

The Silent Comedy

Brothers Joshua and Jeremiah Zimmerman and their band The Silent Comedy know trouble. Facing that trouble head on, searching for a flicker of hope in the dark, permeates their work. Rough-hewn, expansive American rock & roll with dirt under its nails and whiskey on its breath, the music of The Silent Comedy channels the iron spine of the blues, Honky-Tonk sweat, and punk swagger into a euphoric declaration that when trouble rears its worrisome head it's time to crack knuckles, lock arms, and lift our voices high.

The brothers Zimmerman spent their formative years traveling the world with missionary parents. The family returned to the U.S. and wandered before settling in San Diego, California, in a house bare to the bones apart from an upright piano. In search of catharsis, the teens found solace in songwriting.

Soon enough that songwriting became a pile of songs, and the call of the stage became too much to ignore. The young band proved capable of throwing wild, raucous shows and word began to spread. This led to years of touring, performing with the likes of Dave Matthews Band, Queens of the Stone Age, Mumford and Sons, Arctic Monkeys, and Vampire Weekend, and gracing stages at festivals such as Bonnaroo, Wakarusa, Under The Big Sky, Summer Meltdown and more.

The band recorded and self-released a series of albums for their growing fan base: *Sunset Stables* (2007), *The Silent Comedy EP* (2008), *Common Faults* (2010), and the *Cruelty & Clemency EP* (2011). Their reputation continued to grow, and soon the brothers' music had sold hundreds of thousands of copies and been streamed in the millions, despite no label support. Studio collaborations with Kris Kristofferson and members of Dave Matthews Band followed.

Still, the brothers weren't fully satisfied. The rock club was their new church, their sweating and swaying audience congregants ready to receive sonic communion. They needed to capture that elusive, incorporeal magic on tape. They found the answer in Grammy-nominated producer Chris "Frenchie" Smith (...And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead, Jet, The Darkness). The resulting studio sessions led to a body of work that includes the EP *Friends Divide* and LP *Enemies Multiply*.

The brothers channeled a time of conflict into *Enemies Multiply*. In fact, for a few years, Joshua couldn't bring himself to listen to the album. Born of a rough patch in the Zimmerman brothers' personal and professional lives, it was too personal, too raw. Despite the album being the best work in the history of the band, the project was shelved. Then the 2016 election happened. "Suddenly, I realized the feeling of this moment was what we wrote this music for," Joshua recalls. "At that particular instant I felt like a lot more people could take comfort in the songs than before."

Near the end of recording *Enemies Multiply* Joshua found himself struggling with an acute mental health crisis. After a tour of Europe, the band took a hiatus from performing live, and largely stepped away from music to expand their creative horizons. Joshua returned to his original love of visual storytelling, filming and directing for television (including special episodes of the series *Vikings* and the Hulu original series *Wild Crime*). He bought a house in the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York and did a full renovation largely on his own. Jeremiah channeled his talent for songwriting and production into scoring for television and sound design for podcasts (including breakout Stephen King project *Strawberry Spring*).

This time away from the band has sparked a bit of a creative renaissance for the brothers. Frequent collaboration on film projects has opened up new artistic doors. "We are writing songs together in a different way now" explains Joshua. "We have begun working together from the ground up, sometimes trading line by line as we write lyrics. The guard rails have been taken off a bit. We no longer feel that industry pressure to narrow our sound down. We are writing and exploring in a way that feels very liberating."

Fate has a way of conspiring with the muse, and after six years spent on opposite coasts the brothers Zimmerman find themselves both living in Nashville, TN. Energized by the return of sibling proximity, the musical embers are glowing brighter than ever. As was the case with *Enemies Multiply*, the churn of contemporary reality has driven The Silent Comedy to action. "We've received criticism in the past for being overly dark" says Joshua. "We see it more as being open and clear-eyed about the darkness that is inherent in human nature, and desperately looking for some hope in music. The events of the past few years have made it abundantly clear that no one is immune from hardship."

While their lyrics are often focused on the darker side of humanity, they also bring catharsis and comfort to people who find themselves in difficult times. Heeding the call, The Silent Comedy is ready once again to bring their medicine to the masses. Writing and recording, cracking knuckles and shining up the live show.

Fittingly, the band's first release in years is a diesel-fueled, anthemic reinterpretation of the Fleetwood Mac classic "The Chain". The titular chain is reminiscent of the deep bonds between the band members. Recorded at the end of the *Enemies Multiply* sessions, there is a raw urgency to it that is unique among their recordings.

Recorded at the end of their final tracking session in Austin, Joshua's mental health crisis peaked during vocal takes for "The Chain". "The emotional weight of the lyrics connected with me" explains Joshua. "I was breaking down in tears between each take, and often wasn't able to complete the chorus without my voice cracking. Listening back to it now from a much better place, I can hear all of that in my voice on this recording. "The Chain" remains my favorite vocal performance I have ever delivered in the studio or live. Fleetwood Mac was in a period of turmoil when they recorded the original, and my situation as we recorded this cover seems like a fitting tribute in a strange way."

The road these brothers have wandered has been fraught, and not without peril. Yet, the music of The Silent Comedy has always served their fans – and the band themselves - as a source of comfort in the face of uncertainty, chaos, and despair. "If our music continues to have that effect on anyone at all, then we will be here, making more of it" says Joshua. "Dark songs for dark days."