

= Syro =

Syro (pronounced / sa?ro? / ; often stylised as SYRO) is the sixth studio album by the electronic musician Richard D James , released under the pseudonym Aphex Twin on 19 September 2014 on Warp . It is his first studio album release under the name Aphex Twin in 13 years since Drukqs (2001) and his first album of new material since Analord (2005) . The album is also his first official release as Aphex Twin since Chosen Lords (2006) , a compilation of tracks from the Analord series .

Recorded over a period of several years in various studios ? including James ' own studio in rural Scotland ? Syro features 12 tracks and incorporates several subgenres of electronic music including techno , glitch , jungle and ambient . The album also features edited vocal tracks provided by James and his family . Syro 's cryptic promotional campaign included an announcement made available only on the Deep Web , as well as several press releases in broken English and events in various international cities . Upon its release Syro received widespread acclaim from music critics and placed in several international charts , as well as earning a nomination for the Choice Music Prize and winning the 2015 Grammy Award for Best Dance / Electronic Album . It was nominated for the 2015 Mercury Music Prize .

= = Background = =

Following the release of Drukqs in October 2001 Richard D James released a compilation album , 26 Mixes for Cash (2003) , and the penultimate installment of an extended play series titled Analord under the AFX pseudonym . A selection of tracks from Analord were later released on the compilation album Chosen Lords (2006) . A long absence followed , during which time James ceased releasing Aphex Twin material and only performed occasional disc jockey sets in the United Kingdom and Europe . He also relocated to rural Scotland , where he constructed a recording studio .

Warp founder Steve Beckett mentioned on BBC Radio 6 Music in 2009 that a new Aphex Twin studio album would " hopefully " be available by the end of the year , though no album was released . Later in 2010 , James revealed in an interview with culture and fashion magazine Another Man that he had six studio albums completed . Describing the records , he said among them were two " very non @-@ commercial abstract , modular @-@ synthesis field recordings " which were completed in 2006 , as well as Melodies from Mars , a collection of unreleased material from 1995 which James reworked in 2007 .

In April 2014 Fact reported that an anonymous record collector had listed a test pressing of Caustic Window ? an unreleased album James recorded under the Caustic Window alias ? on Discogs . The album was on sale for US \$ 13 @,@ 500 (£ 8 @,@ 050) . In response , members of We Are the Music Makers , an electronic music internet forum , negotiated a deal between the collector , the forum 's administrator , James and Rephlex Records and launched a crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter with a funding goal of \$ 9 @,@ 300 (£ 5 @,@ 000) in order to purchase the album . The campaign eventually raised over \$ 67 @,@ 000 (£ 41 @,@ 000) from 4 @,@ 124 contributions . A digital transfer of the album was made available to the campaign 's contributors and the LP was auctioned on eBay , where it was purchased for \$ 46 @,@ 300 (£ 28 @,@ 100) by Minecraft creator Markus Persson . The proceeds from Caustic Window 's sale were split between James , Rephlex and Médecins Sans Frontières , also known as Doctors Without Borders . James said in retrospect that the campaign was " really touching , and really sweet " and , upon realising the continued interest in his music , he was inspired to release Syro .

= = Composition = =

Syro is an electronic music album . All 12 songs on the album were written by James in @-@ studio . According to James , the songs were written over an extended period ; Syro features both archived and more recent compositions , with the album 's oldest track around " six or seven years old " . The

album was recorded in six different studios , including James ' own studio in Scotland , which he spent three years building and which was completed in 2006 . One audio engineer spent three months with James , helping him wire together patch panels and " then [the engineer] realized he was doing it all wrong and had to start again " . Describing the overall process as " brutal " , James referred to the in @-@ studio technical issues as the catalyst for writing new music that would be featured on Syro .

James used various audio setups when composing Syro 's material . He noted that by rearranging equipment ? and often keeping the same setup for around just five minutes ? it allowed him to explore more writing possibilities ; he said " that will achieve some sort of purpose , so the way I 've wired it together becomes the track in itself . " James also explained that when composing the " logical thing to do is not change anything and just do another one using the same set of sounds " , but during Syro 's recording sessions he would often " get bored and swap things out " .

A total of 138 pieces of equipment were used on Syro , including synthesisers , samplers , sequencers , processing units , MIDI interfaces , drum machines , vocoders , graphic equalisers and mixing desks . Among the brands James used were Yamaha , SSL , Sennheiser , Boss , Roland , Korg and AKG . Several pieces of equipment were further modified by James himself .

In addition to instrumentation , Syro features several vocal tracks . Among them are edited " unintelligible " tracks of James , his wife Anastasia Rybina and his two sons , as well as both his mother and father , who appear on " XMAS _ EVET10 [120] " . He recorded several additional " poppy " vocals of his parents ? none of which were used on Syro ? and stored " entire sample packs of their voices " during the process . On the album 's overall sound , James said it 's " [his] pop album , or as poppy as it 's going to get " and " pleasurable to listen to ? maybe just the composition 's changed , but there 's no next @-@ level beats on there " . He attributed this change in style to the fact he no longer used computer @-@ controlled percussion during Syro 's sessions .

= = Packaging = =

Syro (pronounced / sa?ro? /) is a neologism that was coined by one of James ' children . It is a shortened version of " Syrobonkus " , a " nonsense word one of his sons blurted out while listening to [the album] . " The majority of the album 's track titles are named after the working titles stored on James ' hard drives and reference individual pieces of equipment James used in its recording , as well as the tracks ' respective BPM values . A comprehensive list of all equipment featured on Syro is included as part of the album 's packaging ; Creative Review referred to the list as a " disinfographic " .

Syro 's cover artwork was designed by the Designers Republic , a graphic design studio that provided designs for previous Aphex Twin releases , including the 1999 single " Windowlicker " and the compilation album 26 Mixes for Cash . The cover art resembles a receipt , with the official Aphex Twin logo and album title printed upon it . According to Creative Review , the receipt on the album cover details the production and promotional costs of Syro , " from courier charges to photoshoot expenses , expressed per disc and tailored for both vinyl and CD versions . "

Ian Anderson , the founder of the Designers Republic , noted that the final concept for the album cover was conceived after receiving a number of suggestions from James . Among James ' other suggestions for the album 's packaging was " the idea of pressing the album or a single track into the fabric of the cover , effectively as a deboss " , or using various images of the raw vinyl pucks from which all copies of Syro are pressed . These suggestions were implemented into Syro 's final LP packaging , with James ' wife Anastasia Rybina credited for additional design and " puckography " .

= = Release = =

The promotional campaign for Syro began when a chartreuse @-@ coloured blimp featuring the Aphex Twin logo and the number " 2014 " appeared over London , England on 16 August 2014 . On the same day Aphex Twin graffiti was reported outside Radio City Music Hall and various other

locations in New York , United States . Two days later Aphex Twin 's official Twitter account posted a link to a hidden service , accessible using the Deep Web software Tor , detailing the album 's title and track listing . The service accumulated over 133 @, @ 000 views in less than a day , according to The Guardian .

In the following week several purported leaks of Syro appeared on YouTube and Soundcloud ; Richard D James subsequently denied that any of the leaks were legitimate . " Listening events " for Syro were then organised in various cities in the UK , Belgium , Canada , Netherlands and the US as part of the album 's promotional campaign . Beginning on 5 September in London and concluding on 10 September in Utrecht , the events allowed applicants who had won an online lottery ballot to hear the album in its entirety prior to its international release . " minipops 67 [120 @. @ 2] " , Syro 's opening track , was released as the album 's lead single on 4 September . It was made available for stream and as a digital download following its premiere on BBC Radio 1 earlier that day .

Syro was released on Warp on 19 September 2014 in Australia , Germany , Ireland , New Zealand and Switzerland ; 22 September in the UK and various European countries , including Denmark and Netherlands ; 23 September in the US ; and 24 September in Japan . The album was released on triple LP , CD and various digital formats , including MP3 , AAC , WAV and FLAC . A limited @-@ edition box set version of Syro , featuring a bonus track debossed on perspex vinyl , was released through Bleep.com. Limited to 200 pressings , interested users had to first enter a lottery , " in the interest of fairness " , to become eligible .

In a Rolling Stone interview about the release of Syro , James replied :

Horny . I 'm feeling really horny about it . And very smug ? I 'm in that mode now , so hopefully I 'll stay in it for a while ? I 've got a few more things planned ? at least a couple more albums , some EPs , things like that . Some more dance @-@ y things I did about 10 years ago . Experimental things , noise things , weird things . Shitloads of stuff . They 're all pretty much ready to go .

Following Syro 's release , Computer Controlled Acoustic Instruments pt2 and a collection of 155 unreleased tracks were released in early 2015 . The tracks were uploaded by James to several Soundcloud accounts under different usernames , including " user487363530 " , " user4873635301 " and " user48736353001 " . Though there was initial speculation as to the authenticity of the recordings , James ' friend and collaborator Mike Paradinas confirmed that the tracks were legitimate . The Guardian 's Stuart Aitken drew comparisons between the surprise online releases and the promotional campaign for Syro , calling them " the latest example of a new willingness on the part of Aphex Twin to embrace digital media in very unexpected ways " and " explor [ing] the creative possibilities offered by the internet " .

On 5 March 2015 , it was announced that Syro 's Japanese bonus track " MARCHROMT30A edit 2b 96 " would be released as a 12 @-@ inch single on 6 April 2015 , backed with alternative versions of the title track and Syro 's " XMAS _ EVET10 [120] (thanaton3 mix) " .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical reception = = =

At Metacritic , which assigns a normalised rating out of 100 to reviews from mainstream critics , Syro received an average score of 86 , based on 36 reviews , indicating " universal acclaim " . Clash editor Mike Diver referred to the album as " an effortless comeback " and described it as " a more immediately engaging collection " than Drukqs (2001) and " an album that plays almost exclusively to its maker 's long @-@ established strengths " , rating it eight out of ten . Writing for The Guardian , Tim Jonze said that " [Syro] doesn 't do what some fans will have been hoping , in that it does not completely reshape the sonic landscape in the way Richard D James repeatedly did through the [19] 90s ? and yet by sounding simply like a series of Aphex Twin tracks , Syro is still utterly engrossing and remains , somewhat unbelievably , on a completely different planet " . Jonze awarded the album a four @-@ out @-@ of @-@ five star rating .

NME reviewer Louis Pattison rated Syro 9 out of 10 and surmised that the album is " a banging

reminder of why the Cornish raver is one of music 's true innovators " . Pattison further stated that " whereas Drukqs sometimes felt alienating or punishing , Syro charms and beguiles ? [it is] amazing : bug @-@ eyed , banging rave that sounds quintessentially Aphex while not quite sounding like anything he 's done before . " In his review for The Wire , Derek Walmsley wrote positively about the album . He said that " Syro feels like a perfected memory of [19] 80s music " , adding " its sweeping melodies , with echoes of 1991 's Analogue Bubblebath , could be seen as a return to his roots " but concluded that " Aphex Twin 's music seems as new as it ever was . " Rolling Stone reviewer Will Hermes gave Syro a four @-@ out @-@ of @-@ five star rating and stated that the record is " thick with Seventies jazz @-@ funk nods " and " answers Daft Punk 's Random Access Memories with future @-@ shock electronics supplanting nostalgic dazzle ? graying snobs once called this ' intelligent dance music . ' Even now , few do it better . "

The Independent 's Andy Gill awarded a four @-@ out @-@ of @-@ five star rating to Syro and called it " a collection primarily concerned with the somatic rather than cerebral sides of Richard James ' music , overdosing somewhat on staccato , bouncing synth twangs and jittery drum 'n'bass beats . " " aisatsana [102] " , Syro 's closing track , drew comparisons to the works of French composer Erik Satie from both The Independent and Drowned in Sound , whose reviewer Tom Fenwick awarded the album a full 10 @-@ out @-@ of @-@ 10 rating . Summarising the album , Fenwick said that " Syro sees a master craftsman return with renewed inspiration . And while it might not technically be James ' most innovative album , it way [sic] well be his best ? and once you let the hype drain away ? what 's revealed is pretty much flawless . "

Resident Advisor 's Jordan Rothlein described Syro as " look [ing] in no obvious direction ? Syro is freewheeling and playful , but its every warbled note and compositional hard @-@ left betray consideration and technical expertise that didn 't come overnight . In terms of impressive twists and turns , they 're myriad . Tracks morph , pressurize and reorganize ? but never break down , exactly ? following a completely unpredictable if utterly natural logic . " He rated the album a full five @-@ out @-@ of @-@ five rating . Writing for AllMusic , Andy Kellman referred to Syro as " one of James ' most inviting and enjoyable releases " and said the album is " decked in accents and melodies that are lively even at their most distressed " in his four @-@ out @-@ of @-@ five @-@ star review . Derek Staples of Consequence of Sound commented on the album 's wide range of genres , including glitch , chillwave , techno , acid jazz and jungle , and said Syro " peaks as Aphex Twin 's most accessible album since his ambient works " , ultimately giving the album a B + rating . Pitchfork highlighted Syro as part of the publication 's " Best New Music " ; editor Mark Richardson rated the album 8 @. @ 7 out of 10 , writing that Syro " has few extremes , no hyper @-@ intense splatter @-@ breaks or satanic ' Come to Daddy ' vocals or rushes of noise . On the other end of the spectrum , Syro doesn 't cast James in a quasi @-@ classical light ; there 's no ' serious composer ' tracks ? without all that , what 's left ? Sixty @-@ five minutes of highly melodic , superbly arranged , precisely mixed , texturally varied electronic music that sounds like it could have come from no other artist . "

Australian national radio station Double J selected Syro as its " Feature Album " for the week beginning 22 September 2014 . The station concluded its review with the statement : " This is another fascinating record from one of the few artists on this planet who can make something very weird sound utterly amazing . " Syro was also selected as " Album of the Week " by Mojo and The Sunday Times , ranked number one on The Washington Post 's September list of " best new music " , featured among Dazed 's " top ten albums of the month " for September , and was the highest @-@ scoring album on Metacritic that month .

= = = Commercial performance = = =

Syro placed on the mid @-@ week UK Albums Chart at number 2 , selling 9 @, @ 000 copies less than This Is All Yours by alt @-@ J. It subsequently debuted at number 8 on the weekly chart , selling 17 @, @ 751 copies in its first week of release . Syro is James ' first album to reach the top 10 in the chart , and his highest peaking album in the UK to date ; Selected Ambient Works Volume II had previously peaked at number 11 in March 1994 . Syro also appeared on four other British

charts ; it placed at number 2 on the Independent Albums Chart and number 7 on the Scottish Albums Chart , as well as reaching number 1 on both the Dance Albums and Official Record Store Albums charts .

Syro entered the top 10 in several international charts , including the Irish Albums Chart , the Irish Independent Albums Chart and the Russian Albums Chart , where it debuted at number 10 with first week sales of 10 @, @ 029 . The album entered the weekly Japanese Albums Chart at number 8 and sold 10 @, @ 553 physical copies in its first week of release . Syro debuted at number 35 on the Belgian Albums Chart in Flanders and subsequently entered the top 10 , rising to number 7 in its second week .

On the United States ' Billboard charts , Syro placed in the top 10 in several charts , having sold 23 @, @ 000 first @-@ week copies ? 22 per cent of which were LP copies and responsible for " the largest sales week in 2014 for a dance / electronic album on vinyl " , according to Nielsen SoundScan . Syro topped the Vinyl Albums , Dance / Electronic Albums and Tastemaker Albums charts , and entered the Digital Albums chart at number 8 and the Independent Albums chart at number 2 . As of February 2015 , Syro had sold 54 @, @ 000 copies in the US .

= = = Accolades = = =

Syro was featured on several publications ' year @-@ end critics ' lists . The album fared particularly well in the British press ; The Guardian selected Syro as the fourth @-@ best album of 2014 , and the album placed at number 9 on the newspaper 's reader poll . The Wire named Syro album of the year , while NME placed Syro at number 4 on its list " Top 50 Albums of 2014 " , Q ranked the album at number 10 on its " Top 50 Albums of 2014 " feature and Uncut selected it as the third @-@ best album on its list of the " Best Albums of 2014 " . Syro was also featured at number 6 on Dazed 's " top 20 albums of 2014 " and number 8 on Clash 's " Fuss @-@ Free Top 40 Albums Of 2014 " .

Elsewhere , Syro was featured in Rolling Stone at number 41 on its " 50 Best Albums of 2014 " list , on Stereogum 's " 50 Best Albums of 2014 " at number 33 and Pitchfork Media 's " 50 Best Albums of 2014 " at number 4 . Critics on behalf of Billboard selected Syro as the eighth @-@ best album of 2014 and PopMatters placed the album at number 9 on its " Best Albums of 2014 " feature , while Resident Advisor ranked it at number 4 on its " Top 20 albums of 2014 " . In its end @-@ of @-@ year roundup Bleep.com selected Syro as the top album of the 2014 , surmising that the album is " a poignant reminder of the relevance of one of the most important artists of our time . "

Syro won a Grammy Award for Best Dance / Electronic Album at the 57th Annual Grammy Awards in February 2015 ; sales of the album in the US increased 101 per cent following James ' win . Syro was nominated for IMPALA 's European Independent Album of the Year and is also shortlisted for the 2015 Choice Music Prize for Irish Album of the Year , due to be awarded in March 2015 .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Richard D James .

= = Personnel = =

All personnel credits adapted from Syro 's album notes .

Performer

Richard D James ? piano , synthesizers , keyboards , drums , percussion , vocoder , programming , production

Technical personnel

Mandy Parnell ? mastering (2 ? 13)

Beau Thomas ? mastering (1)

Design personnel

The Designers Republic ? design , cover art

Anastasia Rybina ? design , " puckography "

= = Chart positions = =

= = Release history = =