

TIM BAKER

FOREVER OVERHEAD

At the end of 2017, twelve years after their inception, the multi-award winning band, Hey Rosetta! went on hiatus after selling 10,000 tickets to five farewell shows. For the band's principal songwriter and lead vocalist Tim Baker, this was the start of a new chapter. On his debut solo album *Forever Overhead*, Baker warmly welcomes you to it. The opening words we hear him sing, on the first single "Dance," is akin to a toast: "here's to the other side."

Forever Overhead was recorded in two sessions in Montreal with producer Marcus Paquin (The Barr Brothers, Timber Timbre). Baker recorded thirteen songs in the Fall of 2017 and then worked on them for an additional six months by road testing the songs through a series of twenty performances in intimate space. In partnership with Side Door (a platform run by label-mate Dan Mangan which connects musicians and performance spaces), Baker performed in living rooms, a hotel room, a ski lodge, a bookstore, and the rink bar during a curling tournament.

After spending time with his new songs, Baker realized they weren't a cohesive enough unit. To pull the album together, he wrote and recorded a handful of tunes that picked up on elements that he liked from his first recording session: the 70s style drumming of Liam O'Neill (Suuns) and Mishka Stein's (Patrick Watson) explorative bass work.

With additional accompaniment from Ben Whiteley (The Weather Station) and Joe Grass (Patrick Watson) and backing vocals from Laurel Sprengelmeyer (Little Scream), Erika Angell (Thus Owls), Kat Karberg, and Lisa Iwanycki-Moore (Blood and Glass), *Forever Overhead* is a blend of piano ballads with ebullient folk-rock tracks. Although the record is brushed with the qualities of 70s singer-songwriters (think Jackson Browne and Randy Newman) Baker drew inspiration from his contemporaries like Feist, Leif Vollebekk, and The Barr Brothers. The resulting organic blend of pop grooves and folk-rock is straightforward with curious undertones that provides a timeless backdrop for Baker's vibrant lyricism.

"I felt free from the body of work I'd created with [Hey Rosetta!], the expectations people had of us, and what we expected of ourselves and I suppose you can hear that freedom, almost a lightness in the record," Baker says.

This lightness Baker describes is a distinctive quality of *Forever Overhead*. Songs like "Spirit," which builds from minimal folk to an energetic full-band tune, or the swinging "Hideaway," bubble over with a playfulness that's punctuated by a supporting horn section. Baker saves the loudest celebration though for last: on "Don't Let Me Go Yet," you are dropped into a party that's already in full-swing as a vivacious Baker leads an animated congregation of voices and instrumentals.

Lyricaly, *Forever Overhead*'s eleven songs centre on kinship. In the album's opening track "Dance," Baker moves alongside soft piano chords as buoyant, 70s pop style instrumentation and a piercing guitar riff steadily build, bolstering his words of longing. He sings of connectivity and the tender emotions that are coupled with glances across a gym's confetti-lined linoleum floor, the air thick with potential. "All Hands," likewise, cherishes connections and acts as part thank-you letter, dedicated to the people who have helped Baker throughout his career, and part nostalgic anthem about his Newfoundland home.

Intertwined in songs about human connections, Baker is in awe of nature and longs to renew his relationship with it. "Strange River," a bouncy, piano-driven track, was inspired by Baker's move from his home in St. John's to a condo in downtown Toronto and sonically echoes the joy that nature provides while on "Our Team," Baker muses about nature's perseverance and he grins at birds maintaining their authority over land that will soon host another skyscraper.

Before it blossomed into a seven piece rock band, Hey Rosetta! began as Baker's solo project. On *Forever Overhead*, Baker's focus returns to specifics but the impact of his songs remains just as grand as the climatic works of Hey Rosetta!. *Forever Overhead* swings with contemporary desires, frustrations, and joys with Baker at its heart, providing beauty and hope into listeners' lives.

"From the very beginning, I've always felt surprised that people gave such a shit about Hey Rosetta! and my songs prior to that. I felt that if I had this opportunity or this voice then I should say something that I really want to express," says Baker.

"I always felt that I want to write about things that are really meaningful to me and, perhaps in a kind of oblique way, do good. If you're going to commit your whole life to it, I think it should be about more than trying to be cool or something...which I've never been particularly good at anyway."