

The Dear Hunter

The Birth of a Legend

By Dana Forsythe



It's easy to see why critics have dismissed The Dear Hunter as pretentious. Their debut EP, *Act I: The Lake South, The River North*, is the first in a six part plot of records. The theateresque feel to the album doesn't do anything to dispel that thought, either. Oh yeah: then there's the operatic vocals projecting lyrics that read like a darker, modern Poe. But the fact of the matter is that, The Dear Hunter (aka Casey Crescenzo) was born not out of delusions of grandeur but simply as a side project in the spare time of a career musician.

As Crescenzo puts it, "I was always happy being a part of a bigger idea, but this just came up after my departure from my last band." After leaving Receiving End of Sirens, Crescenzo went through a turbulent time where

he was trying to find himself creatively as well as personally. After leaving California, Crescenzo came to Boston in 2003 and soon began committing himself full time to the realization of The Dear Hunter. "The Boston scene was overwhelming in a good way, the people in the music community are amazing," says Crescenzo. "It's the best. I love it."

The Dear Hunter's opera took shape soon after. "Well, it all started out as this story of a boy who falls in love with a prostitute," explains Crescenzo. The idea kept gaining steam and soon Crescenzo had crafted a story following the same boy from birth until death. "There's a bit of my life romanticized in the story, but a lot of [it is] simple fiction," says Crescenzo.

throughout ("City Escape"). Overall, the album is a gorgeous, ever expanding palette of the dark and the beautiful coming to fruition as The Dear Hunter's fictional world.

The opening track, "Battesimo del Fuoco," sets the tone of the record with Crescenzo setting the scene vocally like a medieval acapella group, singing "the flame is gone, the fire remains." "The Lake South" continues to spread the scene, slowly playing like a prelude to the epic "City Escape," a song that cries out Mars Volta at the theater.

Crescenzo's talent for high quality and diverse production is evident throughout the album, but understated is his ability to craft a catchy tune—albeit seven minutes long—song. This can be

As for the music behind it, Crescenzo says his influences are his parents' old records. "Weather Report, Beatles, any 70s jazz fusion... but I also love stuff like Bjork." Musically, the album melds fusion and the hard hits of a metal opera

heard in tracks like "The Inquiry of Ms. Terri," "1878" and "His Hands Matched His Tongue."

Musically "1878" boasts a great reward with off-beat time signatures, sweeping vocals and beautiful use of instrumentation, especially about four and a half minutes in where The Dear Hunter gets to jam out in an unstructured fashion for a while. Recalling the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, the vocal play at the end of "His Hands Matched His Tongue" is another great part of many throughout the album.

A multi-instrumentalist, Crescenzo crafted the songs, stories and even arranged all the other parts on the album. Still, *Act I* is a family affair with drum, vocal and organ contributions from brother, sister and father. In the end, an album such as *Act I* is often dismissed as pretentious, but there is no denying the stunning results of such meticulous work. Now finishing recording on *Act II*, The Dear Hunter—now a five piece—has begun to tour. Most notably, they appeared at SXSW in March. As for the criticism, Crescenzo is unaffected. "Even though there's a strong possibility this record is simply dismissed as pretentious, at the heart of it, it's still just a rock record. Just enjoy the music."