



Artist: Boom Bip
Title: *Blue Eyed In The Red Room*
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When we last met Bryan Hollon, AKA **Boom Bip**, we left him at a crossroads. His debut solo album, *Seed To Sun* had catapulted him from the hip hop underground he'd emerged from in Cincinnati, Ohio in 2001 with *Circle*, the album he made with rapper Doseone. *Seed To Sun* had taken Boom Bip to the lofty realms of the international indie cognoscenti.

A significant signpost in an emerging genre combining the palette of the laptop producer with hip-hop and rock, Boom Bip went one further and turned *Seed To Sun* into a four piece live band, performing at Glastonbury, Dedbeat Festival in Rome, London's Ether Festival, the Pompidou Centre in Paris to name just a few. Boom Bip was also invited back to record a **second Peel Session**, having been heralded by John Peel as "a modern day Captain Beefheart" when he invited Boom Bip & Doseone in for their first **Peel Session** in 2001.

The release of *Seed to Sun* also put Boom Bip on the lips of his contemporaries and led to a string of hot remixes by artists like **Boards of Canada**, **Mogwai** and **Four Tet**. These were collected on the 2004 *Corymb* compilation to sizeable acclaim. Boom Bip supported the **Super Furry Animals** on their 2003 US tour, which led to a remix on their *Phantom Phorce* album, while Boom Bip's signature tune, "Roads Must Roll" can currently be heard over the opening scenes of a new concert documentary, *Fade To Black*, which captures **Jay-Z's** 'farewell show' at New York's Madison Square Garden in 2003. Yeah.

Meanwhile, Boom Bip upped stakes and moved to Silverlake, Los Angeles to start work on *Blue Eyed In The Red Room*. Cue rolling hills, flowers in bloom, views of Silverlake, beautiful sunsets every night and hummingbirds outside his studio window...

"This album was started on a clean slate, in a new place, with new inspiration," BB says. "You can hear that in the songs, the fear, excitement, loneliness and comfort that I've felt for the past year. With *Seed To Sun* I was in rut. I was stuck, and a lot of dreaming and sadness were expressed in that album. It was like a caged bird singing!"

But in a way, the new album returns Boom Bip to his beginnings as a musician. He played *everything* himself on the new album – which is not to say he has moved away from the ultra-finesse of his unique production style – the textures, sonic details and intricacies, tones, melodies and hypnotic reveries are all still to be found in ever more evocative shapes and emotional colours. It just means the crate-digging has ceased for the moment.

"I wanted the listener to get a sense of what is going on inside my head and my environment as much as possible," he explains. "Samples are a detour from that connection. Samples express what you like, but it's someone else's idea and product. To really connect with the listener it was essential that I play everything. While making the record I had the live show in mind the entire time. The new songs are 98% live instrumentation and have energy, structure, chord changes and dynamics. Not loop-based or beat-based like tracks in the past."

Although drums were Boom Bip's first instrument, it was the guitar that turned him into a songwriter. "Even though I've tinkered with guitar and used it in songs over the years, I never fully committed to it like I did with this record," he admits. "In times of beauty and peace I can lay down delicate acoustic parts and in times of excitement or anger I can thrash an electric."

Blue Eyed In The Red Room features two special guest vocalist, SFA's **Gruff Rhys** and acclaimed New York singer/songwriter, **Nina Nastasia**.

With a forthcoming solo album, a SFA Back To Mine compilation and new SFA album in the works, Gruff was flat out, but made time to write the lyrics and sing "Do's and Don'ts", recording the vocals at Danger Mouse's California studio one afternoon. An MTV camera crew were chilling at the DM crib that day, so they filmed the session.

"We became really good friends at that time," BB recalls of his time on the road with SFA. "Gruff crashed on my couch for a few days. He drew inspiration from some of the books I had lying around, in particular was *Bahai Faith* by Jessyca Russell Gaver." Needless to say, Gruff's portentous lyrics perfectly complemented the spooky, cosmic feel of the track with the layered vocals, finger clicks, tablas, backwards guitars and mesmeric bass that spiral out into a proper LA-style, wig-out.

The Nina Nastasia track, "The Matter (Of Our Discussion)", developed from Boom Bip's pure fandom. "She had me from the first song," BB says of first hearing her breakthrough album, *The Blackened Air*. "I was shocked at how moving her voice and lyrics were."

Nina wrote a simple song based around guitar and her devastatingly intimate vocal. Mashing and processing the sounds of autoharps, guitars, drums and strings, BB created a haunting drone ballad. "Nina's voice demands every bit of the attention of the song," he says. "The subject matter and lyrics of this track mean so much to me. I can identify with every word. We both are in deep relationships and battle with our thoughts on our partners. I love it, it's the perfect way to close the record with thoughts that Nina and I both share."

Boom Bip will bring *Blue Eyed in the Red Room* to the UK and Europe this spring with his live band.



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