

REVIEWS

MATTHEW SWEET

**Modern Art**

[Missing Piece]

After a nearly 30-year career and the critical acclaim reaped by much-loved albums like *Girlfriend*, *Altered Beast* and *100% Fun*, Matthew Sweet has earned his place among power-pop's elite. His up-and-down fortunes have been dictated all too often by never-ending shifts in record-label affiliations, but each new album still brings an endlessly renewed sense of possibility. True to Sweet's retro sensibilities, *Modern Art* is distinguished by a psychedelic strain that courses throughout the proceedings. Byrds-like harmonies are plentiful as well, with the hushed vocals of "Oh, Oldendaze!", "She Walks the Night" and "Baltimore" recalling the iconic *Fifth Dimension* and *The Notorious Byrds Brothers* albums in particular. Other offerings—most notably "Ivory Tower" (with its angry entreaty "Come down from your ivory tower"), the blistering "Ladyfingers" and the shape-shifting "Late Nights With the Power Pop" ("... drowning pain that will never stop")—reflect an edgier side as well. Three decades on, *Modern Art* finds Sweet still creating new colors for his palette. —Lee Zimmerman

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