

= Ellis Paul =

Ellis Paul (born Paul Plissey ; January 14 , 1965) is an American singer @-@ songwriter and folk musician . Born in Aroostook County , Maine , Paul is a key figure in what has become known as the Boston school of songwriting , a literate , provocative and urbanely romantic folk @-@ pop style that helped ignite the folk revival of the 1990s . His pop music songs have appeared in movies and on television , bridging the gap between the modern folk sound and the populist traditions of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger .

Having grown up in a small town in Maine , Paul attended Boston College on a track scholarship where he majored in English . An athletic injury sustained during his junior year changed the course of his professional career . Paul picked up a guitar to pass the time while sidelined , and discovered that playing guitar and writing songs was the creative outlet he had been looking for . After graduating from college he began playing at open mic nights in the Boston area while working with inner @-@ city school children . Paul 's growing popularity at Boston coffeehouses , coupled with winning a Boston Acoustic Underground songwriter competition and national exposure on a Windham Hill Records compilation combined to give him the confidence to resign his day @-@ job and pursue a career as a professional musician .

To date , Paul has released 19 albums and has been the recipient of 14 Boston Music Awards , considered by some to be a pinnacle of contemporary acoustic music success . He has published a book of original lyrics , poems , and drawings and released a DVD that includes a live performance , guitar instruction , and a road @-@ trip documentary . In 2014 his children 's CD Hero in You was published as a book by Albert Whitman & Company . As a touring musician , Paul plays close to 200 dates each year and his extensive club and coffeehouse touring , together with radio airplay , has brought him a solid national following .

= = Growing up = =

Ellis Paul was born in Fort Kent , Maine , a small , rural potato @-@ farming town near the Canadian border . Paul 's family had strong connections to the potato industry ? his father , Ed Plissey , was Executive Director of the Maine Potato Commission and his grandfather owned a 140 @-@ acre (0 @. @ 57 km2) potato farm . Schools in the area closed for three weeks each year so that school children could help with the potato harvest . Paul spent many hours working on his grandfather 's farm . Paul 's mother , the former Marilyn Bonney of Buckfield , Maine , is a University of Maine graduate and was an extension agent for northern Aroostook County . She and her husband often worked together on special projects for the service . In the 1960s , Mrs. Plissey produced her own television show " The Aroostook Homemaker " which aired every third week on Presque Isle television station WAGM @-@ TV .

While attending high school in Presque Isle , Maine , Paul listened to Top @-@ 40 radio and participated in track . He played trumpet in the school 's stage band where he was introduced to the big band jazz music of Stan Kenton and Maynard Ferguson . He excelled in track , becoming the Maine State champion in five @-@ kilometer distance running , a feat that garnered several scholarship offers , including an offer from Boston College . Having graduated high school with the class of 1983 , Paul relocated to Boston , leaving small @-@ town rural life behind . In an interview with Daniel Gewertz of the Boston Herald Paul stated , " It wasn 't until I went to Boston College on a track scholarship that I first heard folk . " Paul was particularly moved when he heard Bob Dylan singing " The House of the Rising Sun " . It was then that he began to take folk music seriously .

Paul was inducted into the Presque Isle High School Athletic Hall of Fame on Jan. 11 , 2013 .

= = Early career : 1987 ? 1990 = =

Paul majored in English at Boston College where he continued to participate in track . His best time in the 10 @, @ 000 meters (30 : 18 : 50) remains the fourth best men 's outdoor record in Boston College history . When a knee injury in his junior year sidelined him from athletics , Paul picked up

an acoustic guitar to pass the time . He taught himself to play guitar with the help of a Hits of the 70s songbook , and began to write songs . Boston radio included a classic hits station that played the music of Bob Dylan , Joni Mitchell , Neil Young and James Taylor ; artists who were mostly unfamiliar to Paul . Within a few years they became major influences . Having a career in music was the furthest thing from Paul 's mind at that point , but as his playing and writing improved it became a bigger focus in his life . In an interview with FolkWax journalist Arthur Wood , Paul stated :

" I started playing and learned a few songs by other writers to begin with . I started writing originals within a few months . My songs were pretty horrendous to begin with . They kept getting better and better . When I graduated , I started playing at open mics in bars in Boston . Eventually discovered that there were folk clubs where people were actually listening , and not drinking and carousing while you played . I got involved in that circuit . I think that 's why I 've become so lyric conscious ? because of those listening rooms , where you really have to rely on words in those situations . "

The open mic circuit in the Boston area included The Nameless Coffeehouse in Cambridge , Westborough 's Old Vienna Kaffeehouse and The Naked City Coffeehouse in Allston . Paul became a regular face at those clubs along with other young folk musicians such as Shawn Colvin , Patty Griffin , Dar Williams and Vance Gilbert . In 1989 he won the Nameless Coffeehouse 's New Songwriter Award . Paul played Cambridge 's Club Passim , a venue that would become his " home " venue , for the first time when he opened for John Gorka in October 1989 . Less than four years later he performed his first shows at Passim as a headliner . The three consecutive nights of shows took place on February 19 ? 21 , 1993 .

It was at the Old Vienna that Paul met Jon Svetkey , Brian Doser and Jim Infantino , all struggling young local musicians . In 1989 the four young men formed a collective called " End Construction " and in 1990 released a compilation of songs titled Resume Speed : New Artist Compilation on the End Construction Productions label . The four songwriters each performed four of his own original songs on the CD release . The Resume Speed liner notes stated that End Construction Productions was a small independent production , promotion and recording company run by songwriters and musicians " hellbent on getting the good music out there . " In the interview with Wood , Paul stated that the four songwriters started doing group shows together and collaborated on each other 's material . Although he goes on to say that the collaboration " was a good thing " and that the four musicians learned a lot from each other , eventually the foursome " burned out on the competitiveness " . The collaboration lasted three years .

Following his graduation from Boston College in 1987 , Paul worked a day @-@ job at the COMPASS school as a teacher and social worker with inner city school children performing at open mics three or four nights a week . It was not until the fall of 1992 that he quit his day @-@ job to pursue music as a full @-@ time career . During this period Paul met his manager , Ralph Jaccodine , and together they founded Black Wolf Records . In 1989 the label released Paul 's first two albums of original material : Am I Home and Urban Folksongs and Paul began touring outside the Boston area . Although originally released on cassette , the two albums were re @-@ released on CD in 2001 .

= = Rising success : 1990 ? 2000 = =

Winning the Boston Acoustic Underground Award in 1991 resulted in Paul playing to the largest crowd of his career to that point ? 300 . He continued to play in and around the New England area . Around this time , Windham Hill Records , which had previously released the Legacy songwriter compilation , put a call out to the music industry asking for songwriter submissions to be considered for the follow @-@ up Legacy II compilation . After the Old Vienna Kaffeehouse sent one of Paul 's tapes to Windham Hill , Paul 's " Ashes to Dust " from Urban Folksongs was chosen to be on the compilation . In the interview with Wood , Paul stated that he felt very excited to be on the Windham Hill release because it served as a calling card that every DJ and folk promoter in the country would recognize . Legacy II was released in 1992 and included songs performed by Patty Larkin , Patty Griffin , Greg Brown , Cheryl Wheeler and several others . Legacy II was Paul 's first national exposure .

After Paul opened for Bill Morrissey several times , Morrissey became one of Paul 's earliest mentors . Morrissey introduced Paul to the traditional songwriting of Woody Guthrie and Mississippi John Hurt , as well as songwriters of the 60s , such as Randy Newman . In a 2001 interview with Scott Alarik , Morrissey said that Paul jumped into listening to traditional songwriters " bigtime " and as a result is a much better writer and performer .

Paul asked Morrissey to produce his first album Say Something , which was released in 1993 on Black Wolf records . Fiddler Johnny Cunningham and guitarist Duke Levine , both friends of Morrissey 's , can be heard on the recording along with the background vocals of Patty Griffin . Scott Alarik wrote : " As his lovely , demanding and brilliant debut album Say Something attests , there is a precocious credibility and emotional truth to his real @-@ life ballads . "

Levine would co @-@ produce Paul 's follow @-@ up release Stories , which was released on Black Wolf in 1994 and re @-@ released on Rounder Records the following year . It was also in 1994 that Paul was first invited to play the Kerrville Folk Festival , winning the Kerrville New Folk award .

Paul became a follower of the music of Woody Guthrie during the early 1990s . In a 1998 Boston Globe article , Paul refers to a tattoo of Woody Guthrie on his right shoulder saying that Woody 's image was the only thing he could put on his body that would be " like a badge of who he was . " Paul 's tattoo of Woody Guthrie resulted in a chance meeting with Nora Guthrie , Woody Guthrie 's daughter , at a Folk Alliance Conference when Nora asked to see Paul 's tattoo . That chance meeting resulted in Paul being invited to perform at a Woody Guthrie tribute show at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland , Ohio . The 10 @-@ day celebration , held in September 1996 , included other notable musicians such as Bruce Springsteen , Billy Bragg , The Indigo Girls and Ani DiFranco . DiFranco 's record label , Righteous Babe , released a compilation of the event , ' Til We Outnumber ' Em , in 2000 .

Jerry Marotta , a drummer who had worked with Peter Gabriel , produced Paul 's third CD release A Carnival of Voices which was released on Rounder in 1996 . Marotta brought in bassist Tony Levin , guitarist Bill Dillon , and once again Duke Levine . Paul stated that A Carnival of Voices comprised character sketches of different people in different towns tied to " the carnival mentality of traveling . " A Carnival of Voices hit # 3 on The CMJ New Music Report Triple chart and World Café voted it the # 1 album of the year . By 1997 Paul 's mailing list passed 7 @,@ 000 names as his fan @-@ base continued to grow .

As Paul 's reputation and popularity grew , he was asked to return to folk venues and festivals around the country including the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival , the Kerrville Folk Festival and the Newport Folk Festival . The number of shows he performed annually increased to more than 200 . Although Paul performed mostly self @-@ penned songs , he would often include a Woody Guthrie song into his set . Woody 's " Hard Travelin ' " was always a crowd pleaser , especially in Oklahoma , Woody 's birthplace . In July 1998 , the 1st Woody Guthrie Folk Festival was held in Woody 's hometown of Okemah , Oklahoma . Not only did Paul headline the festival along with Billy Bragg , but the city of Okemah made him an honorary citizen . Paul stated that when he made the pilgrimage to Okemah he felt that he was walking in Woody 's footsteps and that the experience was " like going to the mount " . Paul 's sixth CD , Translucent Soul , was released later that year in October . Again produced by Jerry Marotta , the title track is a song about his relationship with good friend Vance Gilbert and tackles the issue of racism .

At the end of the decade , Paul was invited to perform at Club Passim 's 40th anniversary show . The event took place on January 16 , 1999 at the Sanders Theater in Cambridge . The four @-@ hour sold @-@ out concert also included Patty Larkin , Joan Baez , The Nields , and others . Joan Anderman , covering the event for the Boston Globe , reported that Paul 's " thinking @-@ person 's poetry " at the Sanders theater was " embellished with the bite of an electric guitarist and the earthy cool of a percussionist " , and that his set was " a model of modern organic grace " .

= = Career : 2000 ? 2003 = =

Paul released his first live recording , simply titled Live , on March 14 , 2000 . The double @-@ disk

included recordings from several shows , as well as previously unreleased studio tracks . Highlights of the year 2000 included Paul singing the National Anthem at Fenway Park , and having his song " The World Ain 't Slowing Down " chosen for the theme song in the Farrelly brothers movie Me , Myself and Irene starring Jim Carrey and Renée Zellweger . Both events took place on the same June weekend . In November 2001 , Paul was again successful in having a song in a movie when " Sweet Mistakes " was featured in Shallow Hal starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Jack Black . Paul released his 8th CD , Sweet Mistakes , a collection of audience @-@ favorites not yet recorded , on November 15 , 2001 . In January 2002 , Paul was named the FolkWax Artist of the Year for 2001 .

Paul often recites original poetry for his audiences . Some of those poems can be found in Notes from the Road , a collection of Paul 's original poems , lyrics , and journal entries published by Black Wolf Press in May 2002 . In her review for Performing Songwriter , Abby White said , " The book has an intimate , conversational tone , and Paul 's childlike drawings , song lyrics and poetry provide commercial breaks to his personal journal entries and vivid recollections of significant events he encounters while touring " . As the 21st century began Paul recited his " Millennium Poem " , regularly at shows .

In 2002 Paul became friends with Nora Guthrie . Nora Guthrie is executive director of the Woody Guthrie Foundation and Archives in New York City where hundreds of Woody Guthrie 's handwritten lyrics ? many without music ? are housed . She invited Paul to visit the Archives and choose one set of lyrics to put to song . Referring to the huge undertaking of finding songwriters to write music for hundreds of her father 's lyrics , Nora Guthrie stated that there was a " job description " that her father left behind that " Ellis took on " . Paul chose " God 's Promise " , lyrics that Woody had adapted in 1955 from " What God Hath Promised " , a hymn of the day and recorded it for his 2002 release Speed of Trees . Paul said that visiting the Woody Guthrie Archives was like going through a time capsule of his biggest hero and that the posthumous collaboration with Woody Guthrie was one of the " coolest things " he 'd ever done . The Nov. 5th episode of the TV series Ed featured Paul 's " If You Break Down " .

Paul 's connection to Woody Guthrie continued into 2003 when he was invited to perform in the Ribbon of Highway , Endless Skyway tribute show to honor Woody Guthrie . The ensemble show , which was the brainchild of Texas singer @-@ songwriter Jimmy LaFave , toured around the country and included a rotating cast of singer @-@ songwriters individually performing Guthrie 's songs . Interspersed between songs were Guthrie 's philosophical writings read by a narrator . In addition to LaFave and Paul , members of the rotating cast included Slaid Cleaves , Eliza Gilkyson , Joel Rafael , husband @-@ wife duo Sarah Lee Guthrie (Woody Guthrie 's granddaughter) and Johnny Irion , Michael Fracasso , and The Burns Sisters . Oklahoma songwriter Bob Childers , sometimes called " the Dylan of the Dust , " served as narrator . When word spread about the tour , performers began contacting LaFave whose only prerequisite was to have an inspirational connection to Guthrie . Each artist chose the Guthrie songs that he or she would perform as part of the tribute . One of the songs Gilkyson chose was " Pastures of Plenty " , while Cleaves chose " This Morning I Am Born Again " - a song he wrote using Guthrie 's lyrics . One of the songs Paul chose was a song he wrote using Guthrie 's lyrics - " God 's Promise " . LaFave said , " It works because all the performers are Guthrie enthusiasts in some form " . The Ribbon of Highway tour kicked @-@ off on February 5 , 2003 at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville . The abbreviated show was a featured segment of " Nashville Sings Woody " , yet another tribute concert to commemorate the music of Woody Guthrie held during the Folk Alliance Conference . The cast of " Nashville Sings Woody " , a benefit for the Woody Guthrie Foundation and Archives , also included Arlo Guthrie , Marty Stuart , Nanci Griffith , Guy Clark , Ramblin ' Jack Elliott , Janis Ian , and others .

Paul 's 3000 Miles DVD was released in February 2003 . Divided into four segments , the DVD begins with a live show recorded on October 3 , 2001 at Boston 's Somerville Theater - a show that was the final date of a six @-@ week tour with Susan Werner . The second segment is a 39 @-@ minute road movie filmed in 1995 by Matt Linde , an independent filmmaker who accompanied Paul on a cross @-@ country tour . Individual vignettes chronicle shows , conversations and events in Paul 's daily life as a traveling musician . A third segment shows Paul demonstrating the open tunings he uses in many of his songs , while the final segment is a discussion of songwriting with

fellow songwriters Christopher Williams and Vance Gilbert . In her review for Dirty Linen , Annette C. Eshleman said , " In just under three hours , viewers are able to watch as Paul evolves from a young , inexperienced folk singer wearing a backwards baseball cap to the highly respected , confident , seasoned performer that he is today " .

= = Career : 2004 ? 2009 = =

On May 1 , 2004 Paul was the recipient of the 2nd annual Boston College Arts Council Alumni Award for Artistic Achievement . The award was presented as part of the sixth annual Boston College Arts Festival . His appearances at the festival also included an " Inside the BC Studio " interview with music writer Scott Alarik , a master class on songwriting , and a concert . In 2004 Paul was also awarded his 13th Boston Music Award in the category of Outstanding Singer / Songwriter . At the time Paul was writing what he called " country tunes " when he teamed up with an Irish musician , producer , and studio expert named Flynn . This resulted in American Jukebox Fables , released April 5 , 2005 , a recording produced by Flynn that surprised some fans by melding folk , pop and electronica . Paul said that his collaboration with Flynn formed a partnership where he brought banjos and accordions and Flynn brought a laptop and keyboard . Although Paul knew that the end result would fall outside the comfort zone of some fans who expected another acoustic folk album , experimenting with Flynn 's musical chemistry set injected excitement and fun into the recording project .

Since approximately 1995 (no one seems to know for certain) , Paul has annually played Club Passim over New Year 's , performing two shows on December 30 and two shows on New Year 's Eve . In early 2006 Black Wolf Records released Live at Club Passim , a recording compiled from Paul 's 2005 New Year 's Eve shows . In May 2006 , Paul toured Europe and England playing to sold @-@ out shows in Paris , France ; Twickenham , England ; Cheltenham , England and Wasserburg , Germany . The tour also included two BBC radio interviews and a radio interview in Paris . Paul was included on the Woody Guthrie Coalition 's DVD Woody Sez : a Tribute to Woody Guthrie released in 2006 . The tribute show , recorded July 13 , 2005 at the Crystal Theater in Okemah , Oklahoma , included Paul performing a duet with The Burns Sisters on " God 's Promise " . Also released in 2006 was Paul 's " best of " album , released as Ellis Paul Essentials , on October 10 . The two @-@ disk retrospective of Paul 's 15 @-@ year career contained some songs that were absolutes and others that were included based on polls held on his website and discussion board . In his Folkwax review of Ellis Paul Essentials , Arthur Wood stated : " If you 've never visited " musically " with Mr. Ellis Paul , Essentials is a stunning place to start . " In his review for The Washington Post , Mike Joyce said " Essentials , a career @-@ spanning double CD from veteran singer @-@ songwriter Ellis Paul , has a few newly produced , John Jennings @-@ helmed tracks of previously recorded tunes that help set this compilation apart from most retrospectives . " In her review for Sing Out ! , Kari Estren said " Paul 's Essentials is just that and a must for your folk collection . "

In January 2008 , Paul released a children 's and family record entitled The Dragonfly Races . Inspired after the birth of his second daughter , Paul said that he wanted to teach his children about the world through the use of music . The songs are meant to be enjoyed by both children and adults , and Paul said " I wanted my kids to hear music with social commentary and some fantasy involved . " Scott Alarik said " Paul sings movingly about what really worries new parents , and turns lazy dragonflies , gentle monsters , and resilient roses into useful metaphors for world peace , the power of faith , and the delights of a sleepy day . " In April 2008 the Parents ' Choice Foundation awarded The Dragonfly Races a Silver Medallion . The Parents ' Choice Awards program honors the best material for children in these categories : books , toys , music and storytelling , magazines , software , videogames , television and websites .

In 2009 , country musician Jack Ingram chose to record a song written by Paul . According to CMT , Paul 's " The World Ain 't Slowing Down " , may be the song that takes Ingram to the " next level " . Ingram says " It 'll be fun for me to expose people to a fantastic song from an artist who 's had a 20 @-@ year career of being a very successful folk artist . "

= = Career : 2010 ? 2014 = =

Paul 's sixteenth CD , *The Day After Everything Changed* , was released on January 12 , 2010 . Rather than work with a record label , Paul invited fans to help finance the recording by offering donors various premiums determined by the level of donation . Although Paul wasn 't sure what to expect when the United States economy collapsed , the fan @-@ funding initiative resulted in more than \$ 100 @, @ 000 being collected - more , according to Paul , - than any label had ever spent on him . Recorded in Nashville with a guest appearance by Kristian Bush that includes a duet on the track , " Paper Dolls " , Paul says the fan support inspired him to make " the best record I could " . One reviewer wrote : " This is such a tuneful , beautifully drawn set of songs played and sung with authority that it reminds you how much we need storytellers back in pop music ? storytellers with empathy , fine eyes and an understanding that even though we live in a soulless , indifferent world our music doesn 't have to reflect our culture . " In her review for the Folk and Acoustic Music Exchange , Roberta Schwartz said that the CD is " a masterwork filled with the best music and lyrics of his career . "

Five concerts commemorating Paul 's 20th anniversary in the music business took place at Boston 's Club Passim the weekend of July 9 ? 10 , 2010 . Paul performed his eight solo albums in chronological order over four shows . In addition , he also performed a children 's concert . The Mayor of Boston , Thomas M. Menino , proclaimed July 9 , 2010 as Ellis Paul Day in the City of Boston .

WUMB announced that its listeners voted *The Day After Everything Changed* one of the Top 10 CDs of 2010 .

Paul 's second children 's album , *The Hero in You* , was released on January 1 , 2012 . The songs on the album are all written about persons who Paul considers to be American heroes including Benjamin Franklin , Thomas Edison , Georgia O 'Keeffe , and Rosa Parks . The album is Paul 's attempt to teach children about some of America 's most famous heroes . " I was a big fan of Schoolhouse Rock in the 70s . There was always a really great charm about the music . The main reason I can still remember the Preamble of the Constitution is because of those little songs " , Paul said . The illustrations in the accompanying lyrics booklet were all created by Paul .

In a review for the Folk and Acoustic Music Exchange , Roberta Schwartz said that *The Hero in You* contains some of the best melodies and most moving lyrics of Paul 's career . She goes on to cite " Chief Joseph " as an example - a song that incorporates one of the most famous quotes in Native American history : " I will fight no more forever " .

The Hero in You received a Gold Medal from the Parents ' Choice Foundation .

Paul 's first Christmas album , *City of Silver Dreams* , was released on December 1 , 2012 . Produced by Flynn , the album consists of nine original songs - several co @-@ written with Kristian Bush - and one cover song , the classic " Have Yourself a Very Merry Christmas " written by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane . In her review for No Depression , Holley Dey wrote : " It 's a collection with multifaceted personality , offering both melodic romanticism and a folk styled humor that twinkles with good natured fun . "

On July 12 , 2014 , Paul was one of four performers inducted into the Maine Music Awards Hall of Fame . The awards ceremony took place in the Portland (Maine) Civic Center . Paul performed along with other members of the inaugural class which included Don McLean , Howie Day , and David Mallett .

Paul 's 19th and second fan @-@ funded album , *Chasing Beauty* , was released on September 9 , 2014 . The 14 @-@ track CD was produced by Kristian Bush (Sugarland) and Brandon Bush (Train) and recorded primarily in Decatur , Georgia . Paul is supported by Kristian Bush (acoustic / electric guitar , mandolin , banjo , bass) , Brandon Bush (keyboards) , Sugarland ? s Travis McNabb (drums) , Gray Griggs (bass) , Megan Lovell (lap steel) , Tim Smith (bass) , Ben Torres (trombone) , Michael Snell (trumpet) and Brandyn Taylor (baritone sax) . Rebecca Loebe and Red Molly make guest appearances .

= = Career : 2015 @-@ present = =

Paul was invited to present the keynote address at the 2015 NERFA (Northeast Regional Folk Alliance) conference held Nov. 12 @-@ 15 , 2015 at the Hudson Valley Resort in Kerhonkson , New York . The 26 @-@ minute address presented on Nov. 13 , 2015 was later published on his website and on YouTube .

In late 2015 , an announcement was made that Paul 's song " Nelly Bly " from the album Hero in You would appear in the movie 10 Days in a Madhouse being released in the fall of 2015 .

= = Collaborations = =

In September 2003 Paul released Side of the Road , a duo album recorded with good friend Vance Gilbert . The two songwriters , who have often shared the stage , each chose four cover songs to record - individual favorites - plus one song of their own . Although the album did not start out as a " 9 / 11 " project , the inclusion of Mark Erelli 's " The Only Way " set a theme . A review in No Depression magazine said this about Paul and Gilbert 's choice of songs :

" Thematically they 're mostly about individuals ? indeed , an entire planet ? in desperate need of healing . To that end , Paul 's original tune " Citizen of the World " is a wonderful balm , as he and Gilbert trade lyrics about the crossed bloodlines , attitudes and experiences that make us all brothers and sisters . Their version of Van Morrison 's " Comfort You " works magic of a similar sort . "

Sugarland 's first holiday album , Gold and Green released on October 13 , 2009 includes " City of Silver Dreams " and " Little Wood Guitar " , co @-@ written by Paul and Kristian Bush . In his review of the album , Matt Bjorke wrote , " City of Silver Dreams " could actually find itself a seminal holiday song like Joni Mitchell 's " River " as it tells a wonderfully soft and melodic story of New York City and the beauty of a new romance within the context of Christmas . "

= = Songwriting = =

" Boston @-@ style " songwriting refers to the introspective and literate breed of singer @-@ songwriter so prevalent in the modern folk music landscape . According to Paul , Boston @-@ style songwriting grew out of Boston 's thriving folk scene with its dense collection of colleges , college radio stations and listening rooms . Boston radio includes the University of Massachusetts ' WUMB , the country 's foremost radio station for folk and acoustic music 24 @-@ hours a day . Paul said the Boston songwriters tend to be more thoughtful and soft because in an intimate listening room , " all you 've got is you and your words . " Boston @-@ style songwriting tends to be more about lyric than melody , is intimate and thoughtful but also relevant , often addressing social issues . Boston @-@ style songwriting does not only refer to Boston musicians , but includes national artists such as Shawn Colvin , John Gorka , Susan Werner , Bill Morrissey , and Dar Williams . In an interview with Paul Freeman for the East Bay Daily News , Paul commented on how he hopes audience members relate to his songs , " Each song is supposed to be like a little three @-@ dimensional world . I 'm hoping to invite them in , have them make out the details and the reasons for being there , and apply them to their own lives . But I 'm also hoping to entertain them . "

After graduating from Boston College , Paul worked as a case worker at an inner city school in the Jamaica Plain section of Boston , working with children with behavioral problems and also worked as a social worker in Boston with clients who were drug dealers , rapists , and other kinds of criminal offenders . His work experiences opened his eyes to see the world in a broader , more open @-@ minded way and provided material for the songs he was beginning to write . Early in his career Paul promised himself that he would always write about the things he knew well . In her review of Ellis Paul Live for the Folk and Music Exchange , Roberta Schwartz said , " His finely honed songs tell stories filled with images that sparkle like jewels . His is a poet 's heart , and a romantic 's soul . He is an optimist who believes in people and possibilities . "

In her 1993 review of Paul 's Say Something , Debbie Catalano wrote , " Ellis Paul draws a picture

with his words then draws you into the world he 's painting . " Like a Norman Rockwell painting , Paul 's songs are replete with crucial details and careful observations that tell a story with a minimum of words . In a 2002 article , Thomas Conner dissected a verse from Paul 's " Conversation with a Ghost " from Say Something . " Instead of bluntly saying , " I ran into an old flame in Central Park " , Paul writes around it , avoiding the clichés , painting the picture , showing us everything ? the motives , the setting , the serendipity ? except what we expect . "

When teaching songwriting classes , Paul often introduces aspiring songwriters to his " six @-@ step program to effective songwriting " which is based on the premise that songwriters should show and not tell . Paul teaches this six @-@ step method to develop a character in a song :

Choose a name for the person .

List five items in the person 's bedroom .

List five things the person would see if he or she looked in a mirror .

Choose two colors that bring the person to mind .

Choose one non @-@ human metaphor describing the person .

Write one line of dialogue that conveys the way the person speaks .

The most important advice he gives aspiring songwriters is to write what you know or what you 've experienced . " Use reality as the springboard to whatever you 're writing about " , Paul said . Paul also says that being a successful songwriter is like being a journalist who writes about what he sees and knows , the times people are living in and the things people are facing today . " The journalist looks out the window and writes about what is really happening . " " I make sure it 's real . I don 't want to fictionalize about things I haven 't witnessed . " Paul states that over the years he 's learned the value of simplicity in writing . He 's learned that he can say more when he writes more simply and direct . " It 's almost as if you can be complex and intricate by adopting a shorter , less complicated structure . " " I 'm not doing rocket science -- I 'm a storyteller " , he said . " I hope to inspire people to think and feel and to walk out with more than they came in with . "

When asked to describe the difference between writing songs for children and song for adults , Paul said : " The difference between writing a kids ' song and an adult song is that in the kids ' songs you tend to use primary colors and the words are brighter and the tempos are always upbeat . There 's a nuance to the adult songs that is different . It 's still the story telling , but its different shades and angles . You read between the lines more . "

Paul continues playing close to 200 dates annually on the folk circuit . His songs have appeared on more than 50 compilation CDs , and he has made nearly 40 guest appearances on the albums of artists including Lori McKenna , David Wilcox and Mark Erelli . When asked if he would rather play the 19 @,@ 600 @-@ seat Fleet Theater or the 900 @-@ seat Somerville Theater ? both in Boston , Paul replied , " I prefer to keep it intimate . That way people can see the whites of your eyes . I 'd love to write a hit song and have it on the radio like " American Pie " or something , but I 'm just gonna do what I do and take what I can and run with it , because it 's a hard business to have even what I have . So I don 't have pie @-@ in @-@ the @-@ sky Springsteen @-@ esque hopes . I just want to write great songs . "

In a review for the Folk and Acoustic Music Exchange , Roberta Schwartz said , " Ellis Paul is one of the best singer / songwriters of his generation . And for many of us he is the face of contemporary folk music ? few are as smart , as literate and as poetic as Paul . He has spun his story songs for nearly twenty years now , and has eleven studio recordings (with an additional two early recordings on cassette ? now available on CD) to his credit . I cannot think of another artist on the acoustic music scene who is better @-@ loved by fans , or more respected by his contemporaries . "

= = Children 's books = =

On September 1 , 2014 , Paul 's children 's CD Hero in You was published as a book by Albert Whitman & Company . Illustrated by Angela Padron , the book of American biographies includes a copy of the CD with exclusive introductory tracks by Paul . The accompanying CD allows young readers to listen to each song while discovering additional facts about Paul 's heroes on each page .

Paul 's second children 's book was published - again by Albert Whitman & Company - in October 2015 . Based on his Christmas poem The Night the Lights Went Out on Christmas , the book , illustrated by Scott Brundage , is the whimsical yet heartwarming story of a neighborhood where families trying to outdo one another with Christmas lights and decorations use so much electrical power that the neighborhood is thrown into darkness . The poem originally appeared on Paul 's City of Silver Dreams Christmas CD and is included as a downloadable mp3 file with the book .

= = Sports honor = =

In September 2012 , Presque Isle High School announced that Paul would be one of four high school graduates inducted into its Athletic Hall of Fame at the third annual ceremony on January 11 , 2013 . During his high school career , Paul - a member of the class of 1983 - starred in cross @-@ country and track . He won a cross @-@ country state championship as a senior as well as three Eastern Maine titles and a 5 @,@ 000 @-@ meter state crown in track . He also finished second in the 15 @-@ 16 age division of the 1981 AAU national cross @-@ country championships and later during his career placed seventh in the 17 @-@ 18 age group at the AAU Junior Olympic national championships .

Coinciding with the Athletic Hall of Fame induction ceremony were two performances to benefit the Wintergreen Arts Center , one at The Whole Potato Cafe and Commons and one at the University of Maine at Presque Isle 's Wieden Auditorium .

= = University of Maine honor = =

On May 17 , 2014 Paul was the commencement address speaker at the University of Maine at Presque Isle 's 105th commencement . Paul was also awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree during the commencement ceremony . At the conclusion of his commencement address , Paul performed his composition " Rise Up , Presque Isle " which has been adopted as the school 's new Alma Mater .

= = Discography = =

= = Awards = =

= = = Books = = =

2003 ? Kerouac , Jack . Doctor Sax and the Great World Snake , Mint Publishers , ISBN 0 @-@ 9729733 @-@ 0 @-@ 3 . (Screenplay recorded on two audio CDs with Ellis Paul as the voice of Lousy .)

2003 ? Alarik , Scott . Deep Community : Adventures in the Modern Folk Underground , Boston : Black Wolf Press , ISBN 0 @-@ 9720270 @-@ 1 @-@ 7 . (Prominently features Ellis Paul .)

2002 ? Paul , Ellis . Notes From the Road , Boston : Black Wolf Press , ISBN 0 @-@ 9720270 @-@ 0 @-@ 9 . (Paul 's self @-@ illustrated book of lyrics , poems and journal entries .)

2002 ? Kubica , Chris and Hochman , Will . Letters to J.D. Salinger , University of Wisconsin Press , ISBN 0 @-@ 299 @-@ 17800 @-@ 5 . (Includes an entry written by Ellis Paul .)

2001 ? Stambler , Irwin . Folk & Blues : The Encyclopedia : The Premier Encyclopedia Of American Roots Music , Thomas Dunne Books , ISBN 0 @-@ 312 @-@ 20057 @-@ 9 . (Includes an entry for Ellis Paul .)

= = = Magazines = = =

(See the Ellis Paul Archives for a more comprehensive listing .)

2006 ? Perricone , Mike. gallery : ellis paul . Did Galileo Pray ? Symmetry : Dimensions of Particle Physics , Jun / Jul 2006 , p . 28 @-@ 9 . Retrieved February 10 , 2007 .

2005 ? Soroff , Jonathan . Soroff on Ellis Paul . Improper Bostonian , Apr 6 ? 19 , 2005 , p . 16 .

2002 ? Rutz , Kathy . New Release Spotlight : Ellis Paul . Performing Songwriter , Dec 2002 , p . 26 .

2000 ? Weider , Tamara . Ellis Paul : On the road again . Improper Bostonian , June 14 , 2000 , p . 18 ? 22 .

1996 ? Fagan , Neil . Artist spotlight : Ellis Paul . Performing Songwriter , Jan / Feb 1996 , p . 30 @-@ 1 .

= = = Miscellany = = =

2011 ? Never Not Funny : The Jimmy Pardo Podcast Video of Ellis Paul appearing on Never Not Funny hosted by Jimmy Pardo . February 2 , 2011 .

2007 ? Studio Concert Series : Ellis Paul . Video interview / performance recorded at Blue Rock Studios in Wimberley , Texas .

May 10 , 2007 .

2004 ? " Inside the BC Studio : A Conversation with Ellis Paul " . Video interview at Boston College with Scott Alarik as part of the Boston College Arts Council Alumni Award weekend festivities . April 30 , 2004 .

1999 ? Ellis Paul on The Millennium Stage of the Kennedy Center Video performance in Washington , D.C .. June 22 , 1999 .