to get you to have feelings, is this one - their first music show win in February of 2010 (here look at Jo Kwon being emotional because he'd been training since he was a kid and he never thought he'd be able to debut let alone win and he did!!!!).

2AM or 투에이엠 is an idol group under JYPEntertainment currently, though they've been back and forth between JYP and Big Hit Entertainment for years. They're known for their ballads and, basically, crying (well, not crying. but their songs are generally emotional). To give you kind of an idea, one of their sets for their latest comeback includes them in cardigans singing on a stage full of hay looking sad). There's Jo Kwon, Jinwoon, Seulong, and Changmin.

2AM is one of the two subgroups branched out from the concept One Day, the other being 2PM. The concept there was 2AM as kind of the introspective, early morning, sad, lonely time, and 2PM as a 'start the dance party time'. So you can already get an idea of their ~image as a group.
They debuted in July of 2008 with this song about their trainee days (I'm emotional already gdi). It was apparently dedicated to their parents, and Jo Kwon specifically has talked about his mom

supporting him through his 8 years of training and never having money and it's just the most beautiful song and they get super emotional singing it.

They're known for being emotional and having amazing voices as I've said (seriously...they did justice to this old Noel hit, aka the vocal group that is still lauded as probably the best vocal group the industry has seen in the 21st century) , their ballads are incredibly famous (here is my favourite music video they've done, featuring jinwoon being all dramatic) and always do extremely well (they joke about it here in this interview, which is also a good starting point for getting to know their personalities). They're known for their harmonies and the fact that every single one is a phenomenal singer :)



So before their debut, they were all training rigorously (except for Changmin, who was serving in the military for his 2 years mandatory draft). Jo Kwon had been training for 8 years before they officially debuted, he joined the company around the same time as Sun Ye from Wonder Girls.

They didn't win anything with their first couple single promotions, and it was quite a difficult time for them. Jo Kwon and Seulong were both in debt to JYP financially when they debuted, so most of their first year of paychecks went to paying it back - JYP idols generally don't have to do that anymore - they both had to share Changmin and Jinwoon's income (because C and J hadn't been training for as long, only three and eight months respectively as opposed to years).

They talk here about needing to create a memorable image on variety shows when they were invited, because they were not well known at all and they had to beg Wonder Girls and 2PM to take them along on talk shows as special guests or friends in the first couple of years. Here's an example of a variety show from 2009, from their Friend's Confession promotions, where the hosts did not know who they were and the fans that called in didn't either and they were trying really hard to be memorable but it didn't work. Changmin got a background gig on Star Golden Bell, a game/quiz show, and stayed up for a week watching old episodes because he was so desperate to find out what was "funny" and what would go viral/get 2AM well known.

but FINALLY!!! Finally their first EP in Jan 2010 skyrocketed everywhere and "Can't Let You Go Even If I Die" gave them their first win and basically made them super famous. It's still played in so many dramas in coffee shop scenes and IU's cover of it in Dream High helped catapult her as a star and it's still to this date their most popular song ever. 2010 was Peak 2AM. (They were on Star Date a few times, but the time during their CLYGEIID promotions was my favourite. Also

the one for One Spring Day. The fans getting all excited about seeing them, Jinwoon' smile... yeah. It's also a good place to get to know their personalities). There's also this more recent one, where they talk about each other's personalities at length.

Around that time, Jo Kwon and Changmin were the most well known/popular because Jo Kwon was super famous for his kkab, which is basically like over-exaggerated dancing (you can see clips here and here), while Changmin had a duo with 8eight's Lee Hyun (who is also known for emotional singing, so you can imagine that group dynamic :')) called "HOMME". You can see them here (I Was Able to Eat Well, the duo's debut, came out a few months after 2AM's first win, and it was INCREDIBLY popular like, song of the summer/fall and still really popular to cover) Here's their latest 2014 comeback (the second song). They recently had a concert that BTS and Sistar were guest performers at and it was amazing.

Their covers are amazing, they do an acoustic medley of popular songs that's fun and cute and not at all like their hit ballads, it's adorable.

After that success and the whirlwind of January/February of 2010 in which they were winning everything, super popular, and the hot topic, did an official song for the FIFA World Cup representing Korea, etc, they randomly decided to try and be more ~hip and ~cool (lmao boys please) and did like a typical box MV promo run a few months after CLYGEIID with "I Was Wrong" (yes, 2AM...you were), not attached to an album but to a repackaged version of their Can't Let You Go Even If I Die EP. It did quite well, and won on music shows, and their eventual debut album in late 2010, Saint O'Clock was critically acclaimed and beat SNSD's mini album at that time for the top spot in many album charts.



Notably, one of the songs was featuring BTS before BTS debuted, called Love U, Hate U (BTS got some really good promo out of it even as trainees and even though only one or two of the current members were around back then). Now they talk about their dance pop and how much of a mistake it was because they couldn't just make a carefree dance song, it was just as ridiculous and sad as their other stuff just more beat-y.

Then they spent the better part of 2 years promoting in other countries, China and Taiwan but mostly Japan (with a Japanese full-length album, tour, variety show with 2PM, and they all learned Japanese, etc), and returned to Korea's idol scene in 2013 with their second album, One Spring Day, which basically didn't do that well because they'd been gone for so long. It was still a hit with older folks though and amongst fans, and it was a really really good album, just not in the super competitive industry sense. Although they won on music shows and the lead single was really popular, the actual album sales were lower than they'd wanted them to be. They tried again in late 2013 with another mini-album, which they didn't promote much because

Jinwoon was injured (he was in a really bad car crash, he escaped with just broken bones but one other person died so understandably their schedules were halted). I loved the song, and it did okay in the charts, and has one of the saddest MVs ever created, basically.

And then!!! At long last!!! A full album (that opens with a gorgeous a capella about loving their fans...rip) AND TWO MVs AND promotions in October of 2014 during which they become even more sad and emotional and FLAWLESS. The entire album is really good, and all four of them have solo songs which kind of showcase their individuality in music (Jo Kwon's dance track, Changmin's trot and 60's inspired track, Jinwoon's rock ballad, and Seulong's falsetto/smooth one). In fact, just before getting to individual member profiles, probably one of the best ways to get a first sense of who they each are is to listen to their individual/solo tracks on this latest album.

They've really chilled out by this point in time, Changmin is a visiting professor teaching vocal training at a university and he and Jo Kwon are doing musicals and Seulong is doing films and tv dramas and Jinwoon is writing and making rock music for other groups, everyone's kind of just older and taking it slowly and they also look so much happier, i'm so glad <3. There was a period in 2011, after Saint O'Clock and before they started Japan promos, that they were really tired and exhausted (as all idols are when they're the "it" group), so I'm glad that now although they're not as dominant in the industry they're able to chill a bit.

OK! So, the members! Because people need to pick biases

Lee Changmin





He's the eldest at 28, super responsible and loves to cook for his members and is always fussy about cooking. You can see him arguing with SNSD's Sunny about cooking here.

He has probably the most powerful voice, and the most traditional-sounding tone in the group with a really good vibrato, so he's the fav amongst their older fans. He's super frank about his military experience, he's just a ball of emotions when he's singing (they were performing on a hanging platform once and his body movements and emotional convulsions when he was singing rocked the whole platform and it was a joy to watch tbh. they never did hanging platforms again :')))))))))).

He's the overbearing aunty/chef/old man of the group, who hasn't dated since they debuted, and always talks about wanting to settle down and panics about how old he is like, constantly.

(some stuff about body issues and dieting in the next paragraph, as well as JYP fuckery, just skip ahead if you don't want to read it <3)

He's insecure about his looks, and he's known both negatively and positively as the "average idol" that no one really recognizes on the street because he apparently doesn't look like an idol, which is supposed to make him accessible but he still has insecurities about. JYP made him wear glasses to hide his face when they debuted, and has told him to wear glasses at random moments since then.... UGH. JYP has also spoken about how when he signed Changmin on as a trainee they had meetings about "what to do with his look" because he was chubby and had moles on his face, which they surgically got rid of before his debut. He's pretty much constantly on a diet, and works out a lot, is always cracking jokes about his appearance and is always self-deprecating but then on fancafes has said that he's still uncomfortable with his body and weight, and that he likes to cook the food he can't eat for his members and live vicariously through them.

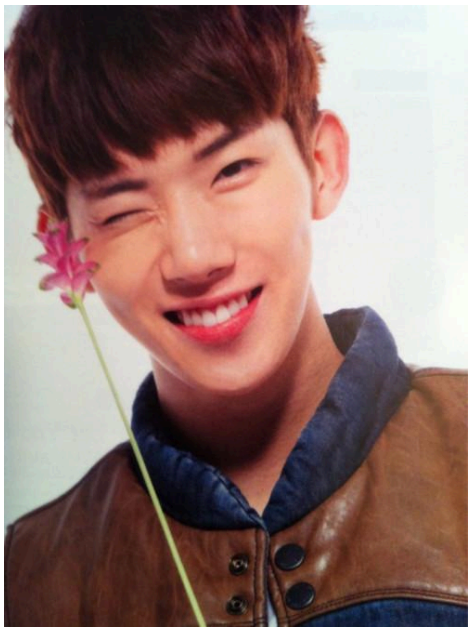
MOVING ON.

He's also nicknamed "sad eyes" by some fans because of a/ how sad his eyes look generally, and b/ because whenever he sings his face gets super contorted and emotional. Basically, he's emotional and you would think he'd be kind of quiet being the oldest, but he also knows how to step in and be a leader when Jo Kwon can't

He's really close with his mom and grandmother, he has a cafe in Seoul called "The Mins" that he runs pretty much and his mom is apparently always there and taking pictures with fans and being really sweet :(((((((. There are fan accounts of people sending fan packages to that cafe

and getting delivery notifications that he himself signed for them, he spends a lot of his time making up recipes for little desserts and drinks and he does labelling on the products too it's all just really cute

Jo Kwon





So Jo Kwon, leader of the group and trainee for the longest, known for his kkab and his over the topness, is perfect. His voice is amazing, like, truly outstanding (his tone always takes me by surprise because it's not as consistent as Changmin's but when he gets into his head voice and upper register he's unbeatable), he is the absolute best at choreographed routines, and he's generally outspoken and fearless about everything from sexism in the industry to homophobia and ughhh he's just so cool and recently starred in a production of Priscilla, and you can see him flawlessly performing Material Girl here.

In terms of personality, he's kind of a perfectionist and worries about everything with the band because he's trained so hard and for so long, like since he was a CHILD he's been wanting this and he's not my main bias but he always gets me so emotional. After their first win, after what was televised, they re-performed their winning song, and he just cried the whole time it must have been so monumental for him and his members were all there supporting him and changmin gave him flowers and he went off sobbing again ;_;

He's amazingly good at variety shows, he was on We Got Married with BEG's Ga In (that's the song they promoted out of it, written by JeA from BEG!) and they're one of the most popular couples ever on the show, they were so cute! he's really good friends with Min and Fei and Jia from Miss A, and of course with all the Wonder Girls, he's just a joy tbh. He's calmed down since the height of their popularity in 2010, because back then he had so much invested in 2AM doing well so he was kind of extra on variety shows trying to get conversation going (which worked!) - and recently he's said that he's glad he can just be himself more nowadays :) His members love him so much, Changmin even said once that he wouldn't want to have been put into 2PM even though he trained as a rapper because that meant he wouldn't have been with Jo Kwon :((((((. They would do anything for him, they defended him like terriers when he was getting flack for being in Priscilla in such a good way and they're so fiercely protective of him it's incredibly cute.

Jeong Jinwoon






HE'S SO CUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUTE. Think of him as the Jia of the group. Jinwoon wasn't very well known at first, he was still in high school when they debuted so he was always tired and a little sad when they'd perform, but then Dream High 2 happened (with GOT7's JB!!). He's the cute maknae the others dote on, and is also a super hard worker and really just the sweetest person. The other three absolutely love him and spoil him and he's the easiest to ship because he loves everyone and just wants attention from his members it's so cute.

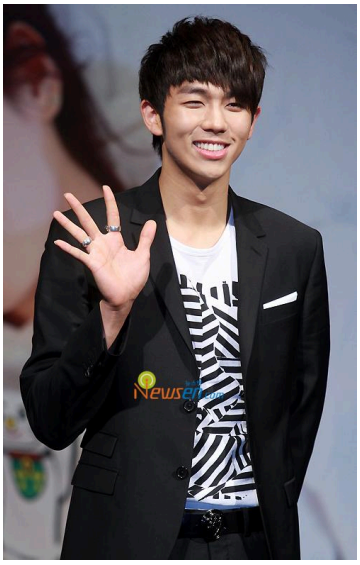
He's the rocker of the group, and he's friends with a lot of veteran rock singers in the industry and writes with them constantly, and he has released solo work under Big Hit Entertainment that's been incredibly well received which you can see here and here. (with bonus shirtlessness here)

He's also in love with Seohyun from SNSD, and during her first We Got Married episode with another guy he was a guest MC and was just kind of jealous in a cute way and kept talking

about how the guy should take her to bookstores because she likes that kind of thing and just basically was super concerned about him treating her poorly. Pls :') he's just cute and such a loser and does the most random and dorky things all the time i love him. He was also on We Got Married himself, and for his first episode Jo Kwon and Seulong filmed a "Jinwoon User Guide " for his wife in which they describe him as "a goodie good" (a fundamentally good person), say he's difficult to read because he smiles even when he's sad, and warn that he can sometimes be hot and cold in close relationships. Which pretty much sums him up I think!

Lim Seulong





Seulong!! A lot of the JYP artists, specifically younger ones, go to him for advice (people like JB from GOT7 and Jimin from 15&) and he's kind of like an older brother to them. He's quieter than Jo Kwon and Changmin in interviews and stuff but super bubbly around his members, and often the others will be having a laugh and he's just come in with a ~witty line that no one else understands and he laughs at himself for it and it's just very cute and confusing.

He's also been nicknamed (by Changmin) as the "lazy, unemployed uncle" of the group because apparently whenever he gets back from an event or practice, he just changes into tracksuits and lays on the couch for hours upon hours watching sports. It was A Thing around the 2010 time, because he was an up and coming actor but his image took a few hits when some variety shows showed him watching TV for 9 hours in a row one time, Seulong pls :')))))). He was really cute on Strong Heart because the woman he has a massive crush on was there too, and he literally couldn't look her in the eye he was blushing so much it was adorable.

He's also super studious, currently doing his MBA after graduating with a BA in Theatre and Visual Arts and I think he took a couple engineering courses as well. He's seen as kind of mysterious and quiet and gorgeous (but also kind of a shit stirrer and his banter with his members is L E G E N D A R Y), and his solo song on their new album is just...one of the

hottest things ever. That fucking falsetto, man (watch it here. the lyrics are kind of NSFWish). He's also done independent work with others, including IU, which became incredibly popular and is the only 2AM solo(ish) track to win on a music show! He also wrote a song with 2PM's Taecyeon for their 2014 JYPNation tour. He's known for his unique voice, so he's featured a lot on other artists' songs. He's just basically an inspiration and does his own thing but loves his members so much!! so much. He and Jinwoon are ridiculously close, like probably the closest in the group, always stirring shit up and bantering and having fun.



That's pretty much it! Here's some links to variety stuff they've done that I like (x x x x x x x x), x for them being cute with SNSD and x for them being cute with Wonder Girls. They're more popular in Korea than they are internationally, except maybe with the exception of Southeast Asia (they're always in Thailand and Malaysia and Indonesia for promo and have a ton of fans there) and kind of difficult to get into because they've been around so long, they have so many videos and most of their 'intro' videos and super funny variety shows aren't eng subbed because it was so long ago. The main subbing place for them/2pm, TIME2SUB, has had a lot of their old videos taken down for copyright and also because the platforms aren't around anymore (twitvid for example). This is a good intro variety show for them too, they have a lot of episodes so just press "Previous" to see the different parts.

I can't end this primer without talking about 2AM's relationship with the 2PM guys, so here goes. It makes me kind of emotional, because in the same way that Wonder Girls are 2AM's sisters 2PM are their brothers. Having formed out of one group, training together for a long time, debuting at a similar time, when 2PM's success skyrocketed right after debut and 2AM's took two years to build up, it was difficult for everyone. 2PM regularly mentioned them in interviews, helped to get their name out there, had them as guests all the time on their solo variety shows like Idol Army and Wild Bunny and were around for their first win. There's an example of that here, right after when 2AM finally got popular they had an amazing joint interview on Win WIn. During their time in Japan, 2AM and 2PM got even closer because both were there to earn

money for the company (Japan is a more lucrative market in terms of buying music and attending concerts than Korea) and were lonely because of it. They're all really close, still hang out a lot, and they're just generally one big family <3.

That's pretty much it - feel free to ask me anything else about them!! There's another individual member profile thing here if you're interested too (warning for autoplay).