

JESSE NORTHEY *Onion Knight*

If one was to analyze the DNA of Jesse Northey music, its double helix might look an awful lot like a sharp insider's take on the world of capital "P" pop songcraft. A decade and change into his career, Northey has long established his own voice as a songwriter, but the music palpably pulses with inspiration from the decades' worth of tune-smiths that have come before him. In tandem with lyrics that explore the myriad ways in which we need to dismantle the artifice of masculinity, societal norms, and creativity-sapping careerist ambitions, this is music firmly rooted in the classics, but cut with a clear-eyed contemporary viewpoint.

On his new EP *Onion Knight*, Northey presents a widescreen distillation of these influences, brought to life with exceptional warmth and attention to detail by ace producer Thomas D'Arcy (The Sheepdogs, NOBRO, Yukon Blonde) at Taurus Studios in Toronto. The drums are lush and up front, the bass melodic and McCartney-esque, and the songs are driven by piano, vintage keyboards, and shimmering synths. All of these elements readily bring to mind titans of song such as Elliott Smith, Harry Nilsson, Aimee Mann, and Spoon, as well as contemporaries such as Chris Cohen and Andy Shauf.

None of this should come as a surprise, however, as Northey has maintained a parallel career behind the curtains of the music world. His work as an engineer and producer has afforded him plenty of time to hone his studio skills, and his place on the High Priestess Publishing roster has led to songs appearing in far flung places such as the Amazon's documentary on Pete Buttigieg, former Indiana Mayor turned presidential candidate. As the leader of Jesse & The Dandelions, he has shared stages with Hollerado, Said the Whale, and July Talk, and toured extensively in Japan. And since 2019, he's been the man behind Victory Pool, a record label and management company, helping to shepherd an impressive variety of acts such as Witch Prophet, The Deep Dark Woods, Marlaena Moore, Ghost Woman and Ombiigizi.

"Onions are associated with crying," Northey says. "I wanted to conjure an imagery that confronts the stoic heroism associated with masculinity and take a jab at it." And he's done just that: the feel of *Onion Knight* is classic but also urgent, tackling modern anxieties and buffered by a warm, rich psychedelia that is inviting as it is pristine.

(Chris Dadge, July 2022)