

Toro y Moi: Boo Boo

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Daniel Bromfield

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Boo Boo has the feel of a spectacular failure without actually being one. When it stumbles, it's not because the record is boring or too polite or compromised in any way, but because Chaz Bundick, aka Toro y Moi, simply reaches too far. Even when ideas don't work, at least they're *ideas* chased to their logical endpoint, and they end up hitting and missing with equal probability. If he was a bit timid on his last few records, he's mustered up the courage here to go for broke, and that alone is kind of exhilarating.

The most effective moments often involve tried-and-true '80s sounds, like the seductive cluck of disco guitar on "Mirage" or the pearly pianos of "Embarcadero." These sounds might have come off as cheesy when Toro y Moi first debuted in 2010, but now they gorgeously speak to the gut rather than to our mental log of Reagan-era hits. Other experiments fail with aplomb, like the trap ballad "Windows," sung through heaps of Auto-Tune. And sometimes the best songs on the album contain the most cringe-worthy moments, so the listener does have to put in some effort to get to the good stuff.



"Don't Try" opens with perplexing lyrics—"Love's only funny when you're tongue-tied"—made all the more off-putting when his vocal gives them the weight of an immortal truism. Still, "Don't Try" is one of the tracks worth revisiting because it's just so big and beautiful, a sheet of sound that conveys some of the same lovelorn, nocturnal desolation as a Drake song but through its own grandiosity rather than its lyrics. Bundick also appears to have been listening to a lot of Travis Scott. Hip-hop's king of high camp isn't great at rapping and his music is often meaningless, but he knows how to make each effort *feel* like a statement. Bundick does something similar here.

Boo Boo's sense of scale is enhanced by its sprawl. At 49 minutes long, its runtime is exceeded in Bundick's discography only by *Anything in Return*, whose length was in keeping with its house sensibilities. *Boo Boo* is miasmatic and easy to get lost in, and it evokes some of the same neon-lit melancholy as *Causers of This*, the first and best Toro album. It also suggests *Underneath the Pine* in its funk leanings. The album feels like a culmination, combining the best of past Toro records. And while it's far from tidy, it's nevertheless pure Bundick, an auteur project to the bone.

Despite its flaws, this is a very interesting album, and that's more than can be said about a lot of low-key records put out by once-hyped indie stars who have settled into routine. Toro y Moi still has name-brand recognition, but he's more a perennial producer than a star or a respected veteran—a sort of Fat Joe for the indietronica set. This may not be a classic album that deserves a place in indie canon, but it is certainly the type of record that will prompt some interesting discussion.

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