



## → THE KING HAS RETURNED

BY MONICA ALBERS

**A NEW ALBUM IS A TASTE OF SWEET SUCCESS FOR A BAND THAT'S BEEN STEADILY EVOLVING IN SOUTH DAKOTA FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS.**

*Bitter Honey* is the latest album created by **Burlap Wolf King** – set for release Friday, May 19 with a concert at **Icon Event Hall + Lounge** in Sioux Falls to celebrate. According to **Thomas Hentges**, who's previously gone solo under the Burlap name, this record is true to their Americana/folk roots, with a lot of focus dedicated to the basics of songwriting.

"It's definitely a batch of songs where my intent was to write the best damn song that I possibly could," said Hentges. "I was much more concentrated on melodies and production, and how songs were going to be heard in the end, and how that would resonate with people. [That] was a concern probably more than it's ever been in the past."

This is the first time this specific group has ever collaborated for an album, consisting of **Adam Jones** on lead

guitar, **John "Slap" Myers** on bass, **Phil Mueller** on drums, **Alex Olsen** at the keys, and **Megan DeBoer** on vocals. Hentges says the contributions of these artists, some of whom he's known for 15 years, is part of what makes the album shine.

"I definitely think it's a big step forward as far as the songwriting goes, as well as the performances," he said. "They've really been able to shape out the sounds that I've long heard. They seem to be a little bit more in tune with what I'm trying to lie down."

One track that stands out to Hentges is "Thunderhead," which he describes as having "Fleetwood Mac vibes."

"It's certainly putting us in a more pop-rock area that I had previously almost avoided," he said of the track. "I wrote the skeleton of the song, and had several ideas about the

melody, but could not pin myself down to complete the lyrics. I finally finished it on a Los Angeles morning, poolside on a trip out West to see friends, which is kind of romantic, really."

It's seeing those sounds and lyrics come to life that pushes Hentges to keep pursuing music. "It's because of the moments of human relation," he noted. "It feels really good to get lost and engaged in something that's maybe bigger than you every so often."

Hentges changed the way he connected with audiences about a decade ago. He entered the music industry through a Christian-themed metalcore band called **Nodes of Ranvier**, but says his current genre is more where he belongs.

"Primarily I wrote words and screamed them," he recalled. "I wasn't playing an instru-

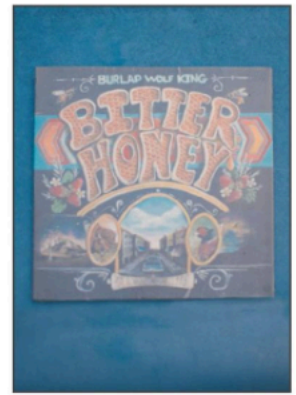
**WHAT:**  
BURLAP WOLF KING  
"BITTER HONEY" LP/CD  
RELEASE SHOW LIVE

**WHEN:**  
MAY 19 // 8 P.M.

**WHERE:**  
ICON EVEN HALL + LOUNGE

402 N. MAIN AVENUE  
SIOUX FALLS

**TICKETS:**  
\$10



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ment, or really responsible for the composition of the song outside of the words. So this is truly much more of myself."

A native of Madison, and 17 year resident of Sioux Falls, Hentges says that part of the creative process that matters to him is being able to give a voice to the people. He says he can't imagine living anywhere else after experiencing, from town to town, what he describes as the goodness and generosity of South Dakotans.

Seeing a mutual, strong connection to the state, he approached local artist Altman Studeny to collaborate on the album art. The back of the album features past Jello works Studeny is known for, and the artist created a custom piece for the cover, including Hentges' truck, "Babe."

"Having a certain pride from being from this part of the country, you can kind of recognize others that are cut from the same cloth," he described. "Upon seeing Altman's work for the first time, I felt an immediate connection. He clearly sees things of this area in a unique way, which I strongly relate to."

According to Hentges, the album drops at a successful time for music in Sioux Falls.

He's seen the area music scene develop from what he describes as less established and more disorganized into something gaining strength, attention, and distinction. New community projects like **Total Drag** and **White Wall Sessions**

have been part of that transformation. Hentges is also involved in creating **Different Folk Records**, a newer label for the area that's specially focused on producing vinyl. Pockets and genres are taking hold, which he considers a sign of growth.

"I think that's the sign of something healthy brewing ... when scenes can kind of represent themselves, even by genre. So when you see that happening, you know there's momentum coming," he said.

In addition to releasing *Bitter Honey*, Burlap Wolf King returns to **JazzFest** this summer **July 13-15** at **Yankton Trail Park** – this time on the main stage Friday night at 6 p.m. The invite is a testament to the group's growth in the region. Hentges says this will be the largest crowd they'll have performed for to date.

Ready to share what he's been working on, Hentges can't wait for the release date and concert.

"I am most excited to just celebrate and let go of this album," he said. "It's been a wonderfully frustrating weight on my shoulders for the past few years, and I can't wait to share it with everyone."

Tickets for the release show are \$10, and doors open at 7:30 p.m. Special guests **Sean McFarland**, **The Cold Heavy**, and **DJ Absolute** will also take the stage.

*Bitter Honey* will be available at local record stores and at [differentfolkrecords.com](http://differentfolkrecords.com).