



IRASCIBLE MUSIC



SPINNING COIN (UK)

Album: *Permo*

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Web: www.dominorecordco.com/artists/spinning-coin

EPK: irascible.ch/de/releases/spinning-coin/permo

Over the space of three years, two singles and countless gigs, including tour supports with Teenage Fanclub and Real Estate, Spinning Coin have determinedly made their music heard: beautifully rough-hewn guitar pop that takes in frustration and escapism, but also gracefulness and splendour. Their first album, *Permo*, recorded with Edwyn Collins at his AED Studios, and at Glasgow's Green Door with Stu Evans, captures this balance perfectly. It's an album both of bold steps and of simple gestures, coming from a group who have found, seemingly effortlessly, a confident, unpretentious way of working together.

It's partly down to their history. Starting out in 2014 as a four-piece – Sean Armstrong (guitar, vocals), Jack Mellin (guitar, vocals), Cal Donnelly (bass) and Chris White (drums) – the members of Spinning Coin have all been involved in collective, DIY music-making. They may have formed out of Armstrong's project, the Sean Armstrong Experience, but their unique sound coalesced quickly, with Armstrong and Mellin both bringing songs to the group. Sometimes, their material is sculpted from jamming in their practice room: it's an egalitarian way of working, a politic reflected in much of the members' other music too, whether White's involvement with the Winning Sperm Party collective, Donnelly's membership of Breakfast Muff, or Mellin's time with Smack Wizards.

Spinning Coin released a few cassettes in 2015, but made their first forays into wider consciousness with two seven-inch singles, 2016's "Albany / Sides" and this year's "Raining On Hope Street / Tin", both released on The Pastels' Domino imprint, Geographic Music. Taken together, they sketched out some parameters for the group's songwriters – Armstrong more melancholic, Mellin's songs full of nervous energy – with Donnelly and White framing the melodies with deft touches. But initial appearances can be deceiving, and one of the revelations of *Permo* is its breadth, the way both Armstrong and Mellin are happy to experiment, to take a risk on the next melody, and to see it take flight in unexpected ways.

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The fourteen songs on *Permo* trace all kinds of terrain, though the overarching story might be that of a group looking for escapism, somehow and anyhow, in the midst of a social and cultural climate that's closing down possibilities for difference and community. It opens with the gorgeous "Raining On Hope Street", an Armstrong song that dates back a number of years – there's an undercurrent to the song, too, as Armstrong reflects that he wanted to write something "slightly spooky, ambiguous and open to interpretation". "Tin" follows, one of many Mellin songs that looks to the outside world and finds things wanting.

"“Tin” is trying to look at the two extremes of privilege and under-privilege,” he says. It’s a theme that Mellin returns to, with variation, over the course of the album – from the deceptively spry “Money Is A Drug”, whose flecks of country-soul charm conceals lyrics calling out ‘class war’ and ‘stupid rules’, through to “Powerful”, where Mellin takes on the possibilities of self-empowerment: “I’m talking about people that do have the ability to maybe quit their shit job and do something a bit better for a while. I know not everyone can do that.” What gives Spinning Coin’s songs nuance, though, is their self-awareness. “I’m really singing to myself, to be honest,” Mellin reflects, and there’s nothing didactic about these songs. Spinning Coin write from lived experience, grounding their songs in an understanding that we’re all finding our way through the world, trying to figure out what the hell is going on out there.

Armstrong takes on similar themes with “Starry Eyes”, and its blunt lines about how it’s not ‘the right time to celebrate, when people in the world are dying at the hands of the government’, but he also writes some of the album’s more peaceable songs, like the sleepwalking reverie of “Metro-nome River”, or the driftwork of “Floating With You”. His songs pour out as stream-of-consciousness: from there, Armstrong continues, “I’m usually trying to say something positive. I think there’s value in being critical, but I don’t think I’m very good at it.” It’s an important counterpoint to Spinning Coin’s more political moments.

They’ve also just welcomed new member Rachel Taylor, who appears on the album, offering, amongst other things, ghostly backing vocals on “Running With The World”. That’s a typically Spinning Coin development: a group fiercely engaged with community, welcoming new experience into their orbit, and looking for ways to move forwards with a warmth for humanity. It’s writ large across *Permo* – finding better ways to live, and to be together in the world, against the odds.

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