



normaltown records

T. Hardy Morris
The Digital Age of Rome

In February 2020, T. Hardy Morris had it all figured out. He was busy putting the finishing touches on songs that would serve as the follow up to 2018's *Dude, the Obscure*. He spent the previous few years on the road supporting that release and this group of songs felt like a logical jump forward for the singer-songwriter. With 13 songs demoed, sussed out and ready to go, Morris was excited to get his band together to rehearse the songs before hunkering down in the studio to record.

Then the pandemic hit.

Sequestered at his Athens-area home with his family, Morris, like most everyone else in the past year, mulled over what was truly important to him and in response, the acclaimed singer-songwriter decided to write. And write. And write, before crafting an entirely new set of songs that would end up comprising an entirely new album.

For the first time in his career, Morris took a micro approach to his songwriting with a long look directly inwards. Captivated by the sobering realities of the pandemic, he composed one of the most personal works yet. Titled *The Digital Age of Rome*, Morris tackles the well-worn anxieties of the past year as pandemic and political divisions ravaged America. *The Digital Age of Rome* isn't just the album's title, it serves as the centerpiece thematically and sonically to Morris' message; Technology doesn't necessarily equal progress.

As usual, Morris drew from his experience as the frontman for woozy psych rockers Dead Confederate to his work in the indie supergroup Diamond Rugs (with members of Deer Tick, Los Lobos, and Black Lips). Here, Morris continues his long-time collaboration with producer Adam Landry. The duo's fruitful creative partnership includes work on both Diamond Rugs records and all four of Morris' solo efforts.

Enlisting a star-studded group of musicians including Drive-By Truckers drummer Brad Morgan, singer-songwriter Faye Webster and many others, Morris recorded the album in late 2020 in a deserted Athens, Ga., once again under the watchful eye of Landry.

As is his wont, Morris pulled no punches with his mesmerizing lyrics and his hazy brand of rock. Admittedly not his most uplifting album, *The Digital Age of Rome* is a necessary diary for an uncomfortable time that continues to unfold. The title track explores the pleasures and pitfalls of modern technology and social media, while asking the tough question of is it worth it? “First World Problems,” a term that folks have passively used in the past to dismiss what be looked upon as a luxury problem, came to life in the summer of 2020. With its biting lyrics, the singer-songwriter examined the extreme polarization that even the most mundane issues can divide people who refuse to understand one another.

That doesn’t mean the entire album was full of doom and gloom. “Love Takes,” a tune that ruminates on the meaning of true love. Meanwhile, “DirtRocker” is a nostalgic ode that name checks Morris’ beloved 1985 Chevy Silverado that was stolen, while thoughtfully intertwining its stark symbolism with a person recognizing the need to walk away from their old self in order to move forward.

Morris is the rare songwriter who has the ability to chide and reflect on what he sees without being preachy. *The Digital Age of Rome* is more direct than he’s ever been, but, in the times we live in, it’s an album that he needed to make in order to express his dismay at the current state of the world.

As he prepares to move forward when the time allows a return to normalcy, Morris can’t help but look back at the year that was. As pandemic continues to rage as does the ongoing movement to bring basic rights to all people, the singer-songwriter prepared one of his boldest records yet. Unapologetic and brutally honest, T. Hardy Morris does what he does best: tell a story through his filtered lens. While *The Digital Age of Rome* may be a record that uniquely arrives at a strange time, its themes of angst, anguish and concern are elements that strike the core of the human experience.