

## **NOTHING, *The Great Dismal***

Last year, astronomers revealed the first-ever photograph of a black hole. The image resembled an eye with an ominous dark center surrounded by a lopsided ring of red. The strength of a black hole is so overpowering that nothing—not even light—can escape it.

When the black hole photograph was published on the front page of The New York Times, **NOTHING** founder Domenic Palermo bought a copy at a newsstand, framed it, and hung it above the desk where he writes. The image of a black hole might be menacing to some, but for Palermo, it fits perfectly in line with the themes he draws from. A swirling void ready to destroy anything in its path seemed like a perfect metaphor for humanity itself. One day, sitting at his desk, Palermo had an idea for a new album, and he wrote down a single line: “Existence hurts existence.”

*The Great Dismal*, **NOTHING**'s new full-length album explores existentialist themes of isolation, extinction, and human behavior in the face of 2020's vast wasteland. Closing in on the band's ten-year mark, Palermo finds himself stringing together songs of misanthropic tales of Philadelphia with a refined and refreshed take on **NOTHING**'s classic sound. “The Great Dismal refers to a swamp, a brilliant natural trap where survival is custom fit to its inhabitants,” Palermo states. “The nature of its beautiful, but taxing environment and harsh conditions can't ever really be shaken or forgotten too easily.”

**NOTHING**, a notoriously unlucky band, was set to record in February of 2020, right around the time that America began preparing to be hit with a deadly virus. “As if this band needed any more fear and uncertainty,” Palermo says, laughing a little. After a self-imposed 14-day home quarantine, the band and producer Will Yip, who previously worked on **NOTHING**'s critically-acclaimed sophomore album, *Tired of Tomorrow*, locked themselves in Pennsylvania's Studio Four once again, completely isolated from family and friends while the madness in the outside world unfolded. The result is an atmospheric, cinematic collection of songs and stories. While Palermo and the band have made a career around their signature sound, it is clear the current lineup has reached a point of mastery. Palermo effortlessly blends layer upon layer of sweeping guitar tones that create an ensemble of vanishing and reappearing sounds, resembling ocean waves crashing against cold, desolate shores. The songs reach new levels of melodic accessibility without losing the hallmark structures we have come to expect from **NOTHING**. Each track is vibrant, and reverberates with a crushing sense of unpredictability, undergoing a sonic metamorphosis, always being held together by **NOTHING**'s relentless rhythm section led by bassist Aaron Heard and percussionist Kyle Kimball. Palermo's distinctly sincere approach to vocals are given additional support with the addition of labelmate and Cloakroom front man Doyle Martin, whose soaring harmonies float in and out of the landscapes laid out before them. The ever progressive **NOTHING** stay true to their chaotic outlook on life, keeping a keen eye to avoid repetition. With a radical cast of talented contributors such as harpist Mary Lattimore, classical musician Shelley Weiss, and singer/songwriter/producer Alex G., *The Great Dismal* showcases yet another side of the band's trademark American Post-Shoegaze sound.

**NOTHING**'s cynical, yet sincere lyrical side can be heard weaving through their sound from the start of the album's bleak-yet-glistening “A Fabricated Life” where you can hear Palermo struggle; “in skin that fits me, but never fit me” to the album's dream like closer, “Ask The Rust” where he repeatedly questions, “when did you find out you never made it home?”. It is not all pessimism though: on “Famine Asylum,” Palermo embraces the quick ending. “Send the bombs / We've had enough of us.” The song, inspired by the Dr. Strangelove subtitle: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb, seems to hint at a sense of humor even in the midst of all the darkness.

Despite the hurdles that come with creating while quarantining, Palermo sought out NYC based visionary and Midland Agency co-founder Walter Pearce to art direct the album's imagery. Pearce then brought on photographer/filmmaker, Jordan Hemingway to shoot both the album art and a cohesive series of music videos for **NOTHING's** forthcoming singles, setting a serene yet chaotic scene of apocalyptic tranquility around the album's sound.

Years ago, upon release from a New Jersey State Correctional Facility for a 2000 assault which Palermo still claims was in self-defense, an officer caught Palermo with a waistband full of his books. One of those books was *Meditations*, by Roman philosopher Marcus Aurelius. "The book had sentimental value," Palermo said, and it is easy to see why. One of the book's meditations reads: "The stench of decay. Rotting meat in a bag. Look at it clearly. If you can." *The Great Dismal* shares this stoic attitude—even if the world is rotting, the lyrics encourage you to look directly at it. If you're lucky, you'll find beauty somewhere in the void.