

BROOKLYN VEGAN

Notable Releases of the Week (7/22)

Andrew Sacher | July 22, 2022



John Moreland - *Birds in the Ceiling*

Old Omens/Thirty Tigers

Having started his career over a decade ago in country/folk rock territory, John Moreland began bringing in some electronic art rock elements on 2020's *LP5*, and he goes even further in that direction on this year's *Birds in the Ceiling*. Across these nine songs, John's singer/songwriter style is fleshed out by electronic textures and glitchy drum pads that he says were inspired by hip hop producers like The Alchemist, Just Blaze, and Madlib, as well as house and techno, and John's also adopted a more hushed delivery that sounds more like Pedro the Lion than country music. (For what it's worth, the album was produced by Matt Pence of Centro-Matic, who is one degree of separation from David Bazan.) John's also been looking at the state of the world and specifically America, and that's reflected in this album too. "The songs remind me a bit of last year: the pandemic, the lockdowns and the completely crazy political climate in the USA," he recently told the German Rolling Stone (translated via Google). "I was just like, 'What the hell is happening here?'" You can hear it coming through loudly and clearly on songs like "Claim Your Prize," which looks at the way the American Dream is a lie built on racism, misogyny, and other immoralities, or "Generational Dust," which grapples with being raised to think a certain way and believe in certain things that maybe don't fit with the person you aim to be today. In a way, there are parallels to be drawn between *Birds in the Ceiling* and the new Wilco album, an album that uses country music to address some of the country's issues, rather than indulge in blind patriotism. For a genre of music that's so often built on tradition, John's musical and lyrical choices on this album feel quietly daring.