



Magdalena Bay

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Not only is Magdalena Bay pushing the boundaries of synthpop, they're also pushing the boundaries of performance art. From the playful, early-internet sounds of their synthpop debut *Mercurial World*, it has been clear that Magdalena Bay approaches the world in a calculated yet half-serious way. With the release of *Imaginal Disk* — the duo's grand, ambitious new record — they have set off on the "Imaginal Mystery Tour". Their refined, scaled-up sound is perfectly translated to the stage, solidifying the tour as the next phase of their master plan to get others to see the world in their image.

As the lights dimmed and the winding tapes of "She Looked Like Me!" started to play, all eyes moved to the winged, mirror-shaped portal that took up nearly half of the stage. It displayed various images and videos throughout the show, beginning with an up-close eyeball that twitched and scanned the crowd. Whether acting as the T.V. that entranced Mica Tenenbaum, the duo's lead singer, from her floral-patterned chair during "Watching T.V.," or functioning as a means for her angelic persona to make contact with her alter-ego True Blue on "Fear, Sex," the portal served as the main support piece.

Tenenbaum came out dressed as True Blue, with Matt Levin opposing her in all red, occasionally putting on a mask to become the nondescript monster that haunted *Imaginal Disk*'s promotion. Despite

limited stage space, the duo took complete advantage. During "Fear, Sex" alone, Tenenbaum longingly played a keyboard to the right of the stage, dramatically posed on the podium in the middle, and had a disk nearly inserted in her forehead by Levin as she sat in a chair on the left. The most impressive aspect of the show was the light design. It supported the progressive nature of *Imaginal Disk*, panning over Tenenbaum as the songs started and flashing uncontrollably during the monumental outros. The prog-rock "Tunnel Vision" featured the lighting at its best. The lights calmly matched the song's twinkling synths, shifting in their force as the track built. In its explosive last minute, the lights matched the instrumental chaos as they wildly flashed between blues, reds, and greens. Tenenbaum thrashed across the stage, and just when the disorder hit its peak, the venue went black, leaving the audience shocked and captivated.

The duo's pre-*Imaginal Disk* performances were effective, but they only included Levin's usage of synths and Tenenbaum's vocals. The "Imaginal Mystery Tour's" incorporation of live guitars, keyboards, and drums elevated the experience. Magdalena Bay grounded the more intense build-ups on the record, allowed for stronger payoffs, and transformed older songs off of *Mercurial World* to better encompass their current sound. The dark,

heavy synth outro of "Dreamcatching" was still present, but its layers of reworked riffs and stronger drums gave it a new power that only their expanded sound could accomplish. During the initially gentle "Vampire in the Corner," Tenenbaum slipped on a headpiece decorated with sunflower petals and sang calmly from her podium before contorting her voice and body as the instrumentation sharpened in frequency and power for the song's end. Even their more simple, pop-structured songs were illustrated as grandiose narratives.

Magdalena Bay always ends their shows with "The Beginning." It is the pinnacle of what defines them — a sweet, dreamy pop song that veers on the edge of cliché, yet leans into its silliness just enough that the audience can't help but embrace it, jumping and dancing with more intensity than the rest of the show. As Magdalena Bay walked off the stage, the clamor remained high, the crowd savoring the excitement of knowing they just saw the next big thing in the making.



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