**Kate Weekes // Better Days Ahead**

The beguiling fourth studio album, *Better Days Ahead* finds the Quebec-based singer-songwriter Kate Weekes exploring “the liminal space created by lockdowns and cancelled plans.”

Given that Weekes’ songwriting has typically been inspired by her travels, which have seen her dog mushing-for-hire in Norway, touring China with a swing band, and canoeing far-north Canadian rivers as a wilderness guide, *Better Days Ahead* required an entirely new way of writing, using internal cues to map a moment in time.

Composing mainly in the Gatineau Hills of Quebec before collaborating with producer and multi-instrumentalist James Stephens at Stove Studios in Chelsea, Quebec; Weekes found that “the boreal forest and Canadian Shield were beautiful places to pass a challenging period.

“I learned to play clawhammer banjo and have been thrilled to discover how it dances with fiddle,” she says. “The relationship between the banjo and fiddle, the support of the sousaphone, the beauty of the flugelhorn, and the mysterious dance of the percussive sounds... creating a beautiful piece of music together, as a band, was healing and important, underscoring a need to believe there would be better days ahead.”

Indeed, the wildly eclectic songs assembled on *Better Days Ahead* — which Weekes variously (and fabulously) describes as “Appalachian-influenced murder-suicide ballads, anthemic folk-pop, whimsical instrumental waltzes,” and “moody, horse-riding cowboy meets British rock” among other descriptions — announce an artist fiercely unbound by musical convention yet precisely able to articulate her vision.

Weekes’ bright, crystalline voice is front and centre on *Better Days Ahead*, guiding her ace core band — Rob Graves (myriad percussion instruments) and Brian Sanderson (flugelhorn, trumpet, and other horns) plus producer Stephens (fiddles, harmonium, fretless bass, electric mandolin, vocals, electric tenor guitar) — through a dizzying array of moods and sonic excursions.