

UNICUT



FRUIT BATS

Baby Man

MERGE

7/10

Eric D Johnson gets up close and personal on change-of-pace solo turn



Baby Man presents Eric D Johnson at his most unadorned, with only his voice, piano or acoustic guitar and occasional synth adorning the 10 tracks. Producer Thom Monahan zeroes in on the artist's quavery yelp and delicate self-accompaniment, laser-focusing the album's close-mic'ed intimacy. Johnson's falsetto brings a livewire tension to "Two Thousand Four", "Creature From The Wild" is an unexpectedly heart-wrenching paean to man's best friend and "Puddle Jumper" gets a relatively elaborate treatment as overdubbed backing vocals and an ambient synth hover over his voice and ghostly piano notes. *Baby Man* is an impressive display of unfettered emotionality, but you may miss Johnson's usual luminous band arrangements and bass-driven grooves. **BUD SCOPPA**