



Austin's Atlas Maior Announces New EP *Keyif* Out October 23rd

The Sonic Explorers' Follow Up to 2014's *Palindrome*

Austin music group Atlas Maior announces a new 3-track EP titled *Keyif*, out October 23rd, and will celebrate the release with a local performance at Central Market North on October 24th. Atlas Maior's influences traverse American Jazz, Middle Eastern traditions and Latin American musical idioms, creating hypnotic, transportive soundscapes with powerful melodies and gripping passages. Istanbul, Turkey acts as the geographic focal point for the group's new sonic exploration: *Keyif* is a Turkish word that loosely translates to enchantment and delight, a collective feeling that the band members took as a souvenir from their time there. A long way from the plentiful sounds of honky tonk and rock in the capital of Texas, Atlas Maior spearheads the growing Austin world music scene with their superb musicianship and rhythmic wizardry.

Recorded at Austin's Bell Tree Studios, *Keyif* represents 3 years of Atlas Maior's compositional ideas and travels from members Charlie Lockwood (*oud*, a pear-shaped Middle Eastern fretless lute considered to be an ancestor of the guitar), Joshua Thomson (alto saxophone, flutes), Ted Camat (percussion) and contributing bass player Gary James. Brazil, Turkey and Spain and the Canary Islands provide sonic touchstones for *Keyif*. Instruments such as the aforementioned *oud*, which Lockwood has focused on for the past 8 years, the Brazilian *pandeiro*, and the *dumbek*, a Middle Eastern goblet shaped hand drum, and Thomson's woodwinds and saxophone help the band develop "seeds of melodic or rhythmic concepts" that swell and intensify into lush arrangements. Drawing on their rich improvisation sessions and multifarious musical sources, Lockwood states, "We wanted to come away with a sound that illustrated our original compositions but also captured a natural and lively rendition of each song."

The EP begins with "Bête Noire," a thunderous and grooving track that acts as a great introduction to Atlas Maior's signature sound. Thomson provides both elongated and staccato melodic phrasing as well as a driving solo section, while Lockwood's *oud* lines bounce with bright Turkish aesthetics. "Cynthia's Tears" begins as a melancholy journey that grows with hope and joy, mirrored by Thomson's solo section that transforms from a forlorn smoothness to a triumphant ascendance. "Raqs Laylah" is an arrangement of a standard in the world of Arab and Turkish music, often accompanied by belly dance. Highlights of the track include Lockwood and Thomson's respective solos over a *ciftetelli* Turkish rhythm, and Camat's dexterous work on the *dumbek*.

The band takes its name from the first world atlas, published by Joan Bleau in Amsterdam in the 17th century. Founded in Austin, TX in 2009, Atlas Maior was inspired by the idea of creating original music encompassing the group's wide range of musical inspirations, stretching from Egyptian composer Mohammad Abdul-Wahhab, Lebanese oud player Rabih Abou-Khalil, bassist Avishai Cohen, jazz artists such as Sun Ra, and fusion projects such as Amalgama and local Austin world music pioneers Atash.

Since its formation Atlas Maior has been creating original material, performing throughout Texas, and engaging creatively with other Austin-based musicians. The group released a self-titled EP in 2011, and followed up with the 2012 release of *Four Shades*, Atlas Maior's first full-length album, recorded at Mohr Music Studios. In September 2013, Atlas Maior embarked on an international tour and cultural immersion experience in Istanbul, Turkey, where they performed at a variety of venues including a local university, and took music lessons from well-known Turkish musicians. The summer before leaving for Istanbul, the group undertook a series of improvisatory recording sessions at Bell Tree Studios, where they began their studio collaboration with James, along with guests Bob Hoffnar (pedal steel), and Sari Andoni (oud). The live cosmologies of sounds resulted in *Palindrome*, the group's 2014 two-disc album comprised entirely of this improved material.

Atlas Maior toured internationally, primarily in Turkey, to promote the new recording, and even received a hometown nod with the proclamation of "Atlas Maior Day" on March 27, 2014 by Austin's City Council. They have opened for internationally acclaimed artists Vieux Farka Touré and Tal National, and have performed at music festivals including Wobefest, Art Outside, SXSW, and the City of Austin's F1 Fan Fest. The group has collaborated with a host of talented musicians in Austin and from around the world, including Atash, Layalina, The University of Texas at Austin Middle East Ensemble Bereket, and The Austin Global Orchestra and many more.

<http://www.cdbaby.com/Artist/AtlasMaior>

<http://atlasmaior.com/>

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