

Signature Story (Final Edited Version) 5/26/18

Global citizen and neo-folk singer Eli Lev is making the world a smaller place, one song at a time. Eli pens hymns for everyday enlightenment—songs that resonate because they're heartfelt, earthy, and offer wisdom culled from self-discovery.

His recent four-album project is inspired by the wisdom and majesty of the Navajo Nation's four cardinal directions. Each album is a carefully curated experience with a distinct musical aesthetic and conceptual threads aligned within this overarching and sacred indigenous perspective. His first release, *All Roads East* is available now, with *Way Out West* soon to follow. Together, this four-part series imaginatively and intrepidly connects spheres and generations with a body of work that is irresistibly uplifting, emotionally resonant, and groundbreaking.

“With these albums, I'm offering a personalized musical adventure. When I'm on the road, and I can't speak the language, I've always been able to play a song and suddenly everyone's singing and dancing. My whole life of travel, experiencing other cultures and sounds, and making friends along the way has led me to this moment,” relates the Washington, DC-based artist.

In just two years as a full-time musician, Eli has built a robust profile through wowing audiences each time he picks up a guitar. He has opened for national names like Shooter Jennings at The Fillmore in Silver Spring, Maryland and Ellis Paul at Jammin Java in Vienna, Virginia. Eli has appeared at Burning Man in Black Rock City, Nevada, Music on the Mall Festival in Washington DC, and at Kennedy Center Millennium Stage for the METRO Performs Series.

With regional and national tour dates coming up for Fall 2018, Eli currently maintains a full schedule performing on what he has playfully dubbed the “Beltway Tour.” The tour boasts an impressive series of appearances at hundreds of venues throughout DC, Maryland, and Virginia at festivals, clubs, house shows, and special events, including a special invitation to perform at the US Capitol Building by DC Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes-Norton.

Behind Eli's success is his own production company, the grassroots platform Eli Lev Music, LLC. With entrepreneurial savvy and hard work, he's been able to build it into a sustainable business, allowing him to be a full-time musician on his own terms and connect directly to his community of supporters. “I want no barriers between my music and my community. Music is a means to an end in order to connect to people, and I wanted everything I do with my craft to be as intimate and as accessible as possible,” Eli says. One-way Eli stays actively engaged with his supporters is through his YouTube “Folk Friday” series, during which he sings a cover or an original song in a performance video that welcomes his subscribers to the weekend with a smile.

Eli's latest four-part album series represents an unprecedented artistic feat. The albums offer four distinct viewpoints of folk music, showing that folk is a heartfelt intention and not a genre sound. At the most basic level, his first release in this series, *All Roads East*, is a traditional folk album with a full, organic sound. The title has multiple interpretations. It's a tip of the hat to spiritual Eastern philosophical practices. It's also a tribute to Navajo culture, where being directionally oriented east aligns you with sunrise and the newness of life. The album has been featured on CBS Radio, Buzz Feed, and Paste Magazine for its blend of country, folk, Americana, soul, and pop, while being free from any specific

tradition. A highlight is the sweetly pensive “Making Space”, which Eli calls “My manifesto, it’s my vision of the world creating space to be a community and casting aside artificial classifications that separate us.”

Another stand-out track is the swampy, funky blues of “Go Down,” applauded for its “lush instrumentation and crooning vocals” by *Paste Magazine*. The song is a snapshot of a series of baptisms Eli witnessed on the Jordan River and is rife with intriguing metaphors and impressionistic lyrics. “Go Down” has been called “downright infectious” by *Skope* and lauded by *Modern Mystery* as a “breath of fresh air in the current music scene.” *Dancing About Architecture* goes even further, saying: “He appears to write songs which, without intentionally aiming for the commercial market, are as addictive, groovesome and rug-cuttingly contagious as anything deliberately trying to play that game.”

The follow up album, *Way Out West*, is an adventurous, futuristic folk album with bold electronic touches and experimental soundscapes. On the album, Eli artistically references the untamed nature of the west as it has been represented in popular culture. “It’s that dangerous, fertile area that is unexplored. On this album, it’s emblematic of me pushing the boundaries of folk music,” Eli shares.

The centerpiece of *Way Out West* is “One Road,” which boasts intrepid touches like a detuned mandolin and electronic textures that recall Radiohead more than Bob Dylan. The lyrical content of the piece addresses the folk tradition, how it’s evolved, and how it must continue to evolve to stay relevant.

“To me, folk music represents a tradition of reinterpretation. The music was always growing and evolving,” Eli says. “Together, these albums represent an artistic statement about folk music and how folk songs can be performed in many contexts.”

Still to come is the stirring, soulful, homestyle sound of *Deep South*, which dives into Eli’s southern heritage, with the stripped-down album *True North* completing the series (featuring Eli in an intimate guitar and vocal setting).

To understand these albums, one must understand Eli’s path in creating them. There is a lot of living in these songs. For two decades, Eli has traveled and lived abroad, soaking up cultures, regional music, and meaningful interactions with strangers who became friends. His songs are his stories, his impressions of the world, and his hopes for the future.

Eli’s global passport includes formative trips to Spain, Israel, Arizona to live on the Navajo Reservation, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Andorra, Indiana, coming full circle back to Washington, DC, where he was born and raised. Along the way, Eli absorbed the majestic flamenco chord progressions of Andalusia, Spain, the Middle East’s touch for sublime minor key melodicism, and the southern United States tradition of heartfelt, soulful melodies. Also signature to Eli’s musical philosophy is a bedrock grounding in the folk music continuum that has led him to modern explorations like looping and tap-on-the-body-of-the-guitar percussive touches.

Eli Lev grew up in a musical family; his mother sings and plays piano and his father plays oboe and guitar. His journey in music, however, has seen him forging his own path. Despite a rich soundtrack at home, and supportive, creative types as parents, it would be Eli’s free-spirited attitude toward travel that continued to shape and character of his songs. “Meeting so many different people, I found there were

common themes in all of our lives, and the way we could connect was through music,” Eli says thoughtfully.

Interestingly, it wouldn't be until many years into being a globetrotting troubadour that Eli decided to pursue music full time. In 2015, he was solo camping on a beach in Mexico when he made a fateful choice. “I felt like I was following a path, trusting myself, trusting in the process, and releasing any expectations I felt society had for me. When I finally made the decision, it felt like anything was possible.”

Eli performs both as a solo artist and with his full band, The Fortunes Found. The newly formed group features all-star DC drummer Michael Miraglia, wunderkind bassist Bojan Novevski from Macedonia, and mandolin player Corey Thuro who maintains a folk grounding while exploring the brave tones afforded to him by his expansive pedalboard. With the new addition of lead guitar wizard Dante Frisiello, their full, neo-folk sound is truly something to behold.

To date, the band has performed at premier DC venues such as Pearl Street Warehouse, Songbyrd Music House, DC9, and the Rock and Roll Hotel to name a few. With marquee performances at The 202 Music Festival in DC, Takoma Park Folk Festival in Maryland, and Reston Town Festival in Virginia, the band is quickly becoming a regional sensation as they mix country, rock, folk, and soul on stage.

In performance, Eli captivates the audience with a storyteller approach to stage banter through tales of his travel, witty asides, and engaging commentary. His infectious musicality, commitment to deep grooves, and playful charisma foster an immersive experience for the audience that moves bodies and opens hearts.

“The most meaningful thing for me is being able to express through my music what I've always felt about humanity. I want to bring people in, make them feel special, and break down the walls that keep us apart.”

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