

Art Feynman  
USA

Europe (Agent)

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Label: Western Vinyl

Animism, considered the world's oldest religion, asserts that all things living and inert are endowed with spiritual qualities; from rocks, to tools, to plants. Enter California musician Art Feynman, who seems for whatever reason to have this philosophy driving at his subconscious. His debut album *Blast Off Through the Wicker*-- itself gifted with unmistakable spirit-- documents its creator looking for life in the lifeless, questioning what it means to be living.

The opening track "Eternity in Pictures" was born from Feynman's observation that a statue appears to be crying when doused in rain. On "Can't Stand It" he continues to lyrically tug at the thought that every inanimate thing around him might be awake and watching: "do my synthesizers know when I'm asleep? Does the floor creep beneath my feet?"

*Blast Off*'s magic lies in its ability to conduct these existential, almost anxiety-inducing thought-experiments around playfully excursive sounds that display musicianship and music appreciation in equal measure. It's full of paranoid humor, earnest reflection, and articulate musical ideas. Moments enter and exit with thoughtful punctuality; some are impressive because of their brevity, some are striking in their repetitive insistence, but all of them dart in and out of influences and references with fully-digested confidence. Whatever Feynman borrows from his forbears are a part of him, not sewn-on badges.

There is a calm, disciplined pocket to be felt in everything Feynman does; krautrock slink, staccato bounce, and pentatonic bursts of Nigerian Highlife fuzz pour on the temporal canvas with unquestionable ease, never falling in the wrong place. Even more admirable is that his "canvas" is a four-track tape recorder, and that *Blast Off* features no loops or drum machines despite its aesthetically faithful motorik and afrobeat underpinnings.

Nowhere is this fact more surprising than on album standout "Slow Down" which pulses along infectiously with a crunchy backbeat, and deftly arpeggiating bass lines that are so locked-in that it would be hard to fault an unknowing ear for assuming the whole thing was tediously programmed. The same is true of the frenetic banger "Hot Night Jeremiah" with its metallic guitar, neurotic vocal delivery, and rigidly ticking drums that bounce off the imaginary walls. It's easy to glean the same focused frustration that led Feynman to create the non-album rollout track, "The Shape You're In", about how our disconnection from ourselves can lead to the election of a leader who in Feynman's words "can be a spiteful fool in broad daylight and it doesn't seem to matter."

There are gentler sides to *Blast Off Through the Wicker* that are made all the more special and refreshing by contrast to their surroundings. Slow punctuators "Win Win" and "Party

Line” conjure the spacey tenderness of Arthur Russell inventively and respectfully, without adopting their muse’s palette wholesale. In this regard Blast Off Through the Wicker is an endearing collection of songs that capture the ear with warm-yet-clear cassette aesthetics and spot-on musicianship, both of which form an angle that points lovingly to Feynman’s deep and varied influences. Make no mistake-- this one truly is alive.

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