**GOAT *Requiem*Release Date: Oct 7th 2016**

In a culture obsessed with content, saturation, and continual exposure, it’s rare to find artists who prefer to lurk outside of the public eye. Thomas Pynchon is perhaps the most notable contemporary recluse—a virtually faceless figure who occasionally creeps out of hiding to offer up an elaborate novel steeped in history and warped by imagination—but for the crate digging audiophiles, guitar mystics, and third-eye visionaries, Sweden’s enigmatic rock outfit GOAT may qualify as the greatest modern pop-culture mystery. Who are these masked musicians? Are they truly members of a remote tribe in the Arctic community of Korpilombolo? Are their songs actually a part of their communal heritage, passed down through generations in their isolated homeland? Their third studio full-length,*Requiem*, offers more questions than answers, but much like any of Pynchon’s knotty yarns, the reward is not in the untangling but in the journey through the labyrinth.

Western exports may have dominated the consciousness of international rock fans for the entirety of the 20th century, but our increasing global awareness has unearthed a treasure trove of transcendental grooves and spellbinding riffage from exotic and remote corners of the planet. GOAT’s previous albums *World Music* and *Commune* were perfect testaments to this heightened awareness, with Silk Road psychedelia, desert blues, and Third World pop all serving as governing forces within the band’s sound. But GOAT’s strange amalgam isn’t some cheap game of cultural appropriation—it’s nearly impossible to pinpoint the exact origins of the elusive group’s sound. Whether or not the enigmatic collective truly claims Korpilombolo as their home, the fact that they pledge allegiance to a spot on the periphery of our maps—a spot so distant and off the grid that it feels fictitious—bolsters the nomadic quality of their sonic explorations. With *Requiem*, GOAT continue to rock and writhe to a beat beholden to no nation, no state.

GOAT’s only outright declaration for *Requiem* is that it is their “folk” album. For the initiated, such a proclamation seems almost unnecessary—GOAT has always vacillated between electrified exuberance and unplugged tribalist hymns. But *Requiem* does findGOAT focusing more on their subdued bucolic ritualism than on the psilocybin freakouts. Opening tracks “Djorolen/Union of Sun and Moon” and “I Sing in Silence” both set the stage for GOAT’s rustic approach, with the guitars laying down simple chord progressions and pan flute providing the primary hooks. From those very first notes, the piper leads us down a path where GOAT relies less on acidic guitar lines and more on sun-bleached psych-pop. “Trouble in the Streets” carries all the jubilance of classic African highlife. “Try My Robe” bares the group’s signature ceremonial hip-shaking rhythms, but eschews guitar for a mandolin line that would make John Paul Jones proud. But GOAT hasn’t completely foregone their fiery charms—tracks like “All-Seeing Eye” and “Goatfuzz” conjure the sultry heathen pulsations that ensnared us on their previous albums.

Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of *Requiem* comes with the closing track “Ubuntu”. The song is little more than a melodic delay-driven electric piano line, until we hear the refrain from “Diarabi”—the first song on their first album—sneak into the mix. It creates a kind of musical ouroboros—an infinite cycle of reflection and rejuvenation, death and rebirth. Much like fellow recluse Pynchon, GOAT doesn’t offer up any explanations for their strange trajectories. But like Pynchon, they have managed to create a world of their own where the line between truth and fiction is so obscured that all you can do is bask in their cryptic genius.