

Singing songs from the heart

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Carrying on the singer-songwriter tradition of Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell, Los Alamos National Laboratory climate scientist Wilbert Weijer can be found at local venues such as Santa Fe's Upper Crust Pizza or on a local radio show playing his acoustic guitar and singing songs crafted from what he calls “the road trip of our lives.”

“I picked up the guitar in my early twenties,” remembers Wilbert. “It was Neil Young who taught me that it does not take a perfect voice or impeccable technique to move someone to tears; sometimes all it takes is a song from the heart.”

Wilbert Weijer (left, standing) performs with his string quartet.

As a youngster growing up in the Netherlands, Wilbert learned to play the violin and in high school took up the viola. During his college years, he played in a string quartet and had the opportunity to perform in several orchestras. Even though these experiences were fun, Wilbert found classical music a limiting medium.

“Playing such instruments is only fun when you play them in a group,” Wilbert explains. “What I really wanted to do with music was to use it more as an expressive tool for myself rather than as a group. I heard one of my friends play a song by Neil Young, and it was Young’s music that made me realize that this approach was something that I really wanted to try.”

“Here’s a guy who uses relatively simple guitar chords, and he does not sing very well, but the emotion that comes through in his words is something that really drew me to his music. I too wanted to create songs that could reach out and touch someone.”

The road trip comes alive

Like other forms of writing, crafting a song can be a long, difficult process, but one that pays great rewards.

“For me, a song must be driven by something I feel strongly about, and such an idea could fester in my mind for about six months or so before I start writing it out,” says Wilbert. “First I develop the lyrics. I worry about the melody and the music later.”

In 2016, Wilbert released his debut full-length album titled *Road Trip of Our Lives*. He recorded the 16 songs on the album on his home computer, noting that “they display all the imperfections of an amateur recording—but the songs come from the heart.”

The themes on the album hint at folk music, with Wilbert limiting himself to an acoustic guitar and voice. The opening song, “Happy Go Lucky,” is pristine storytelling, capturing the joys and angst of a daughter and her wise father. An undercurrent of sadness comes through, but it is always balanced with the simplicity of everyday joys.

The Dylanesque “High Desert Rainstorm,” is a love story with a dramatic New Mexican backdrop. Then there’s “Carry the Woman,” one of the most powerful tracks on the CD.

“It’s a very personal song,” says Wilbert. “I wanted to capture a time when I was not responding well to my partner. Writing this song made me face some truths—it made me come to terms with who you love and to make sure that you always express that love.”

Although he has not yet secured a record contact or formally recorded any material, Wilbert is not concerned. “I am happy where I am at,” he says. “I remain free.”

[Visit’s Wilbert’s Page on ReverbNation.](#)

[Learn more about Wilbert.](#)

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