



Black Prairie Follows Breakout Year with Cinematic, Hard Edged New Album *Fortune* (April 22nd / Sugar Hill Records)



Black Prairie's third full-length record *Fortune* will be released on April 22nd via Sugar Hill Records. The album proves the band has outgrown its roots as a casual side-project of indie folk band The Decemberists, solidifying into a primary, creative focus for its members—a band with its own internal momentum, genuine character and style. “Making this record was the most collaborative and magical thing,” says founder Chris Funk. “I’m excited to play these songs live.”

Black Prairie's music has been described as “the musical spirit that emanated from Big Pink in the late '60” (Washington Post) and somewhere “between John Ford and David Lynch, homespun tales with sinister sub-plots” (Uncut), but *Fortune* is an unexpected departure. This group of accomplished musicians from Portland, Oregon - each steeped in traditional American acoustic music - has written what is essentially a rock record, and sometimes with a pretty hard edge. (The band sometimes performs around Portland as their ‘electric’ alter ego ‘White Tundra,’ complete with an 8-foot, handmade robotic Yeti -- it stood in the studio inspiring the band as they recorded this set of songs.)

“Let’s make it sound more broken!” became the battle cry in the studio from *Fortune*’s producer, Grammy-winning engineer Vance Powell, whose work with The Dead Weather and Red Fang the band especially loved.

“We’re a much more fearless writing team now,” says bassist Nate Query, who can trace *Fortune*’s sound to the night the band saw frontwoman Annalisa Tornfelt perform Led Zeppelin’s “The Song Remains the Same.” “She tore the roof off it,” Funk remembers. The band discovered a whole new, blaring dimension to their fiddle-player’s voice, and inevitably that energy started inflecting the songs they were writing.

Inspiration and ideas ricocheted off everyone, pinball-like, and often at the oddest angles. Writing the lyric to Funk’s riff, “The White Tundra,” Tornfelt incorporated lines from a poem by Funk’s wife, Seann McKeel, and psychedelic stories about ethereal wolves from a book of Norse mythology that accordionist Jenny Conlee had read Tornfelt to sleep with in their hotel room every night on tour. Conlee’s song “Trask,” about a late 19th century Oregon fur trapper, came in as a straight ragtime number until Funk suggested remaining it, amping it up into a grinding, punk romp. The pop country

gem “Kiss of Fate” is John Moen’s melody and Chris Funk’s tale of a couple kissing on the sidewalk, surrounded by rats.

Black Prairie may look like a bluegrass or folk band, but their tastes and repertoire are much more expansive. There is a fierce emphasis on musicianship, Powell says, but otherwise: “They’re genre-less. They’re not afraid of anything.”

About Black Prairie:

The band’s story started in 2007, when Chris Funk gathered local musicians he admired for a chance to write music and play instruments he wasn’t utilizing in his role as guitarist in The Decemberists. He pulled in fellow Decemberists Nate Query and Jenny Conlee, on bass and accordion, Annalissa Tornfelt on fiddle and Jon Neufeld (Jackstraw, Doloreon) on guitar, followed later by Decemberists’ John Moen on drums. Their only ambition was to have fun, but ideas started sparking immediately—they were pushing their own musicianship.

2013 was a breakout year for the band, with appearances at the Newport Folk Festival, Bonnaroo, with the Oregon Symphony Orchestra and on the Tonight Show, in support of their two albums that year, *A Tear in the Eye Is a Wound in the Heart* (Sugar Hill) and *Wild Ones*, the soundtrack to the accompanying book by New York Times Magazine writer Jon Mooallem.

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