

## JESCA HOOP

### ORDER OF ROMANCE

Jesca Hoop returns with her sixth album, **Order of Romance**, a record that fortifies her position as one of the most striking and original voices in contemporary music. Order of Romance is Hoop's most intricate and finely balanced album to date, one that draws on classic song writing, recalling anything from Gershwin to Paul Simon, but creating something that is unmistakably, indelibly Jesca Hoop.

Like a lot of tour ready musicians in 2020, Jesca Hoop suddenly found she had time on her hands, and like a lot of musicians, with stages blacked out, she turned her work inward. As it was for many people, those housebound days were some of the most tumultuous of her life, and she found the discipline and balance of a daily writing routine essential in coping with the unknowns that assailed us all during that time. But **Order of Romance** is most assuredly not a journaling of the last two years. It is a deep dive into craft. As Jesca says "I set out to mature as a writer, to further clarify my voice and stance, through melodies and phrases only I can construct. Order of Romance feels like every person, character, or artist, I ever was over the many seasons of my life was handed an instrument to play across the songs."

In the summer of 2021, Hoop once again ventured south from her adopted home of Manchester to Bristol to team up with producer John Parish (PJ Harvey, Aldous Harding), her collaborator for 2019's Stonechild. This time additional assistance came from in Jess Vernon (This is the Kit) to arrange for a four-piece horn and woodwind quintet. Legendary drummer Seb Rochford lent his skills, John Thorne plays the bass and Chloe Foy and Rachel Rimmer were enlisted to deliver Hoop's signature vocal arrangements. The result is a fruitful marriage of song craft and arrangement, brimming with a cinematic charm and lyrical wit that signify a new chapter full of new life for an artist who knows her mind, her heart and voice well enough to trust them in uncharted territory.

**Order of Romance** then is a complete work that demands close attention, an active listen, a filagree that's apparent lightness of touch belies a serious intent. Themes of empathy and friendship, intertwine with a clear eyed and moralistic poetry on subjects such as gun control, religious and political cults, and climate change.

There is **Sudden Light**, an exploration of how, and why dividing lines are drawn, of why we gather under flags and fabricate enemies. Jesca explains: "We group together under flags and icons to protect ourselves, to keep ourselves safe in this big risky world. We fabricate enemies and cling to the banner. Perhaps we humans should invite other possibilities on how to create safety on this vast, complex space we call earth."

**Hatred Has a Mother** was seeded whilst Jesca Hoop toured the US in early 2020 with Ani Di Franco. Watching side of stage, Hoop was struck by the phrase "Revolutionary Love" from Di Franco's then unreleased song of the same name, a song itself written in response to "See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love" by Valarie Kaur. Kaur describes Revolutionary Love as the choice to enter into labour for Others who do not look like us, for our opponents who hurt us and for ourselves. Revolutionary Love is a force for justice and a freedom from Hate. Hoop picks up the baton with Hatred has A Mother as a devotion to the practice of Revolutionary Love and to pass it on to the listener: "Empathy is contagious. The train is leaving the station. All aboard".

Harking back to her youth in California **Firestorm** is a particularly personal examination of the effects of climate change. Jesca explains: "I have sat for hours at the great base of Colonel Armstrong, one of our oldest most esteemed redwoods, standing 308 feet tall and large

enough at its base to drive car through. I feel the heart of the flaming redwood burning from inside out when I see my old trees devoured by the California wildfires. Trees that know my name." There is love here, and also grief.

Also looking back to her childhood and drawing on the distance and insight that leaving the country of your birth behind can reveal, **One Way Mirror** draws parallels between the polarization and radicalisation that makes up so much of American, and indeed global politics. Jes explains, with her inimitable turn of phrase "Warmed by the gaslight, I thought back to my childhood, what it was to be indoctrinated into cult mentality and what it took to get out and what it is taking to avoid falling into another..."

**Order of Romance** is perhaps ultimately an exploration of the endless balance act of being a 'Human Being', an approach and examination of some of the biggest theme and issues of our time through the doorway of the personal, a way finding meaning and some kind of faith in a world where so much is disconnected and discordant. As she states "I seek out reflection and resolve in my songs. I find out who I am in a sense. For a few minutes, I can exist in nature at my full potential, saying just what I mean, in balance, in awe, in wonder and in full force. As a moral agent, a mode I can't seem to avoid, my writing is time taken to observe and ask questions. I find humour in our predicament. I find danger in the reckoning. I find faith despite our sorry state and I feel connection when I draw it through my voice. I stand my ground and through the music and point inevitably towards compassion".