

Parents' Choice

REVIEWING CHILDREN'S MEDIA
Since 1978

Parents' Choice Awards : Audio : Music



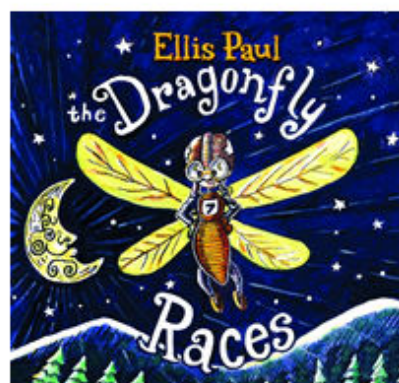
The Dragonfly Races

Spring 2008 Music

Ages: 5 & Up

Producer: [Black Wolf Records](#)

CD Price: \$15.00



Review:

Noted folk singer-songwriter Ellis Paul serves up a deft, soulful acoustic mix of American folk and contemporary pop in songs that find magic in road trips, dragonflies, "The Star Inside the Apple" and swings and pinwheels - simple pleasures. Traditional folk themes of world peace and harmony resonate with immediacy, but are delivered with a gentle touch ("The Million Chameleon March," "The Little Red Rose").

Lynne Heffley ©2008 Parents' Choice

Look for this product at:

Black Wolf Records

<http://www.ellispaul.com>

Major, Specialty & Online Retailers

Amazon.com

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B000ZZLL0I/parentschoice-20>

5/08 - InReview



Baby Loves Jazz

Various artists

Baby Loves Music

All ages; \$16.99

Baby loves jazz and you will, too! This terrific compilation and two-disc set includes 47 songs with outstanding musicality turning each cut into an event. From "The Wheels on the Bus" to "The Itsy Bitsy Spider," jazz twists will get you scatting.

— susan day



Beethoven's Wig 3:

Many More Sing-a-Long

Symphonies

Rounder Kids

Ages 5 and older; \$12.98

There may be no better way to introduce your youngsters to classical music than with Beethoven's Wig! Wiggy lyrics accompany famous classical selections in order to draw young listeners in. My personal favorite: "Where Oh Where" set to "Clarinet and Oboe: Funeral March of a Marionette." Listen to both sing-along symphonies and stand-alone instrumental performances. — sd



The Dragonfly Races

By Ellis Paul

Black Wolf Records

All ages; \$15

Ellis Paul's entrance into the family/children's music genre marks a refreshing masterpiece. Taking inspiration from his two daughters, this dynamic folk singer delivers a project so sophisticated that at first spin you might not recognize it as a kid's record, musically speaking. Paul's unique turn of a phrase is creative and insightful. Coupled with the earthy, acoustic soundtrack, The Dragonfly Races provides a rich, soulful listening experience that gives young ears an appreciation for a music format that might not otherwise engage them. — chad young



No Ordinary Day

By Suzi Shelton

SuziMusic

Ages 10 and younger; \$15

Suzi Shelton's second solo CD is no ordinary effort — it's extraordinary on all counts! The best thing to hit the children's music market since Raffi, Shelton offers up a baker's dozen of delightful tunes boasting imaginative lyrics and dance-inspiring beats. The slickly produced musical backdrop hugs Shelton's vocals, and her voice is like honey. It's sweet, soothing and friendly, full of warm, kid-friendly charm. Songs like "Scooter Boy," "Goin' on a Road Trip," "Lift Me Up" and the title track will have little listeners begging for more. — cy



This is an excerpt from the print edition of *Dirty Linen* #136 (June/July 2008).

Wee Folk

Stories and songs for the whole family

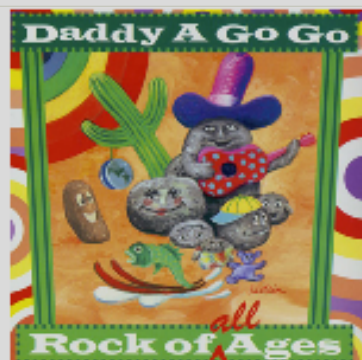
Ellis Paul

The Dragonfly Races
Black Wolf (2008)

It was only a matter of time before the reliably folky Mr. Paul turned his storytelling skills to the younger set. Daughters Ella and Sofia most likely served as primary motivators. There's nothing quite the equal of homegrown field testers for child-centered music. Paul covers a range of subject matter, including a bed tricked out as a car, a counterintuitive fairy tale, a car trip travelogue, a simple motivational tale, a tribute to swings, and an introduction to social justice and political protest. "Wabi-Sabi" honors the well-used items of daily life. Think junior version of Guy Clark's "Stuff That Works" to counteract consumerist influences to come. A couple of songs, notably "I Lost a Day to the Rain" and "9 Months to Fix the World" have an adult perspective that may not penetrate to younger sensibilities, but it's good to aim high as well as to appeal to mom and dad. It's difficult to pin down a targeted age group for the songs; the best approach may be to start playing it at age two or three and let the child grow into it.

The booklet of lyrics is full of Paul's accomplished artwork, which illustrates each song. The illustrations are incredibly detailed, whimsical, and evocative. Any children's book publisher would be thrilled to hire him on as an illustrator, but let's hope he keeps his day job.

-- Colleen Moore (Baltimore, MD)



AMUSING BUSINESS: John Davidson references 1950s pop with entertaining lyrics and good-for-you messages.

POWER 103.1

Children's music enters the next generation

Ricky tunes and clever lyrics engage kids and their teenage adults in making music and learning about the world around them.

By Lynne Haffley, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
April 30, 2003

Gunner Modsen, co-founder of the inventive a cappella group "The Roots," enriches the field of children's music in a style uniquely his own.

FOR THE RECORD:

Children's CDs: Website addresses for two children's CDs reviewed in Wednesday's Calendar section were incorrect. Information for Carmina Maslow's "Tim Crawling" is at www.CarminaMaslow.com. Information for Delia Denysbury's "Very Denysbury" is at www.deliadensbury.com. —

His new album, "Tim Crawling" (Coe, Sparf Records, \$15, (800) 440-6369, www.GunnerModsen.com), is his best to date, with off-the-wall lyrics — "I love that lady with the pumpkin hair / She smells as sweet as butter" — and expert, wily voiced vocal and instrumental textures.

Tender cowboy dreams ("Rest in the Wild"), a tribute to librarians and a tirade on Mozart's 40th Symphony give way to a tender finish, a lullaby with Henry Hisscock-like string harmonies and a soulful rendition of the traditional "Shenandoah."

Other new music releases aimed at the younger set:

"Pop Fly": Childhood obsessed with wit and empathy and one of the most mellow rock 'n' roll voices around. These are singer-songwriter Justin Roberts' trademarks, and they shine in his new CD, "Pop Fly" (Capitol Square Records, \$15,

www.justinrobertsmusic.com).

Roberts weaves old lyrics through layers of beautiful sound. In the title track, a reluctant outfielder plays baseball under "cotton candy clouds." Other songs are about making memories at Grandma's ("From Grandma"), "Big Field Trip" sniffs and living life to the fullest in "Fish Jar."

"Sometimes you've just got to spin that old propeller / And watch it rise up way past the moon."

"The Magic Fly": Imagine riding on a dragon, climbing the tallest mountain, being safe inside a circle of light — or growing up to be an animal doctor or an artist. Grammy Award-winning songwriter Barry Hull encourages children to use their "magic eye" to see worlds of opportunity and dreams in this installment of her "Young Masters" book and CD sets, "The Magic Eye," from Dream a World (\$19.99; www.dreamaworld.com).

Hull's heartfelt songs and text are complemented by Kyle Fleming's delicate computer-generated illustrations, written by Joan L. Taylor and Juliet Dunn-Hay.

"Very Denysbury": With gentle humor, Delia Denysbury (the voice of TV's "Mummy Noddy") takes a sunny, youthful pop and jazz approach to original and traditional story songs in her second children's CD, "Very Denysbury" (VeryDenysburyProductions, \$14, www.deliadensbury.com).

She revisits familiar nursery rhymes, creates her own scenarios, explores opposites and feelings, notes the adventures of two comically fuddled brothers and escorts listeners to a peaceful "Slumberland."

"Dragonfly Races": Internationally known folk singer-songwriter Lili's Paul makes a welcome foray into children's music with his first family album, "Dragonfly Races" (Black Wolf Records, \$15, www.lilispaul.com).

Paul brings acoustic soul and a light touch to road trips, human ingenuity and heart ("Because It's There"), unity ("The Million Children March"), using disguises, pinheads and a fairy-tale squint about the true difference between heroes and monsters ("Abels").

"Music for a Green Planet": Whose, a jazz hit — and very cool — new. In his newest family album, "Music for a Green Planet" (\$14.99, www.musicforagreenplanet.com), Long Beach-based jazz artist Heyes Greenfield (aka, Greenfield) performs surprisingly polka-like "Be-que-to-the-Earth" songs written with environmentalist Margo Schepert. He's joined by other considerable talents, among them vibraphonists Joe Lee Wilson, Miles Griffin, Broadway's Stevie Nicks and a host of notable jazz, rock and world music instrumentalists. The message extends to the CD's green packaging.

"African Dreamland": There's always room for another soothing lullaby album, and "African Dreamland" from Putumayo Kids (\$14.98, www.putumayokids.com) is a blissful time-out treat for any age.

A lovely addition to Putumayo's cross-continental series of lullaby recordings, it features artists from across Africa, including the incomparable Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Toumani Diabate, Samia, and Mapanla, a new artist from the Democratic Republic of Congo (and where, what a name).

Sound Off!

Magic Dragon Returns

by Kathy O'Connell

The new year brings new sounds to family music, including a pioneer's latest effort. The release of Peter, Paul and Mary's *Peter, Paul and Mommy* in 1969 sparked the beginning of modern kids' albums, and folkie legend **Peter Yarrow** returns to those roots in *Puff and Other Family Classics*.

Paul and Mary are replaced on this CD by the singer's daughter, **Bethany Yarrow** and her musical partner **Rufus Cappadocia**. Many performers have produced kids' albums of traditional folk music. With this CD, the bar for such albums is reset to a higher level.



There is a haunting, jazz-like quality to "Blue Tail Fly" that sets the stage for the album. "Careless Love" showcases Bethany's clear, sweet voice. "The Cuckoo" is a brilliant combination of flamenco guitar and dad/daughter vocals.

If you want to introduce your kids to folk classics, *Puff and Other Family Classics* is the way to do it. Some parents may wonder about the inclusion of love-gone-wrong murder classic "Frankie & Johnny" in a kids' album, but it's that kind of daring that makes Peter Yarrow who he is.

The album ends with a lovely re-working of "Puff the Magic Dragon" that can't mask the fun this father and daughter are having with the song. Find this treasure at www.peterbethanyandrufus.com

Rhythm and Depth

I love the depth of sound on **Medeski, Martin & Wood's** mostly instrumental CD, *Let's Go Everywhere*. They start with a Pink Floyd-ish "Waking Up" that adds toy piano to the trio's instrumental repertoire. The album's title song is a play on the familiar "I've Been Everywhere," inviting kids to a litany of locations like "Saigon, Dijon."

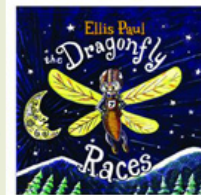


"Where's the Music?" introduces jamming jazz to kids, anchored by the percussion and keyboard that grabs the band's adult audiences. Only kids' voices interrupting with "Where's the Music?" remind you this album is aimed at younger ears. The kids rock out classic rhymes like "Pat a Cake." The emphasis on rhythm takes on a New Orleans feel with "Let's Go."

"We're all Connected" ends the album with a samba beat. Find *Let's Go Everywhere* at www.littlemonsterrecords.com

For Parents Too

Ellis Paul's *The Dragonfly Races* brings the songwriter into the field of family music. Paul's intimate delivery partners with outstanding production, joined by musical friends **Vance Gilbert** and **Billy Jonas**.



The possibilities life offers, from the top of Everest to the bottom of the sea, are celebrated in "Because It's There." "Abiola" relates the story of a misunderstood monster and the power of the people to overthrow an evil ruler.

I love the geography-laden "Road Trip." Who would want to leave the four-wheeled, engine-driven magical wonder of "The Bed Song"? Paul approaches brilliance on the accapella "Little Red Rose."

"The Million Chameleon March" fights for their right to change. "9 Months to Save the World," written for Paul's daughter in utero, expresses the hopes and fears of all expectant parents. This is a wonderful album for adults with or without kids. Find *The Dragonfly Races* at www.ellispaupaul.com

Kathy O'Connell is a contributing writer to MetroKids and host of the Peabody-award-winning Kids Corner, weekdays 7-8pm on WXPB 88.5 FM.

The Daily Progress

Charlottesville, Virginia

Ellis Paul's off to the races with a family CD 'Dragonfly Races' zooms to new genre

By Jane Dunlap Norris / jnorris@dailyprogress.com | 978-7249
January 4, 2008

Some folks scoff at resolutions. Others come up with a great idea in January and then find a way to make it happen.

Folk singer and songwriter Ellis Paul will release his first CD of family-oriented music, "The Dragonfly Races," on Tuesday.

"The genesis of this was the birth of my daughter in January," Paul said of Sofi, who's almost 1. "I wanted to put together a children's record."

Big sister Ella, who's 3, already is a big fan of "The Dragonfly Races."

"She loves it. She runs around and sings all the songs," Paul said. "It's a pretty heady record in a way for a 3-year-old. It's something she can grow into and love."

Creating something for little listeners to grow into was an important part of the process. The melodies may win over the youngest children, but as they grow and their worlds start to expand, Paul's socially conscious lyrics can give them new ideas to think about.



Some of the tunes give children the chance to be the heroes, such as "Abiola," in which a little girl is the one who best understands how to treat a misunderstood monster who has been unfairly accused of wreaking all kinds of mischief in her town.

Others, such as "Million Chameleon March," call on friends from the animal realm to help impart ideals, such as the importance of speaking out when things need to change. (Think of it as a protest song for preschoolers.)

Still others use music as a way to teach complex concepts that might be easier for children to grasp than they might appear on the surface.

"Wabi-Sabi," which takes its name from a Japanese concept of beauty and fragility, explains how things don't have to be right-out-of-the-box shiny to be valuable and lovely and offers a new way of looking at familiar things in our midst.

Tempos run the gamut from lullaby tunes to bluesy swing, and there's even a barbershop homage ("The Little Red Rose") with a theme of cultivating peace in the mix.

Other songs on the album will resonate with parents, including "9 Months to Fix This World."

The song has been received warmly at Paul's performances for a while now, and "The Dragonfly Races" gave it a safe place to land on a CD.

And here's another reason to listen to the collection all the way through - there's a hidden track in which Ella and her dad have an entertaining exchange.

"In every folk singer's job description, there's something in there about writing for your family," Paul said.

"I'm just going to keep on writing and writing and writing for children and adults," Paul said.

Let's hope he keeps drawing, too.

Paul created more than just the 12 tracks on the album. He also put his illustration talents to work for the project, filling a 24-page picture book with cheerful images of children, fantasy creatures and, of course, Dusty the daredevil dragonfly from the title track and cover.

"Doing the artwork was just a thrill that I really loved," Paul said.

"That was kind of an experiment for me. I've drawn all my life, but I've never put the two together."

Paul, a native of Maine who spent enough time in Boston to track up 13 Boston Music Awards, has lived in Charlottesville with his family for about two years now.

He was a popular member of the Boston songwriter scene at a time when its creative energy was capturing national attention in the 1990s.

Film fans heard his work when they caught screenings of "Shallow Hal," "Me, Myself and Irene" and other films.

Folk luminaries were listening, too. Nora Guthrie invited Paul to write the music for "God's Promise," a song for which her father, Woody Guthrie, had left unfinished lyrics. (Fans can hear Paul's version on his "The Speed of Trees" CD.)

That brought Paul membership in a select community of musicians that included Jeff Tweedy and Billy Bragg, who created two "Mermaid Avenue" CDs around Guthrie's lyrics, and Slaid Cleaves, who penned the music for "This Morning I Am Born Again."

Paul will continue writing thoughtful music for grownups to enjoy, but don't be surprised if there's another collection for children one of these days.

"I just wanted something that would stick with the kids," he said.

cookie

all the best for your family

March 2008 Volume 3 issue 3



The Dragonfly Races

ELLIS PAUL
(BLACK WOLF RECORDS, \$15)

Ellis Paul has the ideal voice for a singing storyteller, very Harry Chapin—esque, with the ability to imbue every lyric with soul and meaning. And he puts his natural abilities to excellent use in both sweet, rolling lullabies and guitar-plunky up-tempo numbers. He even manages to translate a good old-fashioned protest song into kidspeak with "The Million Chameleon March."—Ages 2 to 9

Folk: Children's Folk

(See a text list of [all Folk: Children's Folk](#) albums.)

Editor's Picks (see more)



ELLIS PAUL: Ellis Paul-The Dragonfly Races

A lyrical journey across the globe. The songs take you from the top of Mt. Everest to the bottom of the sea, a jaunt around the playground, through the meadow.

MP3 price: \$10.00



HUDSON VALLEY ARTISTS: High Meadow Songs

A compilation of music for the whole family from award winning artists in New York's Hudson Valley including Elizabeth Mitchell, Jay Ungar and Molly Mason, Dog on Fleas and Medeski Martin and Wood to benefit High Meadow Arts.

CD price: \$14.00



KYLE DINE: You Must Be Nuts!

Music about food allergies? You Must Be Nuts. Kids are loving Kyle Dine's CD packed with sing along songs that the whole family will enjoy.

CD price: \$15.00 / MP3 price: \$15.00



PRISCILLA HERDMAN: Moondreamer

A tender and witty collection of folk-style children's and family music which was selected for a Parents' Choice Magazine Gold Award.

CD price: \$12.97



BETH & SCOTT AND FRIENDS: Beth & Scott: Live in Concert

A DVD plus a full-length CD of Beth & Scott's funniest interactive songs for young children.

CD price: \$25.00



CATHY FINK & MARCY MARXER: Blanket Full of Dreams

Blanket Full of Dreams is a collection of songs for nighttime, nap time, or any quiet, reflective time with a child: homemade & Grammy nominated.

CD price: \$13.50



KEN LONQUIST: Earthy Songs

Animal, nature and environment songs in folk and pop styles --- fun AND educational.

CD price: \$12.97 / MP3 price: \$12.97

style / mood

Christian

Featuring Guitar

Mood: Christmas

Mood: Dreamy

Mood: Fun

Mood: Funny

Mood: Intellectual

Mood: Quirky

Mood: Seasonal

Mood: Upbeat

Solo Female Artist

Solo Male Artist

Type: Acoustic

Type: Compilations

Type: Live Recordings

Type: Lyrical

Type: Vocal

Blues: Blues-Rock

Country: Country Folk

Easy Listening: Mood Music

Easy Listening: Nostalgia

Folk: Appalachian Folk

Folk: Modern Folk

Folk: Traditional Folk

Kids/Family: Children's Pop

Kids/Family: Children's Storytelling

Kids/Family: Educational

Kids/Family: General Children's Music

Kids/Family: Kid Friendly

Kids/Family: Lullabies

Kids/Family: Sing-Along/Interactive

Pop: Quirky

Spiritual: Spirituals

World: Middle East Traditional



Ellis Paul

Wednesday, November 28, at the Beachland Tavern.

Cleveland, OH

By [Nathan Baker](#)

Published: November 21, 2007

Subject(s): [Woody Guthrie](#), [folk](#), [Ellis Paul](#)

American folk music has gone through at least three revivals over the past 50 years. The first took place in the early '60s, when urban cowboys appropriated backwoods traditions and created the literate, socially aware style most of us are familiar with. Most recently, Devendra Banhart and Joanna Newsom spearheaded the freak-folk movement, where drugs are decidedly *not* optional. In between, there was a fertile if relatively unknown period in the early '90s that spawned the "Boston School" of singer-songwriters, whose music was marked by provocative, well-read, and urbanely romantic lyrics. Ellis Paul was the darling of this group.

Now 14 albums into his career, Paul has become something of an institution. His dozen-plus Boston Music Awards and frequent appearances at the esteemed Woody Guthrie and Kerrville Folk festivals have cemented his place in the canon of noteworthy American songwriters of the past half-century. On his latest album, *The Dragonfly Races* (a children's record), he combines earnest storytelling with a sense of generation-spanning playfulness (just like Woody Guthrie did back in the day). The title track relates the story of a lazy bug that ends up snagging first place in a race. It doubles as Paul's message to kids and parents alike: Everyone struggles, but a little determination goes a long way. Spoken like a true folkie.



Volume 18, Number 2 February 2008

The Dragonfly Races

Ellis Paul

Black Wolf Records

CD, \$15.00 www.ellispaul.com www.flynnmusic.com

The Dragonfly Races is a family-friendly music CD, with a colorful and whimsically illustrated "picturebooklet" of the lyrics packed in. The tracks range from songs with fantasy overtones, to light social commentary and multicultural themes, to the classic "You Are My Sunshine".

Created by folk singer and troubadour Ellis Paul, The Dragonfly Races is rise-and-shine, toe-tapping fun for listeners age five to five hundred, and highly recommended. The tracks are Wabi-Sabi, Because It's There, Abiola, Road Trip, The Dragonfly Races, The Bed Song, The Little Red Rose, I Lost a Day to the Rain, I Like to Swing, Million Chameleon March, Pinwheel, The Star Inside the Apple, 9 Months to Fix the World, and You are my Sunshine.

James A. Cox, Editor-in-Chief

The Washington Post

ELLIS PAUL "The Dragonfly Races" Ellis Paul

Friday, February 1, 2008; Page WE08

ELLIS PAUL'S "The Dragonfly Races" may look and feel like a children's record, but it sounds like a record for people who have children: It's a collection of songs whose bounciness and subject matter are kid-friendly but whose content is sophisticated enough for adults.



Ellis Paul's music is for kids and adults alike. (By Melissa M. Bugg)

Paul's songs seem like fairy tales set to music. "Abiola" is a girl who stands up against a king deceiving his people for his personal gain; "The Million Chameleon March" tells of a lizard-led protest on Washington with a gentleness that evokes Peter, Paul & Mary ("If we could just play like we're on the same team/This troubled world would be all right").

Paul's soft, sweet voice works beautifully with his subject matter. Its unassuming understatedness parallels the underdog dragonfly who wins "The Dragonfly Races," and the stunning harmonies on the a cappella "The Little Red Rose" underscore the song's message about improving the world with small actions.

Accompanied by CD liner notes that look like a children's book with Paul's own charming illustrations accompanying his lyrics, it's tough to say who will enjoy "Races" more, children or adults. With Paul's discreetly metaphorical songs, there's enough for listeners of all ages to ponder and appreciate.

-- [Catherine P. Lewis](#)

Appearing Saturday at Jammin' Java (703-255-1566; <http://www.jamminjava.com>). Show starts at 11 a.m.

The Boston Globe

HOME / A&E / CALENDAR
FOLK

The Boston Globe

November 17

By Scott Alarik
November 15, 2007

Paul is one of folkdom's most incisive and intimate songwriters. Now a doting father, his first family album, "Dragonfly Races," bubbles with buoyant, hummable songs that appeal to kids and parents - and incite good conversations between them. As simple as the songs are, they don't duck tough issues; a fairy tale, for instance, becomes a timely political allegory about leaders who peddle fear for their own purposes. 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. It's nice to see a world-class songwriter focus on kids without lowering either his sights or his standards. 8 p.m. \$27.50. *Somerville Theater, 55 Davis Square, 617-469-2159. planetarygroove.com* ■

© Copyright 2007 Globe Newspaper Company.

The Hartford Courant

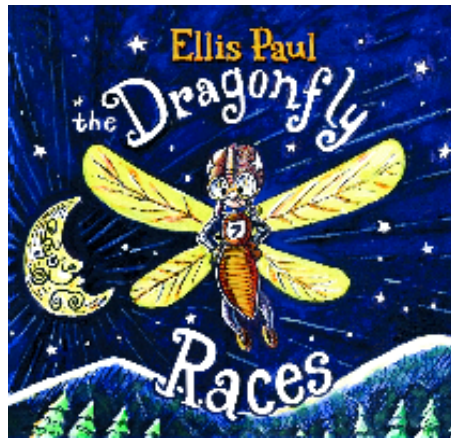


ELLIS PAUL The Dragonfly Races Black Wolf

His accessible, pop-infused music and sturdy storytelling have earned longtime Boston folk stalwart Ellis Paul a solid following nationwide. Now living in Virginia, Ellis, 43, adheres to past form even as he shifts gears with "The Dragonfly Races," a broadly appealing family record. It is full of tuneful enticements for toddlers and adults alike and maintains a level of literacy that gives the songs depth.

Paul's lean, breathy singing suits playful arrangements, which streamline his sound in some places and add robust emphasis in others for tunes such as "Because It's There" that marry detail-filled verses to jaunty, easily retained choruses. Japanese concepts of the inevitability of decline are pretty heavy ideas to lay upon kids in "Wabi-Sabi," but its deeper meanings are couched in a friendly, acoustic guitar-trimmed sway that helps minimize the impact of existential angst on the younger set.

Social change ideas populate many numbers, from the measured musing on racial tolerance "Million Chameleon March" to the



assessment of positive transformation as a debt owed to younger generations on "9 Months to Fix the World." Even at its most pointed, the set downplays preaching in favor of fun like that on the charming, fanciful "The Bed Song," and the impressions that last are of exuberance and ideas that spark curiosity as surely as they reward it.

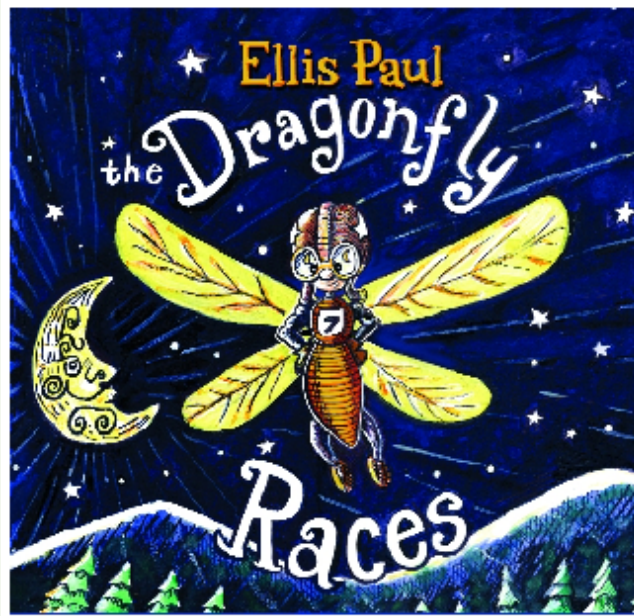
Essential download: "I Lost a Day to the Rain"

— Thomas Kintner



29 december 2007

Ellis Paul "The Dragonfly Races"



Ellis Paul's first foray into the ever-expanding world of children's music may not end up being the coolest kid's record to be released in 2007 but it damn well might, by the time voting closes on the 2008 Fids and Kamily music poll, end up being considered the

prettiest.

Mr. Paul, a long-time veteran of the Boston music scene, applies his passionate, socially-aware and highly literate brand of folk rock to the 13 tracks on the immaculately conceived Dragonfly Races. From the gorgeous 24 pages of album art (also the handy-work of the talented Ellis Paul) to the insightful and thought-provoking lyrical content - this entire record is a masterwork.

"The Dragonfly Races" contains what will easily be one of my top songs of 2008 in "Road Trip". This track, about the simple beauty of packing up the family into the car and traveling across this great country, features one of the most lyrically beautiful and instantly memorable musical phrases in recent memory when Ellis sings "...the miles or the dash are doing back flips." One could picture Ellis watching the odometer turn and turn while on tour, imagining the digits in a gymnastic routine. The line is sung with such grace and joy, it makes me happy every single time it comes through the speakers.

[Watch him perform "Road Trip" live on a TV program.](#)

Everything about this disc such screams beauty. I am pleased to have this in my collection and cannot possibly recommend it enough to each of you reading Out With The Kids right now.

[Buy it right now](#), directly from the artist. You will not be disappointed, I promise.

...and if you are lucky enough to live in Philly, Boston, D.C. or Sacramento - get out and see Ellis perform special family shows in the 1st half of 2008.

Labels: OWTK MUSIC REVIEWS



Posted on Fri, Jan. 18, 2008

Ellis Paul wants your kids in the afternoon & you at night

By JONATHAN TAKIFF
Philadelphia Daily News
takiff@phillynews.com 215-854-5960

Ellis Paul has been a linchpin of the Boston school of sensitive singer-songwriters for about 15 years, with almost as many critically acclaimed albums to his credit. Yet Paul allowed in a recent chat that he's never worked harder at crafting songs than he did for his brand new and pretty darn terrific release, "The Dragonfly Races" (Black Wolf Records), the artist's first CD steered to the children's/family music market.

"Usually, I'm writing for myself," said Paul, who'll perform this vital crop of originals tomorrow morning for the "Dodge Caravan Peanut Butter and Jams" series at World Cafe Live. "But this time I've had to think about how to write for 5-year-olds - how to say something as succinctly and vividly as I can, how to paint a visual that's engaging for the imagination, that's dreamy and whimsical."

Oh, and he's also taken into account that parental units will be subjected to the material. "The goal was to write an album that wouldn't drive me out of my mind, hearing it repeatedly on the long drive to grandma's house."

Fans who don't even have kids tell him they like "Dragonfly Races" a lot. And his friend/musical cohort Vance Gilbert "keeps quoting lyrics from the set."

The tunes are catchy as could be and hardly sing-song fluff. "In fact, there's more social commentary here than on any other album I've ever done," shared Paul. "My role models were songs like Pete Seeger's 'If I Had a Hammer' and Bob Dylan's 'Blowin' in the Wind.'"

"Songs can be great motivators. They get ingrained in your head, become like a mantra. It took a lot of years, but I do believe 'Blowin' in the Wind' swayed a generation, helped to end a war."

A ripe example of Paul's creative spark is his new parable of "Abiola," written with up-and-coming talent Antje Duvekot. The song tells of a monarch who's trying to frighten and thus rally his people against an innocent, Shrek-like ghoul. It takes a young girl to clear the air, set everyone straight.

"The kids might not understand the current political allusions, without a little help from mom and dad," said Paul, "but they do understand, instinctively, how people will lie to manipulate a situation."

Unveiling yet another new creative side, Ellis Paul also decorated the album cover and insert booklet with cute cartoon sketches themed on the material. "Now we're thinking of doing a whole illustrated book version of the songs, with the CD stuffed in the back, that we could get into bookstores," he ruminated.

This artist doesn't deny that children's music is a big growth area these days - in fact, one of the few shining spots in the recording industry. "It's getting harder and harder to sell your CDs," he said. "A number of artists have moved into the family-music category."

But Paul's motivation in creating "Dragonfly Races" was strictly personal, he said. "After the birth of my daughter Sofi [a year ago] and a six-week stay at home helping with her arrival, I realized our first-born daughter Ella [now three] was spending hours listening to the music of a strange cast of characters, right beneath my nose."

"The likes of Barney, Elmo, Dan Zanes, Robbie Schaefer and Billy Jonas had snuck into our house and stole her ears with the clang of their joyful music. My music was lost somehow as an afterthought."

Paul is just getting started with the children's concert scene, too. But he's no stranger to working with kids. One of his first gigs after graduating from Boston College in 1987 was as a social worker in a day-care center.

Love this musical talent but not interested in hanging out with small fry? Paul will do a grown-up gig tomorrow night at Puck in Doylestown.

"That's my goal - to do two shows a day, preferably in the same venue, though we couldn't work that out this time," he said. "Then adults who like me can bring their kids in the afternoon, take them home, get a babysitter and come back and see me again at night doing my other material. If all this works out, I'm hoping I can afford to take off one weekend a month and spend it at home with my own wife and kids." *

World Cafe Live, 3025 Walnut St., 11:30 a.m. tomorrow, \$10 adults, \$7 ages 1-12, under 1 free. Lunch buffet available. 215-222-1400, www.worldcafelive.com. Also, Puck, 1 Printers Alley, Doylestown, 8:30 p.m. tomorrow, \$12,



PARTNER OFFER

Tickets at World Cafe Live

When: ONGOING

Tickets: Check availability

■ [Buy tickets online](#)

Where:

World Cafe Live

3025 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
(215) 222-1400

■ <http://www.worldcafelive.com>


Neighborhood: West Philadelphia

■ [View map](#)


■ [Get directions](#)


Parking: Parking costs \$5 in University of Pennsylvania lots Nos. 1 and 26 (adjacent to the Left Bank one block past World Cafe). Free parking after 5 p.m. in Penn lots off 31st Street between Chestnut and Walnut.


Reviews


 Movies

 TV


 Games


 Music


 Web sites

 Books

 Top Picks

 = Appropriate for age

 = Know your kid

 = Not age appropriate

[More Rating Info >>](#)



SIGN UP!

Care what your kids watch? Sign up for our newsletter to get the latest reviews every week.

[Get Full Details](#)

CSM Reviews

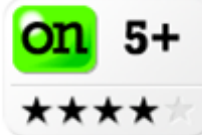
Adult Reviews

Kid Reviews

Dragonfly Races



[view image](#)



[Rate It!](#)

Socially-conscious folk music for kids.

Artist: [Ellis Paul](#)

Genre: [Children's Music](#) Label: Black Wolf Records Parental Advisory: No Edited Version Available: No Release Date: 01/08/2008

Common Sense Note

[Share with a friend](#)

Parents need to know that this CD is the first foray into family music for this well-respected folk artist. There's nothing objectionable in the music, but there is a definite anti-war slant in a couple of songs ("Million Chameleon March" and "9 Months to Fix the World"). The other messages are mostly positive and pretty general -- love your fellow man, protect the environment, etc.

Families can talk about the social justice focus of the album. Are your kids becoming aware of politics and state of the world? Is there a cause they would march for? Also, it's always fun to talk about ways to enjoy the simple pleasures of childhood and family life, as celebrated in these songs. Where would your family go on a road trip? What's the best way to "lose" a rainy day?

[Rate It!](#)

Common Sense Review

Reviewed By: [Amy Weaver Dorning](#)

Award-winning folk artist and troubadour Ellis Paul was inspired to write his first children's album when he realized that his older daughter was humming [Barney](#) tunes instead of his own music. He decided to remedy that by creating this soulful, folksy collection of tunes celebrating the possibilities of childhood. Also included with the CD is a whimsical 24-page lyric booklet illustrated by Ellis.

This is an enjoyable album, but the sensibility is more adult than kid-focused. It's as if Ellis rolled up all the nostalgia parents have for their own distant childhoods and combined it with all the dreams they have for their own kids and made it into a sweet and soulful album. Songs like "Road Trip" and "Wabi-Sabi" are catchy and tell a story, which older kids will appreciate, but it's not likely this music will tear the preschool set away from [Barney](#) and [Elmo](#).

Review: The Dragonfly Races - Ellis Paul



Boston-based singer-songwriter [Ellis Paul](#) has over a dozen CDs to his credit, and many accolades from fellow musicians. It is, therefore, a sign of the ascendance of kids and family music that after all that time this artist with such a career recently released his first album for kids and families, *The Dragonfly Races*.

Paul has written (or co-written) a number of strong folk and folk-rock tracks here, with themes that will be familiar to listeners of folk music -- peace, or speaking truth to power. Indeed, the leadoff track, "Wabi-Sabi," talks about some things, as they get older, having "wabi-sabi soul." That's a good thing for Paul, but more distinctively, when was the last time you heard a kids' music CD use the word "soul"? It's a sign that Paul is not about to dumb down his material just because the audience might skew a little younger. And in many places, that choice pays off in spades. The most rousing track on the CD, "Because It's There," is an inspirational song about doing dangerous things "Because it's there / Because we could / Because we should / Because we dare..." It's a fabulous folk-rock song. Songs that tackle slightly more kid-focused topics such as swinging on a swing (the mid-tempo "I Like to Swing"), or pinwheels (the lullaby titled "Pinwheel," natch) do so with fun wordplay and imaginative lyrics.

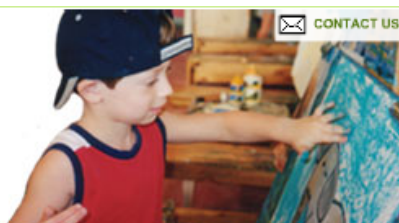
I should note that the album has a definite political undercurrent, and I'm not sure it always serves the album well. It wasn't the content itself -- if you're a fan of Dan Zanes and Pete Seeger (as I am), nothing here will offend you. But I was much more taken with the CD when Paul is telling stories or reeling out his views of life in smaller-scale ways. "Abiola," co-written with Antje Dukevot, is a fantastic song about a girl who ignores rumors spread by a king about a nearby monster to find out the truth. No small political allegory, there. Kids will enjoy the story and, the older ones at least, will understand the point. "The Million Chameleon March" and "Nine Months to Fix the World" have similar themes, but don't work nearly as well on this CD. Perhaps on another one, one targeted primarily at the parents...

Kids ages 5 through 10 will most appreciate (and understand) the themes tackled here. You can hear several of the songs from the 40-minute album at the [album's Myspace page](#) or clips from all the tracks at its [CDBaby page](#). (I would also mention that the album packaging, with artwork from Paul, is one of the nicer kids' music album packages I've seen recently.)

In the end, I don't want to leave you with the impression that this is an overtly political album, because it's not. *The Dragonfly Races* is, however, political in that Ellis Paul has recorded songs that speak very clearly to the type of world he, as a parent of two young kids, would like his kids to grow up in. I suspect that most of you readers envision a similar type of world. These tuneful modern folk songs celebrate imagination and dedication -- we could use more of those. Recommended.



Connecting to the heart of fatherhood -- day by day



Ellis Paul - The Dragonfly Races

Reviewed by Gregory Keer

Some CDs just sound marvelous on a car stereo while driving in the quiet of a drizzly Sunday morning with the kids still drowsy and not yet aware that they're supposed to be rambunctious. *The Dragonfly Races* is that kind of album. The guitars quiver to the heart, the melodies soothe and soar, and Ellis Paul's voice welcomes you into an earthy cabin of soulfulness. This is heartbreakingly good music.

A Boston-based folk singer-songwriter, Paul has fashioned a classic album for parents to share with their children. It has shades of Peter, Paul, and Mary, of Robbie Robertson, of Nick Drake. On "Wabi-Sabi," Paul evokes the gritty strains of Richie Havens as he builds to the ending chorus that has him joined with children's voices. "Abiola" tells a fairy tale with a Celtic lilt. "The Road Trip" travels the world of reality and imagination with the bounciness of an old Winnebago that might actually be able to fly. "The Little Red Rose" offers hope in all of it's a cappella goodness. "Million Chameleon March" uses the imagery of the adaptable creatures to offer a call for positive change.

The above only hints at the ever-unfolding grace and guts of this recording, which makes me wish I could bring my family over to Paul's place and hear him play in his living room. And any album that feels this close to the heart belongs on the living room stereos of parents everywhere.

www.ellispaul.com - \$15 - Ages 2-11

© 2003-2007 Gregory Keer. All rights reserved.

BALTIMORE'S CHILD

Baltimore's Best News For Families

Musical Notes - February 2008

It's All Good

By Charlotte Bohn

The Dragonfly Races www.ellispaul.com

I can't get over how children's music has changed and matured over the years. I would never have reviewed a CD like Ellis Paul's *The Dragonfly Races* years ago because it just didn't exist. Don't get me wrong. I still think children should be listening to goofy and silly kiddie stuff. But, every once in a while, a children's CD with substance is good for the kids. | An internationally acclaimed folk singer and troubadour, Paul released his first family music CD, *The Dragonfly Races*, in January—and I hope it won't be his last. With a voice reminiscent of James Taylor, Paul shares his original songs that offer a fresh new take on encouraging children to be involved with their world.

With songs about dragonfly races in the meadow ("The Dragonfly Races"), chameleons marching on Washington, D.C. ("Million Chameleon March"), and going to the moon and climbing Mount Everest ("Because It's There"), Paul takes listeners on a musical journey that mixes serious concepts with whimsy and fun. "Abiola" tells the story of a young girl who becomes a heroine by ignoring rumors and the King's decree and proves to a small town that monsters aren't all bad. "The Little Red Rose" contains a message of peace: "You could take apart the bombs/ You could plant them on the farms/ Make a garden out of what do you suppose? And tend it like a little red rose." "9 Months to Fix the World" is for all the parents or parents-to-be out there—"Your momma says you're coming, I've got nine months to fix the world, seems like everything here is broken and you're as precious as a pearl."

Yes, Paul has much to say about the world we are living and raising our families in, but he doesn't shove his message in our faces. With beautiful melodies, creative lyrics, and not much more than an acoustic guitar as accompaniment, Paul takes listeners out of themselves and into the world for a little while.

HILLTOWN FAMILIES

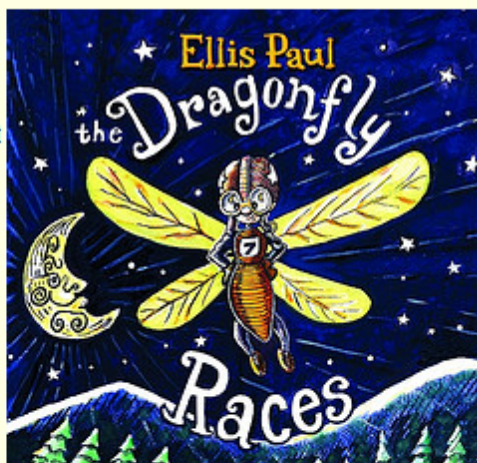
Dragonfly Races: An interview with Ellis Paul.

February 20, 2008 at 6:00 pm (Entertainment, Family, Hilltown Families, Hilltown Family Variety Show, Interview, Sienna Wildfield, music)

Tags: Ellis Paul, Interview

***The Dragonfly Races: An Interview with Ellis Paul* by Sienna Wildfield**

There's a lot of great music and there are many musicians that Persephone and I have become very fond of since we started our musical exploration together. Living out in the rural hilltowns of Western Mass, we do a lot of driving around - giving music we've received for review our undivided attention as we travel from Chesterfield to Northampton, Hadley, Amherst and back. When we come across a song Persephone especially likes, she (being my focus group of one) clues me in with a simple request from the backseat of the car, "Mommy, can you put that on repeat?" That's the indication from the peanut gallery that we've got a winner, adding it to our song list of "must play" for an upcoming episode of the [Hilltown Family Variety Show](#).



But the real litmus test of quality family music comes when we're traveling as a family. The day we drove to Springfield and back we played *The Dragonfly Races* by Ellis Paul, and not once did Persephone's dad turn it down. He even made faces of agreement and pleasure while listening. But the moment of truth came when HE put on the repeat button. Ladies and gentlemen ... we have a WINNER!

Ellis Paul's newest CD, and first family album, *The Dragonfly Races* is an album of discoveries and adventures that lead the listener through fantasy and fun, masked in allegories with threads of social commentary. So while we listen as a family, our 5 year old is enjoying the fable of a fair maiden and a misunderstood monster in "Abioloa" while we're reflecting on the underlying social commentary the story is revealing. As Persephone listens to the songs more and more, questions slowly arise as she searches for more of an understanding.

With *The Dragonfly Races*, Ellis Paul, the father of two girls, wanted to craft an album that was representative of the morals he wanted to impart to his children. Songs that might inspire getting involved and taking action while bringing about peace. To follow is an interview with Ellis that takes a look at the challenges of being a father of two young girls, including how his music becomes that vehicle that imparts the morals he looks to share with his children.