Twin Cities band Peter Wolf Crier performs tonight downtown

By Rob Hanson
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If there's one thing the Minneapolis-based pop/rock duo Peter Wolf Crier has proven in the short two years since their debut album, it's that they won't be held down by the constraints of being a duo.

Filled with lush effects and a variety of different instruments, one need not look any further than the band's most recent album, "Garden of Arms," in which members Peter Pisano and Brian Moen leave behind the notion of simply being a guitarist and a drummer.

"I think Peter was still coming from a similar place in terms of his song writing," Moen said in a recent e-mail interview. "But when it came to fleshing out the songs the second time around, we were really trying to push ourselves creatively and bring something more experimental and interesting to the tunes.

"We were also approaching it with a sort of limitless notion — we didn't want to stick to, ‘I play drums and Peter plays guitar so that's what's going to be on all of the songs,’ but rather finishing the
songs in whatever way and with whatever instruments we felt made the best version of those songs for that album."

That sort of exploration has put the band on the national radar and earned coverage in major publications such as Rolling Stone. It also has carried over to Peter Wolf Crier's live performances and has helped keep things fresh for a couple of veteran musicians.

"We recently started touring as a two piece again (after exhausting ourselves on a three-piece live lineup following the release of 'Garden of Arms'), which meant approaching our live performances in a totally new way," Moen said. "I think when it starts to feel like the same thing over and over, that's when touring becomes difficult.

"So each night now, our set involves no set list and a lot of improvising, which allows us to keep our performances fresh and gives the audience a totally unique show every time."

The band got its start a few years back as Pisano's solo project. Moen, originally from Rochester, Minn., attended UW-Stout and lived in Eau Claire, where he cut his teeth in a lengthy list of bands, from the successful local group Amateur Love to the touring Canadian rockers Land of Talk. After college he moved to the Twin Cities where he met Pisano. Moen said the singer/songwriter originally approached him just to record the Peter Wolf Crier album. But when the record was finished, the two realized it was meant for a two-piece and joined forces.

An ambitious duo, the band continues to play shows but have put another Peter Wolf Crier record on hold until their side projects finish up. Pisano has been working hard on a solo record. Meanwhile, Moen has all kinds of irons in the fire. In addition to solidifying final details on the forthcoming record from local alternative rockers Laarks, Moen said he recently joined a Minneapolis punk band called Lowtalker and has been cutting demos with longtime friend Justin Vernon for their somewhat-under-the-radar blues duo The Shouting Matches.

Recently back from a stretch of U.K. dates, Peter Wolf Crier will perform tonight at the Sounds Like Summer Concert series in Phoenix Park with opening acts Shillelagh Lads and Dexter Wolfe.

For more information about the band, visit peterwolfcrier.com

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