

BIO - Horse Jumper of Love S/T 10 Year Anniversary Deluxe Edition

Sometimes the best art happens when no one is paying attention. That was certainly the case for Horse Jumper of Love's self-titled debut, an album of scrappy, aching slowcore, written in a basement, quietly put on Bandcamp and tape in 2016 by Disposable America, and then given a wider release on vinyl and streaming the following year by Run For Cover Records. The album's extremely humble origins might seem incongruous with its outsized impact—a decade on *Horse Jumper of Love* is widely regarded as an essential record of the 2010s, a key release that helped propel slowcore and shoegaze out of the musical dustbin and back into the indie rock zeitgeist—but at the time of its creation, the young band couldn't have had lower expectations. Now, in celebration of the album's tenth anniversary, Horse Jumper of Love and Run For Cover have expanded and re-mastered this cult classic, including a booklet of handwritten guitar tabs, archival photos, and an additional disc of unreleased b-sides, demos, and alternate versions. It's a lovingly assembled tribute to a seminal record and to the time, place, and spirit from which it emerged.

In the spring of 2016, Horse Jumper of Love (guitarist/vocalist Dimitri Giannopoulos, bassist John Margaritis, and drummer James Doran) were a fresh-faced trio of teenagers making a name for themselves in the Boston house show circuit. "I started writing these songs in my parents' basement when I was nineteen years old," explains Giannopoulos. He had no intentions with it besides the hope he'd make back the small amount of money it had taken to record. "It's truly a slacker album in that way, one that could only have been born out of the shamelessness of being a worm. It came because it had to, because I was en route to fully submitting to mental illness and self-destruction. You put your art out because you burn to tap into some universal truth and make the world feel less alien. In hindsight, it was very pure." That bone-deep need for self-expression permeated *Horse Jumper of Love* and helped it connect with an unexpectedly dedicated audience on Bandcamp before catching the attention of ascending label, Run For Cover, who pressed it to vinyl and spurred the momentum further. Soon the band's small local following was expanding to message boards, then to tastemaker outlets like *Stereogum*, *Pitchfork*, and NPR, and suddenly the group found themselves at the start of what would become a real career as professional musicians.

In a few short years Horse Jumper of Love went from playing in Boston basements to headlining tours worldwide, performing at high profile festivals, and opening for their influences like Duster. And now in turn, traces of their self-titled debut can be heard in a new generation of sonically indebted groups like They Are Gutting A Body of Water, Teethe, Shallowater, and more. Such quick canonization might seem like a surprising trajectory for these soft-spoken, rough around the edges songs, but *Horse Jumper of Love* has become a modern classic, its elegiac tracks are slowcore staples and its hand-drawn cover art (illustrated by Giannopoulos) is instantly recognizable. The sentiment of this music and Giannopoulos' yearning delivery has had an undeniable staying power, a sense of purity and universality that rings timeless. "I see now that it has a lot to do with family and a transition between dependence and alienation," he says. "This album feels like a portrait of that alienation as I was coming into it: I had moved out, dropped out of community college, had no direction, fell in love, got heartbroken, etc. I was 19

when I started writing the album, 21 when I finished it. I didn't think many people would hear it. I got embarrassed, like waking up hungover after revealing too much at the bar in front of people you don't know."

The thirteen bonus tracks on the *10 Year Anniversary Deluxe Edition* (most of which were recorded by Giannopoulos himself) capture the particular gritty melancholy of the album's original songs while inviting us further into the archive of a record the band thought no one would hear. "Ugly Brunette (4-Track)" strips the album's opener to its barest confessional mode, like overhearing an afternoon basement rehearsal. "Heather (2013)" shows the influence of spritelier 2010s indie rock on Giannopoulos' earliest songwriting, an influence which the band has embraced melodically as much as they've resisted it formally (the band would go on to slow "Heather" down to a dirge-like pace, transforming it into the self-titled record's "i love you very much forever"). One can easily access the feeling of being a teenager sick in bed and stuck at home, searching for something novel in the doleful riffs of previously unreleased "Sick Anymore."

Collected together as one body of work, *Horse Jumper of Love* and all of its contemporaneous material feels like a smudged, graphite portrait of that transition from adolescence to adulthood, illuminating the truth of what the original album always was: a potent snapshot of self-definition, the moment an artist crawls out of the dirt and into the world.