**Wunderhorse** - profile (853 words)

Feasting on grunge and shredded rulebooks, Indie Rock outfit Wunderhorse have gone from solo project, *Cub* to a four-man carnivore with a talent for making entire arenas prey held in their jaws.

There are few things music fans hunger for more these days than authenticity. A band who are willing to create their own footprint and stand beside it proudly. In the case of Wunderhorse, their trail of footprints has led them all the way to the likes of Manchester’s Victoria Warehouse and London’s famed Ally Pally as they prepare for their biggest headline shows to date.

The album that brought them here is 2024’s *Midas.* An unapologetic and at times painfully honest series of gold-plated garage punk hits. But don’t let the gold coating fool you, although incredibly well crafted, *Midas* never tried to cover its mistakes. Like some form of musical kintsugi (the Japanese process of repairing ceramics that accentuates cracks with gold paint in order to embrace the item’s history) the album is perfectly imperfect. In essence, it aimed to drop you into the centre of the recording studio, presumably cross-legged with wide eyes and a heartrate synched to the beat.

The band’s drummer Jamie Staples confirmed: “I think we knew we wanted to make a live sounding record like you’re in the room with us really when you listen to it.” It seems important to note his choice of language being “with us” as opposed to watching us. This is a record that pulls you into its mind and invites you to feel the pulse below its ribcage. It’s raw and even unsteady at times. Staples continues, “Nothing was overdubbed except for some vocals and some guitars on a few things.”

It's an album based on real time collaboration and spur of the moment emotion that makes its performance fascinatingly impulsive; and, not to mention, achingly human. It’s also this kind of unpredictability that makes Wunderhorse stallions when it comes to live shows. In the last twelve months, the band has supported fellow hyperactive poets Fontaines DC – much like Wunderhorse frontman Jacob Slater, Grian Chatten has a talent for delivering lines both as if they’ve just come to him that second and as if he’s had them memorised as a mantra for years – and Sam Fender, who too has mastered the art of delivering those soft punches of reality in his lyricism.

Staples credits the “amount of previous touring” with the band’s shift from Jacob Slater’s solo endeavour to a quartet as symbiotic as heart and lungs. Watching them on stage now, you’d find it hard to imagine there was ever a time they weren’t referenced as a set. A Russian doll of players you’d expect to have been living in each other’s sound for years.

Although, there are some ways in which they have always been connected. While Staples acknowledges, “ I didn’t grow up with the other boys, those three grew up more together than I did, certainly Jacob (vocals) and Harry (guitar), and even Pete (bass) was in the area…” he also relays how, in many ways, they grew up under the same umbrella of influences, “I think a lot of us were into older music and maybe that’s down to our parents or what I don’t know.” His next thought draws a perfect sketch of experimentation and youth: “We all latched onto something as kids that wasn’t necessarily the most popular thing going and didn’t necessarily make you part of the in crowd,” a childlike smirk breaks his train in half, “I don’t think that being a musician was always the coolest thing in school.”

Like all the greats before them, Wunderhorse never set out to be cool, recognition simply found them for the same reason it found all those bands they grew up on: they were real. It was never about media training or PR puppeteers pulling the strings although they are now represented by Black Arts PR who described how the band’s “sprawling, almost psychedelic numbers have ignited an ever-growing audience.” Representative Simon Blackmore cited how they “gradually and naturally became a fully formed band.”

On record and in print, the band’s charm and intellect gleams. However, their crowning moments are undoubtably on the stage. Whether they’re smashing guitars, tearing holes in crowds thousands strong or launching themselves over the barricade headfirst into the action, there’s something contagious about seeing them perform.

As the pinnacle of their live shows so far approaches, it’s hard not to look in the rearview at a band who just a few years ago could never have dreamt of such an unprecedented and exhilarating ascent.

As he looked ahead with the knowledge and opportunity this record has given him, Staples summarised the last twelve months best: “I think we really loved making an album that was start to finish, coherent and sonically, thematically and even now, aesthetically just made sense together.”

If we are the prey, then Wunderhorse are the frighteningly talented varmints we just can’t outrun – and why would you want to? If you get the chance, pay Wunderhorse a visit on tour. It just makes sense.