Sam Beam and Jesca Hoop *Love Letter For Fire* (Out April, 15 2016)

*Love Letter for Fire* is the name of the collaborative record from songwriters Sam Beam (Iron & Wine) and Jesca Hoop~~.~~  A collection of songs steeped in the tradition of the male/female duet where love – in its many forms - takes center stage.

Contemplating a duets album for some time, Beam was never able to find the right voice - until Hoop’s music found its way to his stereo. Diving into her catalog on iTunes one afternoon, specifically the album *Kismet*, was the spark Sam needed to reach out to Jesca and propose the idea of writing together.

The timing could not have been better for Beam: “I was looking to work with another songwriter because I had never shared the songwriting responsibility with anyone. I really enjoyed her music and it’s different than mine which is what excited me about the project.”

Hoop at the time was finishing her fourth record and had never co-written either.  However she notes, “I had the advantage of knowing Sam’s music because it had cleaned my house many times, so I was familiar with his sensibilities and knew the combination could work.” Her memory though of “Sam’s pitch” for making the record occurred once they connected in person and Beam “threw [the idea] under his breath, like ‘If we ever write songs together.’ I think he said ‘Let’s make an EP’ and I said ‘Let’s make an album.’”

The inspiration behind *Love Letter For Fire* was Sam’s love of classic duets, most of which are ones he grew up hearing on the radio. “Some of my favorite songs are duets, because the narrative is expanded. It’s not just a monologue.  It’s a conversation, and so it gets complicated. I had melodies over the years that I’d been compiling that I thought, this sounds like a classic Kenny and Dolly, ‘Islands in the Stream**’** kind of thing, or George and Tammy”.  While the record itself is not Countrypolitan in nature, the two have carved out something that feels wholly original and should have no trouble appealing to fans of their previous work.

Over the course of thirteen songs *Love Letter for Fire* brims with joyful energy, contrasting Beam and Hoop’s songwriting styles yet never feeling forced, nor pandering. Veering from disparate pop (“Every Songbird Says” / “Chalk It Up To Chi”) to introspective folk (“One Way to Pray” / “Soft Place to Land”) to a few things in between (“Welcome to Feeling” / “Midas Tongue”), the record never rests solely on just the two voices but rather showcases the new chapter of songwriting each found in the collaboration. Beam notes: “(Jesca) brought a lot of energy and a lot of heart in places where I would be cerebral, she would bring heart.  In places where I would be steady, she would add an exclamation point.”

Recorded in Portland, Oregon with the steady hand of Tucker Martine, the album features a collection of handpicked musicians. The band includes Rob Burger, a frequent Iron & Wine contributor, Sebastian Steinberg (Soul Coughing, Fiona Apple), Teddy Rankin-Parker (Primus), Eyvind Kang (Decemberists/Tzadik and Ipecac labels) and Glenn Kotche (Wilco). This particular set of musicians had never worked together, but quickly found themselves on equal footing.  For Beam it was a bit of a dream team: “It was a really fun band, and a lot less guitar than I usually have on my [Iron & Wine] records.  Tucker and the band were able to help bring out what’s inside of you that you might not know is there.”

The album’s title comes from the song, “We Two Are A Moon“ and the irony of the title and record of love songs by two folks not in love is not lost on its creators. The idea of love in song and life is a constant and universal denominator that everyone relates to. Hoop describes love and the songs succinctly: “Each song has its heat, its own trajectory. The album title represents a kind of “ephemeral love that passes through” and then it’s gone". Beam on the other hand insists the title plays on itself in that “is it a love letter for fire? Or is it a love letter ready to be wasted?” and leaves it up to the listener to come to their own conclusions.

The pair will be embarking on a tour of the U.S. with a full band in late spring/early summer and Europe in late summer/early fall.