

The Shelter

✖ Jars of Clay | Essential Records

Incredibly difficult is one way to describe Grammy-winning Jars of Clay's newest album, *The Shelter*—meaning it's going to be incredibly difficult to remove your finger from the repeat button. Believe me, I know.

The Shelter, Jars of Clay's 11th studio project, is a community-minded masterpiece, brought to life by Jars of Clay members—Charlie Lowell, Dan Haseltine, Stephen Mason and Matt Odmark—along with songwriting and vocal guests such as Brandon Heath, Mac Powell, Toby Mac, Mike Donehey, Matt Maher and Laura Story.

Each of the 11 songs is a testament of the beauty of living together as one and being led by the Spirit as a community.

Used to writing, performing, and producing projects on their own, Jars of Clay felt led this time to bring in friends to be a part of the record-making process. "We thought, Let's just share our story of community and alongside it invite friends to come in and add their voices to it," says Jars guitarist Stephen Mason.

The idea for *The Shelter* came from an Irish saying that translates: "It is in the shelter of each other that the people live." Inspired, Jars of Clay sought to focus the theme of their new album around this idea of unity, which is expressed clearly in "Shelter"—one of the first songs written for the album. The lyrics bring a world of comfort as we're reminded "our lives are not our own" and "we will never walk alone."

"These songs from *The Shelter* just reaffirm our stories and how we learned with baby steps to be authentic and lead with weakness. ... That's how relationships are strengthened and

bonds are formed," Mason says.

The first single, "Out of My Hands," also encourages everyone to remember even in the midst of failures, faults and struggles, "It's out of my hands / It was from the start / In light of what You've done for me"—bringing home the reality we are being looked after by a great and merciful Savior.

There will be many opportunities to sing along with Jars of Clay as they co-headline An Evening with Brandon Heath & Jars of Clay tour, which kicks off Oct. 7.

Though friends, this is the first time Heath and Jars of Clay have officially toured together, and for the 22-city tour, the artists will play within each other's sets.

"Artistically, [Heath's] in this community of artists in Nashville we care about and respect," Mason says. "That said, it just feels right, and we're excited to get some exclusive time on the road with him."

Jars of Clay plan to perform tracks from *The Shelter* along with hits from previous albums as well.

Heath, a Dove Award-winning vocalist, is thrilled to tour with his friends from Jars of Clay.

"Their first record was actually the first Christian record that I ever owned," says Heath, who's been a fan of their music for years. "I felt like it was such a pinnacle record in Christian music. ... Just their willingness to push the envelope, it paved the way for young guys like me. The fact that we're co-headlining, I'm honestly honored and beside myself."

Heath will perform some of his popular songs such as "Give Me Your Eyes," "I'm not Who I Was," and "Wait and See," along with new material from his upcoming album which releases early next year.

If the album's first single, "Your Love," is any indication of the quality of the project as a whole, we're in for a treat.

Heath says the album will definitely have a pop sound. Fans can also expect songs such as the title track, "Leaving Eden," which reminds us there is a time to mourn, but "then move on in hope," he says.

Keeping with the theme of community, the Heath/Jars of Clay tour is partnering with Jars' relief organization, Blood: Water Mission as well as Food for the Hungry in an effort to focus on needs in Africa.

Founded in 2002, the first effort of Blood: Water Mission was bringing clean water to sub-Saharan Africa with the "1000 Wells Project." The 1,000th well is being funded this year.

"The concept of neighbor is changing," Mason says. "We're learning as Jars of Clay how uniquely bound together we are with others in community, and that includes those overseas."

The idea of unity is also fitting, considering the flood that damaged homes and took lives in Nashville, Tenn., says Heath.

"The biggest thing was how so many people pulled together and volunteered," he says. "They realized what the strength of a village is like. There's strength and safety in numbers."

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