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Petal feels: Elephant Revival returns with a new album and wonderment for musical emotion



From left: Bonnie Paine, Dango Rose, Daniel Rodriguez, Charlie Rose and Bridget Law of Elephant Revival. Courtesy photo.

Describing the band's sound is like trying to chase down a piece of shell in an egg white.

A hint of folk floats on a musical line. A smattering of Celtic bubbles along the edges. Bluegrass tones emerge at times. Gospel harmonies, country flavors, even rock spice settles at various spots along the musical palate.

The members of Colorado-based Elephant Revival have made a career out of opening their creativity into wider musical territories. Their newest album, *Petals*, set for release on April 1, takes that musical exploration even farther. The first tour date of the formal release of the album to the world happens March 22 in Flagstaff at the Orpheum Theater.

“We just had so many wonderful tunes that had yet to see the daylight,” says Daniel Rodriguez, who sings, plays guitar, double bass and more in the band. “We really wanted to experiment with these new songs and these new sounds. The time was right. We made, what I feel like, is our best album to date.”

The remaining members of Elephant Revival are: Bonnie Paine on washboard, cello, djembe, musical saw and stomp box; Bridget Law on fiddle; Charlie Rose on pedal steel, banjo, cello, guitar, horns and double bass; and Dango Rose on double bass, banjo and mandolin.

Elephant Revival went into the studio last summer to record *Petals*, and the album represents an expansion and maturity of their musical creativity. “There are so many emotions that go through you during the recording process,” Rodriguez says, adding that now that the recording is done, the album tells a story. “When I listen to it, I feel an overall mood and an overall vibe was captured, completely different from our other albums.”

The band’s debut, self-titled album came out in 2008. They subsequently recorded *Break in the Clouds* in 2010; an EP, *It’s Alive* in 2012; *These Changing Skies* in 2013; and *Sands of Now*, a live album record at Boulder Theater in Colorado, in 2015.

Rodriguez says describing the band’s sound is a tough proposition. It’s not an easy question to answer, and the release of *Petals* won’t make answering that question any easier.

“We have a lot of acoustic elements with electric wanderings,” Rodriguez says. “I usually mention that if you saw the instrumentation, you’d think we’re a bluegrass band, but we have more of a post-rock kind of style.”

Rodriguez adds, "I usually say, 'Just come to the show,' and then I ask them the question after the show."

To get that sound unique to Elephant Revival, Rodriguez says every single member contributes to the songwriting process.

"We usually, on our own time, in our own space, with our own inspirations, write on our own and bring it back to the band," Rodriguez says, adding that if the other band members like the tune, the band will arrange it and put it into the repertoire. Other songs are complete band collaborations.

Music lovers can expect to have a good time at an Elephant Revival show, Rodriguez says. They will leave the show inspired by the experience. "We like to think of them as community gatherings," he says.

The band name speaks to community more than anything. Rodriguez says the band took its name from the story of three elephants at the Lincoln Park Zoo. Rose, who is from Chicago, became aware of the story of the elephants, who had been together for more than 15 years, when they died after being separated.

"This idea of these huge beings, that's all they really had was companionship," Rodriguez says. "When they were separated, they had nothing else to live for."

By that time the band members had all met each other. They each had a shared vision, and they had come together.

The "Petals" release tour starts in Flagstaff and will end up back in Colorado for a headlining performance at the famed Red Rocks Amphitheatre in late May.

“It’s our first time headlining there,” Rodriguez says. “We were there twice before. It’s the first time it’s our show, which is really incredible.”

Elephant Revival began to take shape more than a decade ago when Rodriguez was running an open mic at a club on the East Coast. It is where he met Paine. “She came in and she sang,” Rodriguez says. “She just had everybody there with jaws dropped and captivated.”

He played music with her on the roof of that club until the sun came up. The other members came along, and the playing around campfires and jam sessions deepened.

“It just became more and more apparent that we all carried a similar vision to bring this into a larger dream,” Rodriguez says. “We all just made that decision and that commitment.”

He adds, “Here we are today, 10 years later, playing Red Rocks.”

Elephant Revival has been to Flagstaff before, back in the fall of 2013.

“It’s a really wonderful place, and I think our sound fits in there well,” Rodriguez says. “We’re looking forward to it. It’s like our little baby is going to take the first steps in Flagstaff.”

Elephant Revival plays at the Orpheum Theater, 15 W. Aspen, on Tue, March 22. Doors for the all-ages show open at 6:30 p.m. and North Carolina-based folk duo Mandolin Orange will open things up at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$17 in advance and \$19 the day of the show, and can be purchased at Rainbow’s End, Aspen Deli and Anima’s Trading Co., or online at www.greenhouseproductions.net. For more info about the show, call 556-1580. To learn more about the band and hear songs from their new album, visit www.elephantrevival.com.