

David Elias



Coffeehouse DSD Playlist #1

[originally posted at <http://davideliasblog.wordpress.com> 5/30/2014] – Recording available as DSD download at <http://www.davidelias.com>

Many fine things in life started and evolved from a coffeehouse. Some of the music from coffeehouses of the 60's remains in the air and through the ether today. I was influenced both then and now by many of those stark to warm images being generated at that time.

I soon enough found myself playing coffeehouse on acoustic at university in the mid-70's in the midwest. Then before I knew it the world had already changed several times and it was the mid-90's and I was thinking about again playing coffeehouse, this time in the SF Bay Area with many original songs I had written on acoustic. Coffeehouse and acoustic had already come and gone in popular music but I still felt the influence and had in fact

continued to live in its comfy waves through those rock-pop-disco-metal-grunge decades.

So coming back to the coffeehouse in the 90's was easy for me and I started approaching local coffeehouses with the idea of live music, usually on a weekend morning. I was soon playing at different places on the Hwy 1 coast and other spots in and around San Francisco.

At a similar time, independent home studio recording was taking shape as was the Internet in HTML browser form. In 1994 I started working on a home recording project of my originals. Inspiration and gear were fueled by Gus Skinas and Roger Powell.

The result was "Lost in the Green" as a 100% DIY CD that got played on radio stations ranging from Santa Cruz to Hong Kong. The idea for LITG was to deliver a coffeehouse experience on CD to anyone interested. At the same time, MP3 versions of the tracks were getting uploaded over 33k and 56k modems by me and downloaded at the same speeds by other musicians, DJ's and listeners. This was 1995.

The world changed quite a few times again and it seemed to be turning faster.

In 1999 and 2000 I started listening to a new digital recording format called Direct Stream Digital (DSD) that was being developed as an archive format by Sony and Philips. This alternative to analog tape was needed to preserve the master library of recordings to date. I was astounded by what I was hearing from the get go as transfers from master tapes to DSD on a prototype workstation.

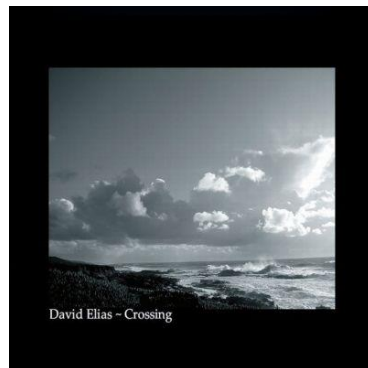
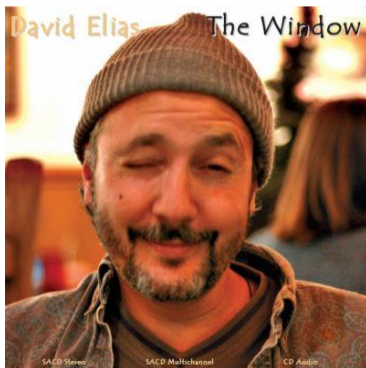
Shortly after that I was experimenting with a bare bones 3-mic, 2-track, no mixer direct recording to DSD with Gus at Wind Over The Earth in Boulder. It was just me and a guitar and 3 of owner Mickey Houlihan's excellent mic's plus preamp. Stark images. Undeniably accurate and honest.

From there the coffeehouse feel and incentive stayed alive and well through a number of DSD projects starting with "The Window" SACD release in 2004. As equipment and costs continue to work their inverse magic, the power of DSD recording is now (suddenly?) a home studio and field reality. The same is true for playback of this beautifully natural sounding media. Gone is the box around the sound. The image is as live and fragrant as roasted Ka'u coffee.

So here is my own work from various DSD releases since those beginning years in High Resolution Audio (HRA). I have created my **Coffeehouse DSD Playlist #1** as a recognition of long trails of roots to some very fine sources of inspiration and art. Mahalo Nui Loa to all of those inspirations and guides.

Aloha!

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COFFEEHOUSE DSD PLAYLIST #1

Native DSD Recordings by David Elias

1. The Old King (from "The Window")

In contrast to the hootenanny spirit of the 60's revival coffeehouse stage also lies in parallel the contemplative and meditative story teller and bard saga. This story in "The Old King" reaches back into the millennia to both recall and record the wisdom and folly of all of our passages through time and earth. Recorded live directly to DSD Sonoma at Immersive Studios in Boulder, I don't recall any other take of this track. I do recall that all musicians participating took something of a deep breath after the take and then we all wanted to get to the control room to listen to what had just happened: A musical time capsule no one had quite anticipated.

2. Half an Hour Away (from "The Window")

All tracks on all DSD recordings I released have been without edits or overdubs. This song has an age and timeless place somewhere in the midst of "The Old King". The two songs are brothers in that regard. In writing songs I have had the freedom to release myself from all personal constraints and history and so become an open channel to other experiences I feel I've witnessed without knowing anything about how or why. "Half an Hour Away" is a comfortable natural place for me to visit repeatedly. Working with the ensemble of Matt Flinner, Eric Thorin and Ross Martin (Matt Flinner Trio) is for me quite simply, as good as it gets. This is true of all the live studio music experiences I've had over the last 20 years. It is truly one of my favorite places to be with all those present.

3. Rodeo on a Ridge (from "Acoustic Trio - DSD Sessions")

This live take from Slipperworld Studios in La Honda, Calif. was one of the 14 tracks presented in order of the takes, recorded as a trio session with Chris Kee and Charlie Natzke in Charlie's studio. I think "Rodeo on a Ridge" is a great example of the ability of DSD to capture and articulately present the finer nuances of acoustic performances. This delicate song and story appear to fall audibly from the sky as lightly as feathery waves. We recorded with the windows open in the hills of Portola Valley among the redwoods. The natural decay and space in this song are to me reminiscent of those forests as well as some of the glacial panoramas reflected in the lyrics.

4. Mend My Mind (from "Crossing")

Another live session from Slipperworld but this time with a full band arranged in a full circle in the studio. An intimate setting for an introspective song. I believe Marc Dalio on percussion simply played the drums with his hands on this track. Matt Flinner on mandolin and Sally Van Meter on dobro are the translated musical expressions of the story being told lyrically. We all have our special places where we seek soul restoration. Here I'm singing about some of mine.

5. Close My Eyes (from "Crossing")

As we imagine the world so it is and becomes. I believe this more and more, the more I witness in this life. With the same ensemble as in the track above, this song steps away from a careful examination of what we imagine to what we need and desire in a bolder statement. Lively pursuit, ignoring the scenes that distract and reduce our energy. DSD captures this as well without isolation of the instruments. In fact the natural bleed from minimal mic'ing is what I had experimented with from the beginning and came to rely on as a natural way to record an acoustic band.

6. Morning Light / Western Town (from "Crossing")

As another experiment we decided to overdub a few electric instruments on top of a live acoustic band performance. In this track, the original session was recorded with Chris Kee, Peter Tucker and myself. We then added John Havard's powerful electric guitar solo tracks (2 tracks) and David Phillips pedal steel. The result is a high impact DSD recording mixed by Gus for both stereo and 5.1 surround.

7. Vision of Her ("Acoustic Trio - DSD Session")

Originally released as a Bonus Track on the world's first DSD Disc album download ("The Window", Nov. 2009) this recording was done as part of the Acoustic Trio DSD Sessions at Slipperworld. Myself, Chris Kee and Charlie Natzke were standing in a small circle almost at arm's length from each other for these recordings. The trio just played songs standing up facing each other in the studio that morning in a single session less than 4 hours long. The entire album comes from that session which I mixed on Sonoma in a single long night. So this is "live" and spontaneous and accurate.

8. Poor Polly (single)

Venturing away from a pure acoustic setting started for me also in the mid-90's as I became good friends and musical brothers with a number of gifted players from the Celtic community in San Francisco. The influence of this music on me at that time was a complete revelation and return to some essential roots spiritually and musically. So along with fiddles and bodhrans, guitars and pipes came some good old fashioned R&B and roots rock sessions in the pubs and in our homes. Poor Polly is a derivative of that way of both playing and listening at the same time. Our electric quartet of The CasualTeas with Scott Beynon, Charlie Natzke and Ken Owen also recorded this live in the studio to DSD Sonoma. It's not a Celtic song, but it tells a darkened difficult story on a rambling road possibly as a lost cousin. You can download this song in a variety of HRA formats to listen to and compare.

9. Aspen Rose (single)

Back to the basics. Aspen Rose was recorded with the handheld Korg MR-1 DSD recorder using the bundled condenser microphone. I recorded this in an off-grid cabin in Hamakua, a beautiful Hawaiian setting in the landscape looking out at the water. You can hear a gecko in the ceiling as well as some bamboo chimes outside on the lanai and even the far off sound of the outer island highway truck rolling by towards the end. There's no studio involved here, just a guitar and voice and a recorder to capture the event. I hope DSD percolates to all levels of the spectrum as a great tool for music lovers anywhere.

1. The Old King (from "The Window") – David Elias

Hear them cheering for your dying day
See them wipe your feet with dust and clay
Never mind the near ones where they lay
Memories of clear ones there they stay
There they stay

See them clear away your open grave
Watch them lower you down into place
Night will pass eternal into space
While the sun burns coins laid on your face
On your face

Consciousness returns to summer's eyes
Windmills spin their patterns through the skies
Heavy air returns to times gone by
No one meets your gaze or even tries
Even tries

Crows in pairs are sentries to your doom
Watchers of the seeds you plant too soon
Blackening the sky they leave no room
For the sun to shine down on your tomb

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Musicians:
David Elias – acoustic/vocal
Matt Flinner – bouzouki
John Magnie – keyboards
Ross Martin – electric guitar
Eric Thorin – upright bass
Marc Dalio – percussion

2. Half an Hour Away (from "The Window") - David Elias

I wish I had a field of corn
Or half a rag to keep me warm
A bag of bones to blow my horn
Time to fade away

I wish I had a bowl of wheat
Or half an ear to keep the beat
See me on a one way street
Half an hour away

Old time
Old time
Old time
Half an hour away

I wish I had a room of gin
And all the keys to lock me in
Never see my face again
Time to fade away

I wish there was a world of green
And half the time to be unseen
Never what you really mean
Half an hour away

Old time old time old time
Half an hour away

I'll look for you in dreams come true
When all you see is what you do
Never mind the world you knew
Half an hour away

Old time old time old time
Half an hour away

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Musicians:
David Elias – acoustic/vocal
Matt Flinner – mandolin
Ross Martin – electric guitar
Eric Thorin – upright bass

3. Rodeo on a Ridge (from "Acoustic Trio - DSD Sessions") - David Elias

The water under the bridge
Echoes the rain outside
Morning and sun become one
Mile after mile
Wave with a smile
Rodeo on a ridge

The meadow we climbed was high
We didn't know how high then
Glacier cut through that skyline
Blue ice on blue
How much of it you
Rodeo on a ridge

And prayers are for the poets
This song sings to that mountain time
All you knew and now you know it
Everything you left behind

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Musicians:

David Elias – acoustic/vocal

Charlie Natzke – acoustic guitar

Chris Kee – upright bass

4. Mend My Mind (from "Crossing") - David Elias

Mend my mind on a summer day
Arguello said what he had to say
No one wants it any other way
Mend my mind on a summer day

Mend my heart on the open shore
Where winds will blow and then they blow some more
Colors fade away from rich to poor
Mend my heart on the open shore

Clear my head on an autumn day
The sun is strong and the winds are grey
The party's over ain't no one would stay
So clear my head on an autumn day

There's nothing wrong with a rainy day
The skies may cry for yesterday
Winds will sing to find another way
There's nothing wrong with that rainy day

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Musicians:

David Elias – acoustic/vocal

Sally Van Meter – weissenborn guitar

Matt Flinner – mandolin

Eric Thorin – upright bass

Marc Dalio - drums

5. Close My Eyes (from "Crossing") - David Elias

I close my eyes and criticize and sympathize
And rest upon my dying day
I breathe the words the ones you heard
That story blurred
I watch them as they drift away

And I close my eyes
To that cold and windy day
I close my eyes
I don't want to see again
Close my eyes
To the higher window
I don't know what time it closes

I paint that picture while they lecture pure conjecture
I deny that river why
I seek the desert for the love that lusts to wander
Through the womb of fire and sky

And I close my eyes
To that cold and windy day
I close my eyes
I don't want to see again
Close my eyes
To the higher window
I don't know what time it closes

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Musicians:
David Elias – acoustic/vocal
Sally Van Meter – dobro guitar
Matt Flinner – mandolin
Eric Thorin – upright bass
Marc Dalio - drums

6. Morning Light / Western Town (from "Crossing") - David Elias

Morning light, western town
Morning light, western town
Roadside crosses lay me down

You can read it on the red brick
When you are up against the wall
Some said they saw you flying
Some said they saw you fall
No matter where you're walking
You're underneath it all

Is that a piece of paper that you're holding
Is that a prayer book in your hand
Written in some foreign language
From some obscure promised land
No matter what they're saying
You still don't understand

You can't beat the big prediction
You can't estimate the odds
You can't treat a false addiction
With some even falser Gods
You wander cross the planet
With your head up in the clouds

Morning light, western town
Morning light, western town
Roadside crosses lay me down

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Musicians:

David Elias – acoustic/vocal

John Havard – electric guitar

David Phillips – pedal steel guitar

Chris Kee – upright bass

Peter Tucker - drums

7. Vision of Her ("Acoustic Trio - DSD Session") - David Elias

Sitting on the edge of your world
Holding on your legs where they curl
Looking for the vision of her
The vision of her

Staring down the year inside out
Making do within and without
Never finding reason to doubt
The vision of her

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Musicians:

David Elias – acoustic/vocal

Charlie Natzke – acoustic guitar

Chris Kee – upright bass

8. Poor Polly (single) - David Elias

Settle down the question now poor Polly
Was it you who rode away or was it you who drowned
Was it Halfway Jim who did you in poor Polly
Or did he sweep you off your feet
And ride to higher ground

Settle down the question now poor Polly
Was there silver in that wedding dress
And diamonds on the ground
Were there three horsemen who knew you well poor Polly
Did they tie you in that chair
And bid you never make a sound

Settle down the question now poor Polly
Did you ride out with your lover straight across the border
Where's the papers that he left behind poor Polly
To vindicate your brother
Identify your daughter

Settle down the question now poor Polly
How many days before we hear your cross chain on the floor
Why waste your time with such small time poor Polly
You could have had most anyone
And struggled never more

Settle down the question now poor Polly
You hunger for the truth as you drink from every stream
Will we ever see your pretty eyes poor Polly
Or do you leave us running endlessly
Right back into your dream

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Musicians:
David Elias – acoustic/vocal
Charlie Natzke – semi-hollow electric guitar
Scott Beynon – electric bass
Ken Owen - drums

9. Aspen Rose (single) - David Elias

Aspen Rose your toes remind me of a summer lost
Beauty in the wilderness unspoiled and untamed
Aspen Rose your ruby nose reminds me of another frost
Straight down from the north comes forth
We're boiling tea again

Aspen Rose your blond hair glows as sunrise
Easing up the mountains you're wandering through the pines
Aspen Rose your youth shows silent as the twilight
Settling through the window calming down my inner mind

Aspen Rose recall those nights when we were strangers
Unknowing to the dangers that surrounded us like thieves
Aspen Rose nobody knows how things could not change
We flowed like a river right beneath October trees

Aspen Rose I'll go I'm sorry that I'm weary
Afraid that I have come too far in far too short a time
Aspen Rose your heart's the slowest burning fire
I'll ever know, it's time to go
I love you more than I

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David Elias - nylon string acoustic/vocal