

## A few words about **Dagger Beach**

While it's true I did endure a terrible break-up at the beginning of writing this record, this is not a break up record. *Dagger Beach* is a put-me-the-fuck-back-together record.

The break up came in late 2011, after endless months of White Wilderness touring. I returned home to an empty house, and, as that's pretty unbearable when you're not quite right in the head, I decided to set out walking. I hiked the **Lost Coast** (36 miles of off-the-grid splendor in **Southern Humboldt County**), I hiked the entire 150-mile trail system of **Pt. Reyes**, I hiked for days, deep, deep in the woods, usually alone.

As I walked and walked, listening to records on repeat, I started obsessing about music again. Three records found their way into my psyche and inspired much of this new record: Joanna Newsom's *Have One On Me*, Silver Jews' *The Natural Bridge*, and Radiohead's *King Of Limbs*. I don't think you'll find traces of these records in *Dagger Beach*, but their spirit and fearlessness deeply affected me. (Hence the shout-out on the record to one of my lifelong heroes, David Berman.)

The first two reminded me how crucial great lyrics can be, how your experience of a record can evolve and change as you slowly decode complex and thoughtful writing. *King Of Limbs* showed me how powerful linear songwriting can be, when subtle changes in form and repeating motifs slowly shift into something else entirely (just try to follow "Morning Mr. Magpie" on headphones). There are many songs on *Dagger Beach* that take this approach: "Damage Control" and "Gaslight" were both written to drum patterns played by Jason Slota, my long-time partner. Jason played drums alone, without music, and I adapted to his structures and rhythms. Doing this keeps me from relying on my usual tricks and structures and forces me into brand new territory.

This strange experience, the endless hiking and backcountry camping off the grid, it completely changed the songwriting process for me. I edited lyrics while walking, I worked out songs in my head. It didn't come easy: the first time I camped alone (I was deep inside the million-acre **Mendocino National Forest**) I freaked out, ended my trip early, and wrote "Raw Wood" the next day. By the end of 2012, I could stay out for a week on my own.

As the experience changed me, it changed the record. *Dagger Beach* is looser, weirder, and more free because of it.