



LOTS OF PARKING *The National Parks'* 40-show tour, which includes a visit to the Catalyst Atrium on Saturday, April 29, hits 38 cities—six have already sold out. PHOTO: NOAH TIDMOREB

Park Pop

Utah folk-rock outfit the National Parks continues to grow their dedicated fanbase **BY ETHAN GREGORY DODGE**

A few weeks after the National Parks released their fifth full-length album, *8th Wonder*, in March 2023, a sellout crowd of 2,500 was already singing to every word of the Salt Lake City folk rockers' new tunes.

"It was one of those shows where

you kind of soak it in and step back and appreciate it because it felt special," frontman Brady Parks says. "That's a show I think we'll hold onto forever."

Their upcoming show in Santa Cruz will mark the Parks' first time performing in the area, which

almost seems criminal given the band's ethos.

"We're very inspired by nature, being from Utah, surrounded by so much natural beauty," Parks, a Colorado native, says. "Our music fits really well within the Pacific Northwest [music] scene."

Before the band began writing the songs for *8th Wonder*, they decided to lean into the nature theme even more.

"I think it differs from our previous albums quite a bit, but it's also very true to who we are," Parks notes. "We try to blend the folk and pop worlds."

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“8th Wonder’ is a road trip album. It’s got a spirit about it that’s full of life. It’s meant to be a companion to people, a soundtrack to their adventures.”

—BRADY PARKS, THE NATIONAL PARKS

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The writing process yielded 30 songs, whittled down to 11. The objective was undoubtedly accomplished: Some tracks capture a Lumineers-esque feel, while others unleash fast-paced, pop-infused sounds accompanied by outwardly positive lyrics. As a whole, *8th Wonder* packs an energetic punch, ala the *Head and the Heart*, and delivers an aura of pensive sensitivity.

The opener, “Angels,” starts with keyboardist Sydney Macfarlane’s poppy synth backed by drummer Cam Brannelly and Parks’ muted guitar strums. When Parks’ vocals cut in, the synth fades.

“We were swaying in the firelight to the sound of coyote calls/ Our silhouette like giants on Zion’s canyon walls,” Parks croons.

The synth returns for the pre-chorus, building momentum, coming together as Parks belts the hook: *“I ma tell our kids about this someday.”*

The group’s brand of folk-rock is rounded out by extraordinary fiddle talent, Megan Taylor Parks, who connects harmonically with John Hancock’s bass.

Meanwhile, *8th Wonder*’s single, “Trouble,” has been trending heavily on social media. Each bandmember has posted a photo montage portraying them playing their respective instruments over the song’s chorus, *“I knew you were trouble from the start.”*

Their social media posts show their passion for the craft and how they’ve developed their sound since they began about a decade ago. The music video for “Trouble” features the band performing in snow-clad mountains in Utah.

“I describe [*8th Wonder*] as a road trip album,” Parks says. “It’s got a spirit about it that’s full of life. It’s meant to be a companion to people, a soundtrack to their adventures.”

It’s been gratifying for the band to see fans naturally make those associations since the record came out.

“We’ve been holding on to it for so long, and we have all these connections personally with different songs,” Parks says. “Having it out in the world and seeing the fan base react to it is really the coolest experience to see what their favorite songs are and what memories they are already making with certain songs.”

Family has also become an unexpected key to the National Parks’ music and touring life. When the group formed, Brady and Megan were just friends. Now, they are married and have a one-year-old son. Parks says his son has visited 32 states with the band as they tour. As they push on, from city to city, the group hopes to continue to bring more fans along on their sonic ride.

“Hopefully, we can connect with people that haven’t seen us play before,” Parks says.

That shouldn’t be too difficult. If there’s one thing the National Parks are known for, it’s the hypnotic intensity and spirit of their live shows.

“We’ve put in a lot of work into becoming a band that’s fun to watch live,” Parks says. “The shows are at a different level than the album is.”

\$22/\$25; \$67/DIP. *The National Parks with Andrea Don Kampen perform Saturday, April 29 at 9pm at the Catalyst Atrium, 1101 Pacific Ave., Santa Cruz. catalystclub.com*

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