

the Mountain Goats



The Mountain Goats' new album is called 'All Eternals Deck,' and will be in stores on March 29, 2011

"The songs cluster around themes of hidden things and the dread that hidden things inspire," says singer/songwriter John Darnielle, "but also the excitement, the attraction, the magnetic draw that scary unknown hidden things exert." The title refers to an apocryphal tarot deck, though Darnielle explains that the album's fascination with the occult originates in having run across the word "occult" in a textbook in his nursing-student days. "'Occult' just means 'hidden' or 'not immediately obvious' in medical terminology. There was a nursing directive to be aware of 'occult blood.' I thought it was the greatest thing I'd ever heard," he says.

Darnielle started recording songs while during his psych-nurse days in California. "I had been writing poetry pretty much all my life," he remembers. "At some point in Norwalk I bought a guitar from this really cool old music store in a strip mall, and I started teaching myself to play." Soon Darnielle was playing live, touring with bassist Rachel Ware and then with multi-instrumentalist Peter Hughes. In 2001 they became a full-time studio-and-road-show duo, releasing four albums together: 'Tallahassee,' 'We Shall All Be Healed,' 'The Sunset Tree,' and 'Get Lonely.' Superchunk drummer Jon Wurster joined in 2007, and the collaboration clicked perfectly. "Peter and I had played with other musicians," says Darnielle, "but with Wurster we were an honest-to-God trio. We played together with real glee."

The band toured the U.S., England, Australia, and New Zealand extensively, recording a new

studio album called 'The Life of the World to Come' in 2009 that prompted GQ to remark: "Darnielle's not just one of the greatest songwriters working today--he's probably one of the greatest working writers." The album earned a 'Best New Music' nod from Pitchfork, and prompted Stephen Colbert to invite the band to make its national television debut on The Colbert Report.

In 2010, the band signed to Merge Records, headquartered within walking distance of Darnielle's Durham, NC home. The band approached recording sessions for 'All Eternals Deck' as commando raids on multiple studios with a several producers: four songs at North Carolina's Fidelitorium with John Congleton; one at Q Division in Boston with longtime soundman Brandon Eggleston; four at Brooklyn's Mission Sound with Scott Solter; and four at Mana Recording Studios in Florida, with Morbid Angel guitarist and Hate Eternal helmsman Erik Rutan.

"We wanted to see how disparate seasons and moods and locations and producers would play out in the songs," explains Darnielle. The result? "If you've ever watched, say, a 70s occult-scare movie where one of the scenes involves a few people visiting a storefront fortune teller, getting their cards read, and then they're trying to feel super-hopeful about their predicted outcome when what they're visibly actually feeling is dread, then you have a pretty decent idea of what this album is all about."

the Mountain Goats:

John Darnielle - vocals, guitars, keys

Peter Hughes - bass, vocals

Jon Wurster - drums, percussion