Perhaps what distinguishes *Green to Gold* from the rest of The Antlers’ canon is its, well, sunniness. Conceived and written almost entirely in the morning hours, *Green to Gold* is the band’s first new music in nearly seven years, and easily their most luminous to date. “I think this is the first album I’ve made that has no eeriness in it,” singer and primary songwriter Peter Silberman asserts. “I set out to make Sunday morning music.”

The brighter outlook emerged, paradoxically, after a succession of ominous events. Following 2014’s *Familiars*, it looked iffy whether there would even be another Antlers album, after the onset of Silberman’s auditory problems. Affecting his left ear, it was a condition that left him struggling to cope with commonplace noises. Feeling assailed by the cacophonyof Brooklyn, it necessitated that he retreat to a less complicated, more sereneworld. So, leaving his band, he moved to Upstate New York in 2015, close to where he spent his childhood.

What grew out of that exile was *Impermanence*, Silberman’s sparse, graceful 2017 solo album that chronicled the disorienting journey through the world of his temporary hearing loss and dislocation, which he feared might hamper his abilityto ever make music again. That issue was complicated further after touring *Impermanence*, when Silberman was diagnosed with lesions on one of his vocal cords, requiring surgery for their removal and vocal therapy to retrain his voice to sing. “Doctors prescribed vocal rest — long periods every day without talking or singing,” Silberman explains. “I took these health obstacles as a sign that I should change course for a little while. I hadn’t made a full stop like that since The Antlers began.”

Turning off the impulse to constantly collect material for songs opened up space for a more fulfilled and nuanced existence. Hiking, gardening, and a burgeoning relationship more than compensated for the enforced slowdown of his artistic obsessions. “I came out of a kind of wilderness of mind and found myself building a more grounded life where art wasn’t the sole purpose,” he says.

The problem was, Silberman wasn’t even sure he wanted to keep making music. “I’d love to say that after recovering from my hearing and vocal issues that I felt a newfound sense of determination and inspiration, but I really didn’t. I was drained,” says the musician quietly.

But he still felt the strong pull to spend time and work with longtime drummer Michael Lerner, and frequently invited him up to visit the idyllic hamlet he now called home. The two friends’ days typically involved long walks in the woods, but routinely ended up in Silberman’s converted-garage studio. “I would record him playing drums in the studio while he listened to old soul and R&B songs in headphones. I couldn’t even hear those songs, I was just listening to him play along and hitting record,” laughs Silberman. “I just sensed we couldn’t begin with an entirely blank canvas, and those drum recordings ultimately served as starting points for the songs that followed. But at the time, we were merely attempting to make music together again, without really knowing how to approach it, or to what end.”

But amidst that ambivalence, the tenth anniversary tour for the release of 2009’s *Hospice* provided conviction. “On that tour, trying out my rehabilitated voice on older songs and reconnecting to our audience, I realized how important this was to me, and to them. After each show, fans would share deeply personal stories of their own losses, illnesses and struggles, and insist that this music had been their life raft. That rejuvenated me, and cemented my decision to revive the project,” says Silberman.

Shortly thereafter, he and Lerner hit on something no more than a jam, discarded years earlier. A scrap of sound that they developed into a short, pastoral instrumental, unlike anything they had done before as The Antlers.

That song became “Strawflower,” a blithe, buoyant album opener — much like “Prologue” began *Hospice* as a scene setter. The ethereal wisp of mood and intention ultimately gives way to “Equinox,” the instrumental that closes out *Green to Gold*. “I think of them as bookends for the unfolding story told within them, which soon began to emerge,” says Silberman.

Unlike other Antlers albums, Silberman didn’t feel compelled to turn a human experience into a circuitous mythology. He chose a more direct approach: documenting two years in his life, without overthinking or obscuring what the songs were about. “Most of the songs on *Green to Gold* are culled from conversations with my friends and my partner. It’s less ambiguous about who’s speaking and who’s listening,” says Silberman resolutely.

Which might have everything to do with the fact that Silberman had found himself in a new relationshipproviding much of the impetus for the sense of hope, renewal and returning to where you belong on this album — both emotionally and geographically — beginning with “Wheels Roll Home,” with its chiming guitars, swaying-yet-sturdy drums and aura of romantic inevitability and deep connection.

“Solstice” is a languid, light-filled memory with Silberman’s effortless falsetto recalling the innocence of childhood summers, where time seemed infinite and days long, while “Stubborn Man” is a job application, a confession and an admission of foibles, in this graceful slow dance that finds Silberman more forthcoming than he has ever been in any Antlers song. Album standout, “Just One Sec” intentionally strays into Americana territory. With a weeping slide guitar, banjo and a vocal that recalls early Cat Stevens, it’s as deft and piercing as an Emily Dickinson poem, and as clever as a cowboy’s lament. “It Is What It Is,” feels half-celebratory and half-funereal, shot through with the wisdom of the Tao, whisper sung as woodwinds moan softly in the background against a steady back beat.

“Volunteer” is a haiku, an incantation, but most of all a parable about getting out of one’s own way and allowing nature to take its course, something Silberman and Lerner seemed to have elegantly done on this record. Title track “Green to Gold” is an ouroboros of a song, beginning and ending at the same place, as seasons change, and the outer landscape mimics the inner map. But most importantly, it reveals the lessons of the natural world, both human and otherwise. Album closer “Porchlight” is an outlier, with a cocktail lounge piano pecking out the stylish melody line, accompanied by an almost country shuffle about hovering between two worlds, but finding your way back to *terra firma*.

But the biggest difference between *Green to Gold* and The Antlers’ back catalog is its arrival at a kind of quiet normalcy after a number of rather anxious records, in the same way Neil Young’s *Harvest Moon* does; a softer, gentler album that the august artist made after recovering from a case of tinnitus himself.

“There’s some David Lynchian quality to every Antlers album, too, but I think this one is our *Straight Story —* it’s heartfelt and melancholic, and possibly the only film of Lynch’s that’s entirely devoid of creepiness and dread. I thought it’d be interesting this time to see what would happen if we excluded that unsettling quality from our work as well,” Silberman says.

“I think the shift in tone is the result of getting older. It doesn’t make sense for me to try to tap into the same energy that I did ten or fifteen years ago, because I continue to grow as a person, as I’m sure our audience does too. *Green to Gold* is about this idea of gradual change,” he sums up. “People changing over time, struggling to accept change in those they love, and struggling to change themselves. And yet despite all our difficulty with this, nature somehow makes it look easy.”