



DAVID THORPE - My Harp, My Rules

By Sophia Ramirez

Last November, New Zealand harp player David Thorpe released an inspired new album: *My Harp, My Rules*. The aim, Thorpe explains, was to make something unexpected and collaborate with his friends to push the boundaries of his “number one instrument”, the harmonica. They accomplished this and more. Thorpe and his friends have created a freewheeling album that is part-blues, part-folk, part-country, and part-everything in between.

The album swings open with *Lowtone Intro*, a quick blues tune that packs a punch with loud energy and a gritty harmonica. After this track, Thorpe proceeds to go beyond blues to show how much more the humble harp can do. As new instruments and new sounds are introduced through his talented musical friends, Thorpe’s playing adapts and diversifies, revealing an exciting musical range. For instance, the track *Deus Ex Machina* spotlights Stephen McDaid and his warm, acoustic guitar playing. As McDaid gently fingerpicks the guitar, Thorpe’s harmonica becomes more acoustic and warm in response. Together, they fill the song with a sweet early-morning, country feel.

This transformation of the harmonica is most surprising, however, in *Blues Trip* with Johnny Ginger. Ginger sets the track with electronic beats, sleek and smooth. Slowly, Thorpe builds on the beats with his harmonica licks, and Ginger’s beats respond to those licks, and so on, until the sound grows organically into a fresh, modern song that wouldn’t feel out of place in a James Bond title sequence. By colliding the very different worlds of techno and harmonica, Thorpe and Ginger made something completely unique and greater than the sum of its parts.

In the description of the album, Thorpe talks about hoping to overhaul preconceptions one may have of this unassuming instrument. I think how *My Harp, My Rules* proves the potential of the harmonica best is by going back to the roots of the instrument: friends playing together, connecting over the music and the rhythm and, most importantly, having a great time.

<https://davidthorpeharmonica.bandcamp.com/releases>