

The Ruby Suns - SPRITE FOUNTAIN BIO

The Ruby Suns, the band-ish pseudonym of nomadic Californian-New Zealander Ryan McPhun, return after four years with a brilliant and ambitious new record *Sprite Fountain*.

It began in earnest upon moving to Oslo, Norway from Auckland in 2013's twilight with impending fatherhood tapping him on the shoulder. A slowly ripening thing, it was made amidst child rearing and touring with NZ pals Lawrence Arabia and remixing, recording and touring with Norwegian acts like Snasen, Heyerdahl and Beezewax.

A pithy nine songs running over thirty-three minutes, stylistically it's an amalgam of the 4 previous Ruby Suns records. Rhythmically and harmonically complex, McPhun's influences are alluded to like snatches of a jukebox heard across a busy motorway. The touchstones are brief - ELO for four bars, a hint of Julia Holter in an arrangement - before they disappear into a kaleidoscopic tapestry that reveals McPhun to be a singular savant hinted at by his diverse back catalogue.

Though harmonious in macro, there is a mania within - a fitting analog to what is often the predicament of a new parent: constantly under-slept, delirious and confused yet somehow elated. Not to mention the matter of cultural isolation that comes with being an immigrant in a new country, and an antipodal one at that.

McPhun has trouble relating to the 'Pram Gangs' he passes by on the street and grapples with Norway's political movements in 'Blåhvalene.' He then goes back to California with the Wilsonesque 'Blankee' - a Steinbeck referencing ode to his teenage surf break (Ventura Point) and the almost A Capella album closer 'King Cake,' citing McPhun's own brush with the law and the overextending slippery tentacles of the War on Drugs in the mid 90s. Elsewhere things get a little more upbeat. 'Gatrapa' is a tropicalia-induced, Siri Hustvedt-quoting epistle on the inexorable parade of time, and 'Tilt of His Hat' - a jovial but bumpy supplication to an overworked and overstressed loved one. 'K Rd Woody' recounts halcyon days on Auckland's Karangahape Road with its transient dive bars, cheap late night eateries and pre-mixed drink of choice, the Woodstock bourbon and cola, while 'Waterslide' is a fuzzy cautionary tale of Primitivism gone awry.

Sprite Fountain was made almost single-handedly by Ryan McPhun in Scandinavia. Beginning in an old schoolhouse in Asker, Observatoriet studio in central Oslo, and McPhun's home in Grünerløkka, Oslo. He then moved onto Spice Boys studio in Copenhagen, with finishing touches made in a friend's 18th century villa in Chelva, Spain. Live Ruby Suns member and long time sonic guru of McPhun's Bevan Smith (Introverted Dancefloor/Signer) visited Norway with his Eventide Harmonizer and assisted with the final mix of the record.

It's a treasure box of potent ideas, discrete and often discreet. The record makes for an experience that is blissful, psychedelic and always totally surprising, with each subsequent listen revealing gleaming new attractions.