

## Mp3 Littlehorse - Strangers In The Valley



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America's only double-piano rock band plays upbeat rock/pop, with strong Latin, world, and spy-rock influences. 15 MP3 Songs POP: Piano, LATIN: Latin Pop Details: LittleHorse has been described by critics ranging from National Public Radio to Keyboard Magazine - as "over the top," and "inspirational." Perhaps more descriptively, Boston Globe likened the duel-piano rock/pop group to "Manhattan Transfer dueling with Queen in the Latin quarter." To the brothers, E. and Jo (yes, "Yo") Horsley, who lead the group, LittleHorses eclectic sound is a reflection of what they grew up with, who they are now, and who (and sometimes where) they want to be. "We were surrounded by a wide range of musical and artistic influences in our developing years," says Jo, "So naturally, we wanted to combine the best of what we heard." Their mother insisted on a well-structured classical music training, while their father corrupted them with boogie-woogie pianists Dr. John and Professor Longhair, as well as Chuck Berry, The Beatles, and many jazz artists. "Eventually," says, E., "I spent more time transcribing Oscar Peterson records than learning Chopin. Next thing I knew, Jo would literally sit next to me on the piano bench improvising on top of the music. We played like this for years." As teenagers, the brothers became proficient in other instruments, such as drums, bass, guitar and voice, but piano remained their true passion. During their music studies in college, they immersed themselves in Cuban and Brazilian music, as well as jazz vocal groups such as Vox One and Take 6. "We were determined to make our band a total experience. Everything beautiful and virtuosic from a broad range of cultures and traditions." Indeed, if one listens to a LittleHorse album from beginning to end, one might distinctly hear echos of Santana, Supertramp, Billy Joel, Sting, Peter Gabriel, Jellyfish, Ben Folds Five, Tito Puente, Ibrahim Ferrar (Beuna Vista Social Club), Carlos Jobim, Earth Wind and Fire, Take 6, not to mention Liszt and Chopin, just to name a few. But the layered sonic experience is also tightly wrapped in punchy (danceable, actually) melody-driven

rock grooves, which the brothers sometimes refer to as "adventure rock." Lyrically as intricate as the music is rich, the themes tend to center around the exotic extremes of life, with the occasional self-deprecating humor thrown in. The listener will be immersed in vivid scenes of life that seem to overlay the most poignant moments from epic tales such as Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, George Mallory, Bonnie Clyde, The Odyssey, and more. Not that the music is academic, merely, the lyrical and musical content is designed to support a second (and third, fourth, etc.), more careful listen. Its not difficult to see the brothers personalities reflected in the music. Jo, the singer and front man of the band, says "I typically like to push the envelope of creativity and my brother will reign in the wild ideas and help define the core artistic element." The result is that each unique song seems to pull from the best of each brothers dynamic personality to create music that innovates while retaining classic instrumentation and sounds. So what is missing here? Angst, depression and a spinal-tap-esque sense of self-importance that is often peddled as "deep art" in some of todays pop/rock music. You wont find songs about the the misunderstood soul and other acute ailments of modern self-absorption. Oh, and, of course, you wont find heavy guitars (after all, LittleHorse brands itself as "Americas Only Double Piano Rock Band"). The music has an imbedded optimism that is just plain refreshing. E. puts it best: "We want you to feel like youve just climbed Mt. Everest without breaking a sweat, and then base-jumped in to the valley below, giving yourself a chance to take in all the wonders around you. And you might have a couple of Red Bulls on the way down." The new album, Strangers in the Valley, begins with a pop epic, I Want Your Love, which is loosely based on Homers Odyssey. Songs such as "Tell Me What Youd Say" and a cover of Louis Jordans "Is You Is or Is You Aint (My Baby)?" demonstrate the groups strong vocal harmony skills, while the more reflective ballads "Jupiter" and "Soldiers Lullaby" show a side of LittleHorse that we havent much seen on the groups previous two records. The 15-song album, which includes two remixes from the previous album, finally leaps into thin air with "Birlstone," the first of three songs alluding to one of the Sherlock Holmes novels, The Valley of Fear, a true-to-form LittleHorse over-the-top, spy-rock closer. LittleHorses commitment to strong lyric writing comes through particularly in the charming "2nd Rate Sweetheart." Overall, the record delivers the promised breathless experience of a LittleHorse album, but Strangers also distinguishes itself as the most mature and consistent LittleHorse record yet. If you are secretly longing for melody-driven rock without the angst, LittleHorse may your greatest guilty pleasure.

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