



IRASCIBLE MUSIC



FLASHER (USA)

Constant Image

Label: Domino Records

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Web: <http://flasher.online>

EPK: irascible.ch/de/releases/flasher/constant-image/

There's weight and lightness here. It's not often a debut album arrives in so complete a form but when it does you know you've got something special on your hands. After years of having to decide between nail-biting confusion and disarming pop melodies, Flasher finally allow us to have it all. Constant Image is an album of anxiety and escape, but also one of euphoria and freedom. No matter how high the stakes may be, the delight in which Flasher came together to write and record these songs is undeniable. The three of them share vocal duties, sometimes harmonizing in gorgeous counter-melodies that sweep you away, sometimes taking turns to sing in nervous fits of emotion.

Since they appeared with their self-titled, self-released EP back in 2016, Flasher has exuded both a clarity of intent and a radiant self-confidence. Critically applauded from the start, that initial release offered a clear blueprint. By turns razor sharp and woozy, skipping from shoegaze to punk and back again, it offered confirmation of a band whose wiry energy and melodic ease made them instantly arresting.

After the release of one more 7" (the wonderfully nervous stutter of Winnie), they quickly found themselves signed to Domino and have since been quietly working on their full-length debut - Constant Image. Recorded in 2017 across a few sleep-deprived weeks at Rare Book Room in Brooklyn, NY, it was produced by Nicolas Vernhes (Animal Collective, Deerhunter, War On Drugs) and crackles with invention. This isn't the sound of a band finding their feet, it's the rare sound of three people who know exactly what they want to achieve from the start.

From their hometown of Washington, DC, with its rich history of idiosyncratic underground music, Flasher - Taylor Multz on guitar, bassist Daniel Saperstein and drummer Emma Baker - has emerged at the forefront of a vibrant musical present. The Sister Polygon label (which Multz helps run with former bandmates Priests) is a vital element in this moment of local cultivation and political confrontation. With their new LP, Flasher is helping to define a new generation of music in the city set apart from Dischord or any other storied DC past.

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Place du Nord 7, 1005 Lausanne
Geroldstrasse 33, 8005 Zürich
www.irascible.ch

D-CH Promotion: Fabienne Schmuki
fabienne@irascible.ch; 044 271 32 83

F-CH Promotion: Gilles Kaeser
gilles@irascible.ch; 078 976 00 25



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Lyrics are often complete thoughts presented through incomplete sentences, phrases that read well on paper but truly come alive in song. They admit to being “Undone by the fascination” in “Sun Come And Golden”; “Laughter in this century / Is a misery afterglow” they proffer in “Material”. From the careful sonic detailing to the cutting, earworm riffs and surging, propulsive melodies, Flasher has a knack for weaving intricacy into moments of infectious pop immediacy. These moves are as surprising as they are thrilling and that rush is important and ever present.

Across the record, Flasher is seeking a freedom that doesn’t always mean rehabilitating the demands society, family or whoever, has had for you in the past. That idea of escape, via various means, is a theme that they continue to explore throughout, often hinging on expectations of identity.

Flasher offers up an idea of identity “as something uncomfortably contingent, something you always negotiate with those around you and most painfully with those who “know you the best”. It’s as much about learning to love yourself as it is giving up the kind of individualized sense of control and autonomy that ironically leaves you ever more isolated.”

The issues they’re wrestling with might be serious then but the band never sinks under the weight of them. Take first single “Pressure” – a song that zeroes in on feelings of mania and alienation but is buoyed by a darting B-52s swagger. That track is part of an opening salvo to the album that offers a rapid succession of taut pop songs that culminates in the surging off-kilter energy of “Who’s Got Time?” – an absolute joyride of a song. From there though, the band throttle back and the last part of the album takes a significant left turn, heading into deeper, more atmospheric territory. The last three tracks – “Harsh Light”, “Punching Up” and “Business Unusual” - indicate a band who know depth as well as immediacy.

The starkest evidence of Flasher’s ability to take the rough with the smooth, album closer “Business Unusual” is a disturbingly sweet and tender anti-cop song; a sharp and poignant pairing of righteous protest and smooth sax (you’ll just have to hear it to understand). It’s in that moment that all the worlds of Flasher collide - future and past, escape and freedom, all twisted up over a naggingly insistent guitar riff.

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