


Album Review: Various Artists – AngelHeaded Hipster: The Songs of Marc Bolan & T. Rex

 BURKE JOSLIN ([HTTPS://MUSIC.MXDWN.COM/AUTHOR/BURKE-JOSLIN/](https://music.mxdwn.com/author/burke-joslin/))

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Legacy of the electric warrior

Sometimes the sweetest things in life are also the briefest. In Marc Bolan's case, this adage proved all too true. As lead singer of T. Rex, Bolan established himself as *the* icon of the 1970s glam rock revolution, ambitiously amalgamating rock, folk, blues and punk to create a never-before-seen genre that enamored fans the world over. Despite his tragic, untimely death in 1977, Bolan's music has continued to inspire musicians of all genres and backgrounds to this day.

On *AngelHeaded Hipster: The Songs of Marc Bolan & T. Rex*, the awesome extent of the singer's magnetism is clearer than ever. Talented artists from across the world united to immortalize Bolan's legacy in what can only be described as the ideal tribute album. Released on September 4, *AngelHeaded Hipster* is every artist's dream—a tribute that showcases not only the original songs' passion, innovation and vision, but also demonstrates the talent of the artists they directly inspired. Featuring Elton John, Joan Jett, U2, Kesha, Father John Misty, Peaches and more, *AngelHeaded Hipster* is a thrilling, eclectic, touching tribute that will captivate listeners from start to finish.

For some, Bolan was a larger-than-life figure. According to Elton John (<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/sep/04/marc-bolan-perfect-pop-star-t-rex-singer-tribute-album-elton-john-u2>), "He was the perfect pop star. His songs were great, his records rocked, he had attitude, he had performing skills, he looked fabulous, he dressed the part. At a time when I was still becoming Elton John, he was a great role model. I thought: 'This guy doesn't give a fuck, he's just being who he is and he's loving every single minute of it.' And that had a great effect on me." Similarly, Kesha recounts (<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2020/sep/04/marc-bolan-perfect-pop-star-t-rex-singer-tribute-album-elton-john-u2>): "I just remember thinking, whatever this music was, it was the soundtrack of my soul: it really helped me unleash things inside me. I feel like I was raised by T. Rex, because I didn't have a dad, so male figures in my life were the ones I'd read about or listen to."

Openers "Children of the Revolution" and "Cosmic Dancer" set the stage perfectly, serving as contrasting yet complementary stylistic counterpoints. While Kesha channels the impassioned, self-important bluster of Bolan's punk rock side, Nick Cave imbues the slow-building ballad "Cosmic Dancer" with sentimental, retrospective soul. The juxtaposition is stark, yet elegant in its simplicity. *AngelHeaded Hipster* accurately reflects Bolan's eclecticism, leaving listeners never quite knowing what to expect.

On "Bang a Gong (Get it On)," Elton John and U2 join forces to breathe new life into one of T. Rex's greatest hits. Between Bono's vocals, John's piano accompaniment and a stellar horn section, the track is as high-octane as it gets. Joan Jett's "Jeepster" is comparably high-energy, opting for bluesy punk riffs in lieu of big band swagger.

Interestingly enough, *AngelHeaded Hipster* also features both of John Lennon's sons. Alongside partner Kemp Muhl, Sean Lennon infuses the Oasis-esque "Mambo Sun" with feel-good tropical vibes. On "Pilgrim's Tale," Julian Lennon and Victoria Williams are an intensely atmospheric combo complemented further by an extended, ethereal guitar outro.

Two particularly notable standouts are Børns' "Dawn Storm" and Peaches' "Solid Gold, Easy Action." While Peaches interprets the latter with her distinct brand of alternative electro, Børns strips down the love song "Dawn Storm" and mesmerizes with soulful, soaring vocals. The tracks are impressive testaments to Bolan's inspirational power—both Peaches and Børns make the songs their own, masterfully adapting their unique styles to elevate the originals.

That said, nearly every song on *AngelHeaded Hipster* stands out. John Cameron Mitchell's version of "Diamond Meadows" is a heartfelt feels trip, while Emily Haines (of Metric) somehow makes "Ballrooms of Mars" even more enjoyably spacey than it sounds. Father John Misty heightens "Main Man" with his signature brand of

high-brow soul, and Perry Farrell (of Jane's Addiction) broods enthrallingly on straightforward jam "Rock On." All in all, *AngelHeaded Hipster* wildly succeeds on two fronts: honoring Marc Bolan's legacy and showcasing the extraordinary talent of the generation he inspired.

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