

CONCESSION 23

Concession 23 [kuhn-sesh-uhn] - noun. To concede; agree; work together + 23 (the number of strings from a guitar, banjo, bass and mandolin). A bluegrass band from the Ottawa Valley.



From the beginning Concession 23 was a band made up of four very different but equal contributors. In the intervening 16 years they have matured into one of Ontario's most sought-after Bluegrass bands with a voice uniquely their own. They embody the ideal that the sum is greater than the parts and their success is founded on the collaboration underlying their music. Known for their considered arrangements, well-crafted stories, and tight integration, this band works as one.

During their long commitment to the genre they have mastered its stylistic range. From lilting waltzes to dig-deep drive, from contemporary "picture" songs to roots inspired back-woods tales, they draw on their broad repertoire to transport audiences away from the day-to-day and into places of the heart.

With their enthusiastically received new album, *Walter and Alice* (June 2015), Concession 23 has combined original music with that of other fine writers. The band built each track from the ground up. Banjo player, Sherry Philp says "When any one of us brings a new song to the band we focus exclusively on the melody and the story: we avoid listening to other interpretations because we want an arrangement that uniquely and naturally flows from us." The title track, co-written by Nick Strachan and Sherry Philp, is perhaps the band's most requested song – a provocative story about the question of forgiveness, inspired by an Alice Munro short story. "What Was I Drinkin'?", another band original, is a classic honkytonk tune about bad choices.

Wandering Steps (2009), nominated for *Recording of the Year*, is a high-octane recording in the tradition of first-generation bluegrass. The CD features a number of classic songs written by some of the pioneers of bluegrass music, such as Red Allen, and by important, early folk song writing giants, such as Felice & Boudleaux Bryant, and Karl Davis & Harty Taylor – people who wrote for and inspired the Blue Sky Boys, the Everly Brothers, Buddy Holly, Roy Orbison, Bob Dylan and others. The original tracks once again showcase the band's song writing talents which draw on two distinct trends in early 20th century acoustic music. The soulful title track tells the ageless story of leaving home and spending the rest of your days trying to find your way back. "I Wasn't Born in Carolina," co-written by Kevin Golka and Nick Strachan, is a straight-ahead, up-tempo bluegrass song about living and loving north of the 49th parallel.

The Walls Around You (2007), the band's first full-length CD, draws from traditional writers and modern artists, and also features four top-notch original recordings: "Albert Johnson", "On the Mountain Side", "To Tell the Truth", and "Write this Down". Each song was crafted by its narrative. "Albert Johnson," a fan favourite at festivals, tells the true story of the Mad Trapper of Red River. In 1932, a mysterious trapper shot an RCMP officer in the Canadian arctic and then managed to evade capture by outrunning his pursuers for nearly 1½ months during the dead of a Yukon winter in what became the most famous manhunt in Canadian history.

Concession 23 has been a fixture at the Central Canadian Bluegrass Awards. Since their inception, the band has garnered nominations in every available instrument category, and also for *Composer, Male Vocalist, Overall Group, Vocal Group of the Year*, and *Best Recording*. Their first original recording, "On the Mountainside," which appears on *North to Ontario* (2006), won *Best Recording* that year. Sherry Philp was named *Female Vocalist of the Year* for five straight years (2007 to 2011) and *Banjo Player of the Year* (2012). Sherry's unique voice is deeply rooted in the bluegrass tradition and the band is very proud of her accomplishments. In 2006 they were named *Most Promising Band of the Year* and now, years later, these same founding members have honed the Concession 23 sound to become one of the most respected bluegrass bands in Ontario.

The warm rapport Concession 23 establishes with audiences is an inevitable by-product of the obvious pleasure they take in sharing music they are deeply devoted to. Time spent with Concession 23 is time well spent.

Concession 23 is Jonathan Ferrabee (acoustic bass and lead vocals); Kevin Golka (mandolin, lead and harmony vocals); Sherry Philp (banjo, lead and harmony vocals) and Nick Strachan (guitar, lead and harmony vocals).

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