

The logo for Matmos' album 'Supreme Balloon' features the word 'MATMOS' in a stylized, colorful font with horizontal lines extending from the letters. Below it, the words 'SUPREME BALLOON' are written in a bold, blue, blocky font with a white outline.

The new album from **Matmos** finds the dynamic duo taking a holiday from conceptual responsibility, skipping the outré sampling antics in favor of a lighthearted "cosmic pop" record made entirely out of synthesizers. Leave it to **Matmos** to invent a hard and fast rule that they have to follow even when they're just having fun: the creative restriction this time around is that **Supreme Balloon** is an ALL synthesizer album and no microphones were used at any point.

That's right, no household objects played in a percussive manner, no snails or blood or amplified semen, no acoustic instruments, no voices of famous people for five seconds, not even any half-way cheating with Vocoders, just synthesizers of all shapes, sizes, eras and nationalities being snipped, folded and reshuffled by an arsenal of samplers and computers into colorful sound-origami.

Gear fetishists take note: the exotic and antiquated synths used on the record heavily spotlight the classic 60s/70s/80s consumer electronic rigs of Arp, Korg, Roland, Waldorf and Moog, and feature modular systems from Electro-Comp, Doepfer and Akai (hell, even a stylophone and a Suzuki Omnichord show up); these were recorded at home in San Francisco, California and in the SnowGhost studio at Whitefish, Montana. But there are also completely unique, one-of-a-kind modular curios present, such as the "Coupigny" modular synthesizer housed in the INA/GRM studios at Radio France in Paris and used extensively by some of the titans of musique-concrete.

Guest players invited to the party include living treasure of American jazz Marshall Allen of the Sun Ra Arkestra (he plays the E.V.I. or Electronic Voice Instrument, a breath controlled oscillator, on "Mister Mouth"), Bay Area troublemakers Jon Leidecker (aka Wobbly), East Coast electroacoustic sages Jay Lesser and Keith Fullerton Whitman, and classically trained pianist Sarah Cahill.

Though it was recorded all over the world over the last two years, the whole shebang was finished in Baltimore, Maryland (the band's new home, at least as long as Drew Daniel is a professor in the English Department at Johns Hopkins University), and comes encased in some truly gorgeous watercolor artwork by Robert Syrett.

To break it down: the album drops with a bumpin' front end of four rhythmic workouts (perky, stomping, toe-tapping, and shuffling, respectively) that coach Perrey & Kingsley and 8-bit video game music and kitsch Latin Moogsploration into some freaky positions. Then things take a classy European vacation in which the baroque composer Francois Couperin's "Les Folies Francaises" is given the Wendy Carlos treatment. Then the band turn a corner into unexpected, ambitious new territory and things swell to a truly ridiculous/heroic climax.

The jewel in the crown is the album's title track, a 24 minute monster synth jam that builds from a lone Roland SH-101 wobbling your sub-woofers into a celestial, psychedelic epic whose spiraling arpeggios recall the sidelong LP-era mind-journeys of Cluster, Mother Mallard and Vangelis. Riding an insistent tabla pattern courtesy of a "Taal Mala" drum machine from India, warm, bubbling layers of analogue synthesis, and the chattering and chirping of MAX patches shaking hands with boutique EFX pedals, it's a long strange trip indeed. Things cool down with an ambient air kiss and it's over.

We know you're probably shaking your head and thinking to yourself, "an electronic band makes an all-electronic album? These guys must be CRAZY." And you'd be right. Consider this revenge for all those Queen records whose liner notes said "And nobody played the synthesizer!", and a sweet surprise from a truly unpredictable American band.

Matmos are Drew Daniel and M. C. Schmidt. www.brainashed.com/matmos www.matadorrecords.com/matmos



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