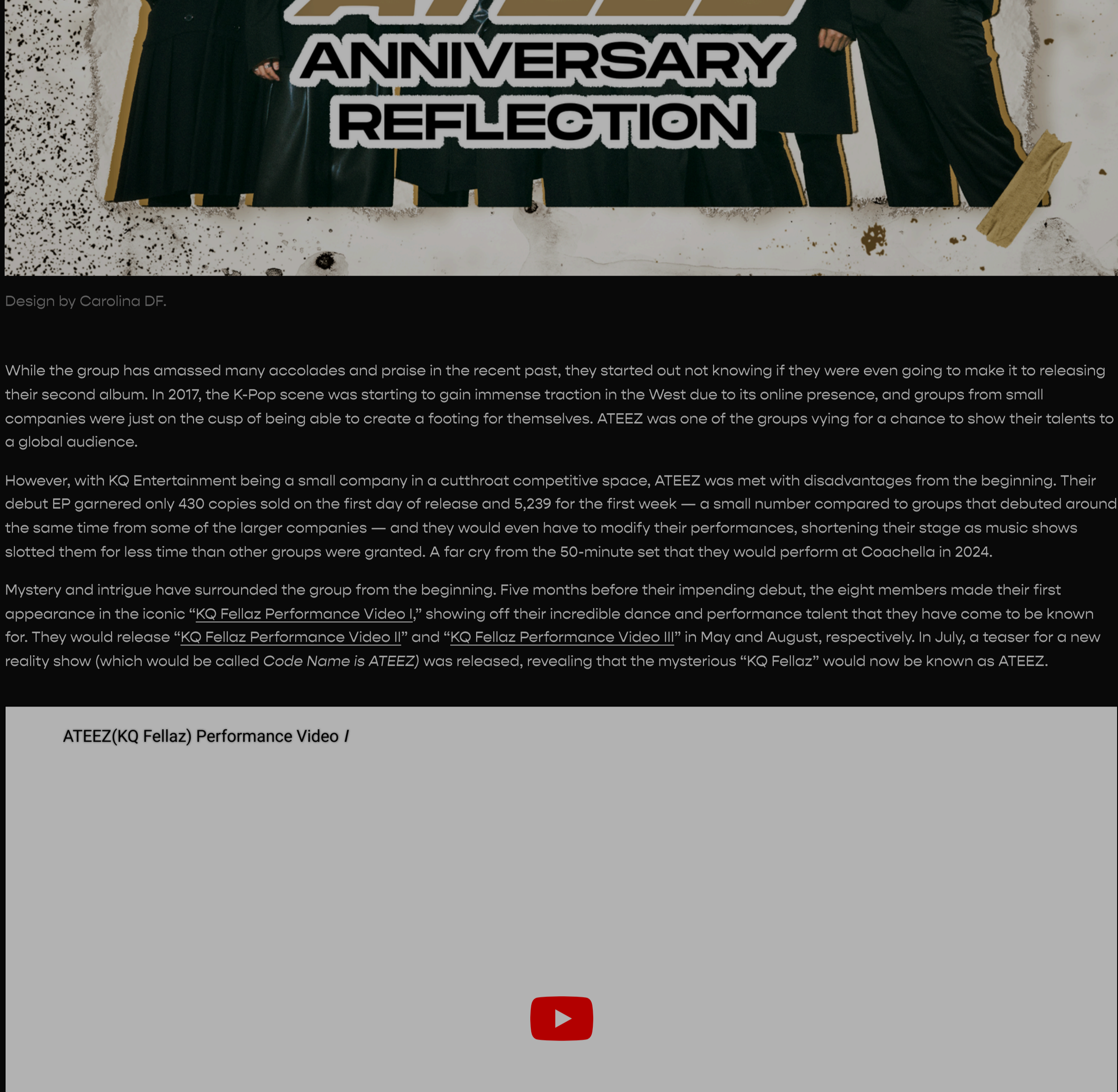


OCT 24 - WRITTEN BY KYA BROGDON

Headlining an international festival with 2.5 million viewers after starting out at a company that had only 20 employees sounds like a heartwarming movie plot — but for ATEEZ, an eight-member group from KO Entertainment, it's reality.



Design by Carolina DF.

While the group has amassed many accolades and praise in the recent past, they started out not knowing if they were even going to make it to releasing their second album. In 2017, the K-Pop scene was starting to gain immense traction in the West due to its online presence, and groups from small companies were just on the cusp of being able to create a footing for themselves. ATEEZ was one of the groups vying for a chance to show their talents to a global audience.

However, with KO Entertainment being a small company in a cutthroat competitive space, ATEEZ was met with disadvantages from the beginning. Their debut EP garnered only 430 copies sold on the first day of release and 5,239 for the first week — a small number compared to groups that debuted around the same time from some of the larger companies — and they would even have to modify their performances, shortening their stage as music shows slotted them for less time than other groups were granted. A far cry from the 60-minute set that they would perform at Coachella in 2024.

Mystery and intrigue have surrounded the group from the beginning. Five months before their impending debut, the eight members made their first appearance in the iconic "KQ Fellaz Performance Video I" showing off their incredible dance and performance talent that they have come to be known for. They would release "KQ Fellaz Performance Video II" and "KQ Fellaz Performance Video III" in May and August, respectively. In July, a teaser for a new reality show (which would be called Code Name is ATEEZ) was released, revealing that the mysterious "KQ Fellaz" would now be known as ATEEZ.

ATEEZ(KQ Fellaz) Performance Video I

On October 24, 2018, ATEEZ officially debuted with their first EP *Treasure EP.1: All to Zero*, led by dual title tracks, "Pirate King" and "Treasure," aptly giving them the moniker of the "Pirates of K-Pop." The music videos for these tracks were shot in the Sahara Desert in Morocco, and even brief showings of other tourists in the background since the company was unable to afford renting out the space fully. Despite their intense nickname, in a behind-the-scenes video, the members were constantly reiterating how nervous they were, how well they want to do for their current and future fans, and how grateful they were for finally getting their chance to debut. Their leader — better known as captain — Hongjoong asks the camera if people will be in attendance for their debut showcos. Two weeks after their debut, ATEEZ released a performance video of "Pirate King" in which they dressed as pirate zombies, playing into the Halloween vibe of their song as well as the timing of their debut. This video once again shows how much ATEEZ focuses on their storytelling through their performances, and how much they shine when they're doing what they do best.

Despite the uncertainty in their future, the group was able to release their second EP, *TREASURE EP.2: Zero to One*, in January 2019. The music video for their promoted B-side "HALA HALA (Hearts Awakened, Live Alive)" created a stir on social media as the members were all dressed in the same outfits with wide hats and masks, covering everything but their eyes — a juxtaposition to the beauty-centric industry that they are a part of. This stark difference, along with their incredible performances, brought them an influx of international fans. Their full focus on styling and presentation for this music video resonated with fans, and there is still inspiration taken from this era by the fans when they dress up for tours and events to this day.

ATEEZ(에이티즈) - 'HALA HALA (Hearts Awakened, Live Alive)' Performance Video

Ten days after the release of their second EP, the group announced their first ever tour, *The Expedition Tour*, in March, April, and August of the same year, which spanned across several cities in the U.S., Europe, and Australia. Between their tour dates, they released their third EP, *TREASURE EP.3: One to All*, with the dual title tracks "WAVE" and "ILLUSION." With "WAVE" ATEEZ earned their first music show win on M Countdown, an emotional affair for both the members and their fans. Despite crying on stage, the members performed a live encore of the song and continuously expressed their gratitude to their fans throughout the entire thing.

[MPD 직캠] 에이티즈 1위 영블 직캠 4K 'WAVE' (ATEEZ FanCam No.1 Encore) | @MCCOUNTDOWN_2019.6.20

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Their original plan for a second world tour was to visit all the cities they could visit, but they were unable to do so due to COVID-19 concerns. Instead, they hosted a free virtual concert for their fans. They hosted a free virtual concert for their fans, which was held for 24 hours. The constant engagement with their fans, in a time when people felt disconnected from reality and their purpose, was a relief to many fans, even if it was just for a few hours.

ATEEZ was among the lineup for the Mnet survival show *Kingdom: Legendary War* which premiered in April of 2021. They didn't win the show, but the group used the platform to their advantage by using each round of stages to further their storyline lore and show off their theatricality as a group. In doing so, they dropped many hints for new lore that wouldn't be introduced officially until over a year later, with the release of "Guerrilla" in 2022. While a large majority of K-Pop groups have a storyline and various lore plots they follow in their releases, ATEEZ takes it a step further in using this survival show, as well as various concerts and other performance opportunities, to further their storyline. 2021 also brought the group's first appearance on the Billboard 200 when their seventh EP, *ZERO: FEVER Part.3*, hit number 42 on the chart.

[폴버전] 리듬 타 (The Awakening of Summer) - 에이티즈(ATEEZ)

After pushing off their 2020 tour due to COVID-19 concerns, ATEEZ was able to pick back up in 2022 with the *The Fellowship: Beginning of the End* tour, spanning twenty arena sized shows in eight different countries. Shows sold out almost immediately, with both new and old fans vying for their chance to see these stellar performers in person. Despite having only performed in the U.S. once before, ATEEZ was able to sell out two nights at The Kia Forum in Los Angeles — a venue ten times bigger than where they played on their first tour in 2019.

The Fellowship: Beginning of the End tour wasn't their only tour in 2022. After playing at KCON LA, it was announced that ATEEZ would once again be traveling the globe at the end of 2022 into 2023 for the *The Fellowship: Break the Wall* tour. While the venues on this tour were similar in size to the previous, the length and production size of the tour had almost doubled. *The Fellowship: Break the Wall* tour lasted almost a year, with five legs spanning 21 countries — a total of 36 shows for the entire tour. Not many artists out there could host two tours within the same year and sell out both — especially when playing arenas — and this is a testament both to ATEEZ's dedication to their craft, and the fans' dedication to ATEEZ themselves.

In 2022, ATEEZ dropped their eighth EP, *THE WORLD EP.1: MOVEMENT*, which would break their pre-sale record and officially make them million-seller artists. *THE WORLD EP.2: OUTLAW* followed in 2023, also surpassing the million pre-order mark and entering at number two on the Billboard 200. Despite the improvement and success of both these EPs, fans weren't satisfied and voted to get them to number one on the Billboard 200. Their second studio album, *THE WORLD EP.FIN: WILL*, released in December of 2023 and would hit number one on the Billboard 200, number one on the Billboard Top Albums Sales Chart, and number two on the UK Official Albums Chart. Fans had done exactly what they had planned and brought ATEEZ's artistry back to the general population once again.

As 2024 began, fans were treated to the biggest shock of ATEEZ's career — the group would be playing at Coachella, slotted for a 60-minute set right before the night's headliners. Fans, and the group themselves, were quick to make the connection between their debut days and their Coachella stage. They filmed their debut music video in the Sahara Desert, and they would be playing the Sahara stage at Coachella. This motif of revisitation and reflection would continue throughout the year. They were announced as headliners for the Mawazine festival, the second biggest music festival in the world and held in the same country where they filmed their debut music video in. Scattered throughout the year would also be the members achieving dreams they had been talking about since debut — multiple members have thrown first pitches for varying baseball teams, and they have attended prestigious fashion shows for varying brands on solo schedules. They have also completed their Seoul and U.S. legs of their fourth tour, *Towards the Light: Will to Power*, upgrading from arenas to stadiums in the process.

From selling 430 albums to selling out stadiums, ATEEZ has made it loud and clear that groups from small companies can, and will, create a place for themselves — no matter the odds.

ATEEZ

Preview Top tracks Follow

- 1 WORK ATEEZ 02:52
- 2 BOUNCY (K-HOT CHILLI PEPPERS) ATEEZ 03:07
- 3 Crazy Form ATEEZ 03:38

What is your favorite ATEEZ moment from the past six years? Let us know by leaving a comment below or by reaching out on [Instagram](#) or [X](#).

TO STAY UPDATED ON ATEEZ: FACEBOOK | INSTAGRAM | TIKTOK | X | WEBSITE | YOUTUBE

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