



Esoteric Recordings

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"There's even a little bit of Bon Iver influence, but I couldn't tell you where," Rundgren says of "State," out April 9.

After hearing younger acts sing his praises and cite his influence and having others (Tame Impala, Lindstrom) ask him to do remixes, Todd Rundgren says he "suddenly felt this obligation to get more educated on what's happening on the fringes of music and make a more sincere attempt to kind of re-adopt the process I had a lot to do with founding."

That, in turn, led to Rundgren's new album, "State," a characteristically one-man-band project that incorporates contemporary electronic and industrial elements throughout its 10 tracks.

"I thought, 'Geez, am I missing out on my own revival here? I better start studying up on what's going on and maybe re-claim some of that kind of experimental, very personal kind of music-making,'" Rundgren tells Billboard. "There's a younger generation of artists, some of whom cite my earlier records as influences on them, who are using the studio or elements of the recording process as creative elements in themselves now, and what you're coming up with ultimately depends less on the usual kind of inter-musician collaboration and are more about a kind of aggressive discovery of possibilities within a more limited scope. The whole thing has just been returned to the artist, and that was my intent way back when I built my first studio and started making my first crazy records."

Rundgren says he delved deeply, and broadly, into artists he clearly felt were making a fresh sonic impact, including Skrillex, Frank Ocean, David Tipper, GRiZ and Lewis Taylor. "There's even a little bit of Bon Iver influence, but I couldn't tell you where," Rundgren notes with a laugh.

But, he hastens to add, he was careful not to let any of that influence him to the point where it was too obvious in "State's" songs. "It gets to a point where I have to stop listening to it or I'll start literally taking stuff from it," he explains. "I wasn't really trying to stick with one style. I was simply trying to find myself in other people's music and figure out, once there was a connection, where does it go from there? So there may be the vague memory of...all the artists who were doing something that I found intriguing and found their way onto my radar and into this record in some way, but in a way that I actually avoid citing them completely."

The Hawaii-based Rundgren will be taking "State" on the road starting May 5 in his former home of Woodstock, N.Y., performing with a trio and "a modicum of machinery." And, he promises, there will be "an improvisational element" to shows.

"We will have a broader palette of things to draw on because we've got some real players there," Rundgren says. "But also I want to have the advantage of random access to a whole realm of music, which is what the portable studio gives you. Certain aspects of the songs can be opened up; you can make an unexpected side excursion into another musical realm and possibly come back -- or possibly not come back. Who knows? Maybe you decide that once you've gone off of that other tangent it's more entertaining than perhaps doing the conventional rendition of a particular song. There are myriad possibilities."

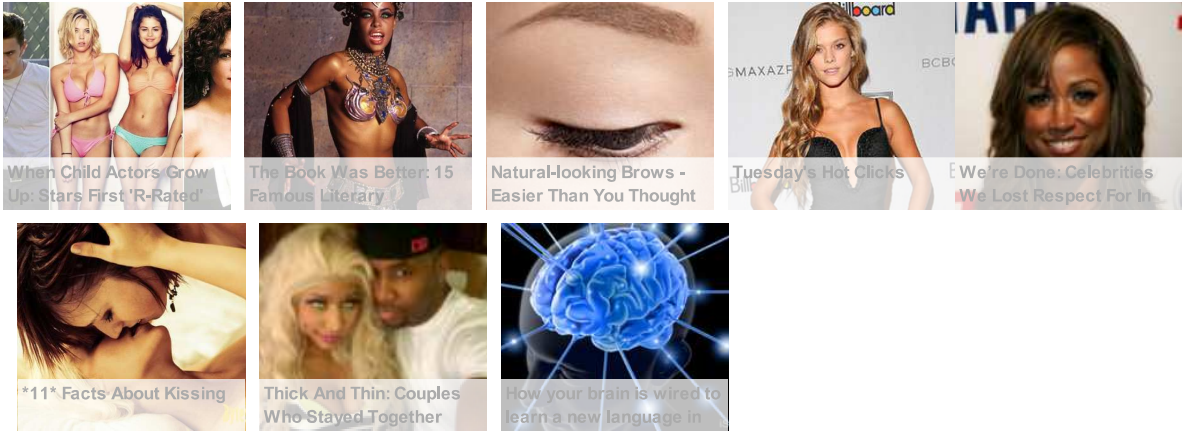
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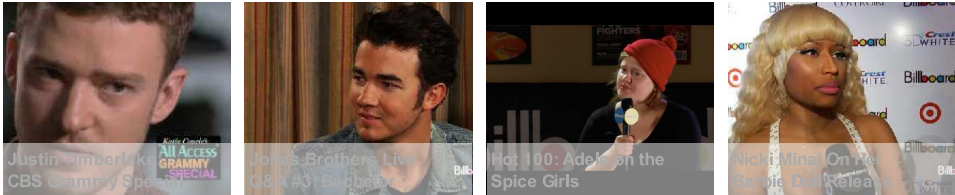
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Robert Prehn

6 days ago

Regardless of how you feel about Rundgren, you have to admire his output and innovation. He's never played it safe...always followed a commercially accessible album like Something/Anything with a less accessible but always entertaining album like A Wizard/A True Star. For a guy with 20+ albums under his belt -- a feat in and of itself -- all of them instantly identifiable as a Rundgren project but no two of them sound alike.

Multi-instrumentalist, producer of such diverse acts as Badfinger, The Band and Grand Funk Railroad, innovator (check out "Twist" his greatest hits re-visioned in a bossa nova style or "A Cappella" where he sampled his voice for all the instrumental parts). I look forward to hearing where he goes on "State."