

Temples - Volcano (2017)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Certainty* 4:25 2 *All Join In* 4:03 3 *I Wanna Be Your Mirror* 4:47 4 *Oh! The Saviour* 3:46 5 *Born Into The Sunset* 4:46 6 *How Would You Like To Go?* 3:35 7 *Open Air* 4:48 8 *In My Pocket* 3:04 9 *Celebration* 4:20 10 *Mystery Of Pop* 3:26 11 *Roman God-Like Man* 3:40 12 *Strange Or Be Forgotten* 4:07 Adam Smith - keyboards James Bagshaw - vocals, guitar Sam Toms - drums Thomas Walmsley - bass

With their first album, *Sun Structures*, Temples tapped into the essence of what makes psychedelic pop so enchanting. The swirling sonic textures filled with chiming guitars and booming basslines, the trippy arrangements and moody melodies...they combined into an aural experience on par with the best psych pop. When it came time to record their second album, *Volcano*, the band made some changes. This time James Bagshaw split the writing duties with the rest of the band, they moved to a bigger room in his house to record, and they added synthesizers to the array of instruments. The biggest shift isn't anything tangible; it's more in the tone and outlook of the record. *Sun Structures* had the feel of a band whose members were stuck deep in their own heads, making music that echoed the bands they loved. *Volcano* sounds like an album made to be played on a big stage at an outdoor festival. The sounds have been simplified, the choruses pumped up, and the vocals stripped of the reverb haze they were buried in. The arrangements are still fully colored-in, but they are sharper and less swathed in psych pop mystery. Where a track like *Sun Structures*' "Shelter Song" enveloped the listener in a murky, entrancing embrace that felt personal and somewhat secret, the songs on *Volcano* are destined to be sung along to at top volume by strangers in a field. That's not an intrinsically bad thing, but it does mean that listening to *Volcano* is a very different kind of experience. The synthesizers on the opening track, "Certainty," see to that right away, and the coldness that they bring to the mix is in direct contrast with the expansive 12-string electric guitar sound that dominated *Sun Structures*. That being said, there are still many good things to be found on *Volcano*. The band still has a way with a hook -- the synth parts on "Certainty" are liable to be an unshakeable earworm after one spin -- and the songs occasionally take flight on waves of synths and guitars, especially on the back half of the record when the band gets a second wind. "Open Air" and "In My Pocket" have the uptempo strum and strut the Cure had at their stadium rock peak during the late '80s, "Mystery of Pop" suggests what Ratatat might have sounded like

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if they were huge Left Banke fans, and "Roman God-like Man" has a nicely chugging rhythm that bursts into some sweet harmony guitar leads. These tracks don't sound much like Sun Structures either, but thanks to the injection of energy and drive, they turn out better than some of the leaden tracks that weigh down the album's first half. It makes for a disjointed record that's definitely not Sun Structures II, but something transitional instead. Fans of the first album may be disappointed by the changes, especially since the band takes most of the psych out of its pop. Those who stick around will find that Volcano is a pretty good modern pop record. ---Tim Sendra, AllMusic Review

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