

**GREAT LAKE SWIMMERS**

***A FOREST OF ARMS***

**Biography**

***A Forest Of Arms*** is thesixth album from **Tony Dekker’s Great Lake Swimmers** and the follow up to 2012’s *New Wild Everywhere*. With a surging rhythm section, razor sharp violin, and flourishing banjo and guitars, Dekker and band mates have pushed their sound significantly, creating some of their most dynamic songs ever recorded.   
  
Those familiar with the decade-long output of Great Lake Swimmers will recognize the thematic threads of beauty in the natural world, environmental issues and explorations of close personal ties that hold us together. The familiar versus the strange theme is also running through this record, both in the instrumentation and in the songwriting (“Zero In The City”, “I Was A Wayward Pastel Bay”).

As with past Great Lake Swimmers albums, *A Forest Of Arms* was recorded in several locations over the span of several months, covering extensive new territory while remaining true to the group’s refined sound. One of the unique and unusual locations was Tyendinaga Cavern and Caves in Tyendinaga, Ontario, where a number of the vocal and acoustic guitar tracks, including the main parts for "Don't Leave Me Hanging,” "The Great Bear" and "With Every Departure," were recorded amid haunting acoustics, stalactites, and circling bats.

The violins were recorded at the Heliconian Club of Toronto, while the bass and drum tracks were largely recorded at the Chalet Studio just outside of Toronto, a unique chalet-style recording space located on 40 acres of rolling hills and trails, in proximity to the shores of Lake Ontario. The pastoral and elemental nature of these spaces surfaces throughout the album.

The title, *A Forest Of Arms*, is taken from album track “The Great Bear,” a song inspired by a trip Dekker took to the northern rainforests of British Columbia in September 2013 with the World Wildlife Fund. It’s a pristine wilderness area that is under threat of being compromised by the construction of a pipeline, and Dekker and the group have been very vocal in their opposition to it. In a broader sense, the title is also a reference to the sense of community surrounding the Toronto-based band, as well as the band’s own growing families, exhibited in the songs “Something Like A Storm” and “Expecting You.”

**Great Lake Swimmers** consists of **Tony Dekker** on lead vocals and guitar, long time guitarist and banjo player **Erik Arnesen**, **Miranda Mulholland** on violin and backing vocals, **Bret Higgins** on upright bass and newcomer **Joshua Van Tassel** on drums. There are several special guest appearances on the album by **Kevin Kane** (Grapes Of Wrath) on 12-string electric guitar, as well as backing vocals on the song “A Bird Flew Inside The House.”

Recorded and engineered by their long time live sound technician **Justin Shane Nace**, and mixed by the wonderfully talented **Howie Beck** (Feist), A Forest Of Arms also marks Dekker’s 8th release of new material. In 2013, he released the solo album *Prayer of the Woods*,and in 2014, he released a tribute album for the artist-loving digital music distribution site Zunior on the occasion of its 10th year anniversary, entitled *Tony Dekker Sings 10 Years Of Zunior*. Last year saw their debut headlining performance at Toronto’s historic Massey Hall, which was documented for the *Live At Massey Hall* series. The band also participated in the Polaris cover sessions with their version of Sarah Harmer’s “I’m A Mountain.”

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