

ROSS GOLDSTEIN NEW YORK

Traveling Empty Highways

On *Blunders*, **Ross Goldstein** revisits his roots as a singer/songwriter. His last three albums, *Chutes and Ladders*, *Eighth House* and *Timoka* were instrumental efforts, composed and played on the Mellotron. The moody ambience that colored those releases is also evident on *Blunders*, a set of introspective cuts steeped in sadness and melancholy. "The songs are an honest reflection of where I was at the time I wrote them," Goldstein says. "I was drifting, experiencing a lot of solitude and living in my car for a while. The songs take place on the road, in a car or while I'm traveling empty highways. The album marks the end of a relationship and some struggles with depression—the end of one chapter in my life and the beginning of another."



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Blunders was recorded with the production help of Wreckless Eric in the veteran musician's home studio.

"I was living in Catskill Village, N.Y., playing improvised music on my Mellotron in a café," Goldstein says. "Eric heard me and asked me to play organ on his *Leisureland*

album. He said he'd be willing to help me record some of my songs in his home studio, so we started working together." Now based in Silver City, N.M., Goldstein handled most of the instruments on *Blunders* himself and layered up the tracks between road trips in search of a new home, though Eric did end up adding some guitar and percussion. The resulting material could be dubbed psychedelic Americana—Goldstein's wistful vocals float over an ambient soundscape, creating a cinematic sense of being alone on the road. "I put some stuff on social media, but I have no plans to tour," Goldstein says. "Playing live has never been my forte, which makes it difficult to promote myself." rossgoldstein.bandcamp.com **J. Poet**

TAYLOR WEINBERG (SARAH ELAZ)

J.M. KEARNS LOS ANGELES

In Pursuit of Promise

"Songwriting was the thing I couldn't stop doing—and I still can't," **J.M. Kearns** insists. "Nothing was—or is—more fun for me than working on a song." Kearns initially started making music decades ago when he was a twentysomething graduate student with a philosophy focus. Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen were early influences, and after Kearns wrote his first song—about getting his heart broken while on a canoe trip—the music kept coming. He thumbed his way back to his hometown of Los Angeles and had a pair of promising encounters—an audition with Elektra/Asylum Records and a meeting with Warren Beatty—but neither panned out. Yet, despite being forced to take a "civilian job," he continued to pursue his passion and relocated to Nashville. It was in Music City that he formed the Lonely Mammals, issuing an album descriptively dubbed *Death or Life*. He also published a novel and saw some of his songs recorded by various independent artists. Confined by COVID, Kearns made the ambitious decision to release the best songs he had written over the last 50 years entirely online, none of which were on any radar prior to posting. His first formal solo album, *Before the coffee gets too cold*, followed in May 2024, and a second, *Songs of Surviving in the City*, was released last November. As if making up for lost time, his third album, *only the love songs*, appeared this past June. Two other albums are due to follow—one, *Undiscovered Country*, will consist of country tunes while the other will revisit the first



songs he ever wrote in the '70s. Now based in Cape May, N.J., Kearns performs solo and in a trio called The Squares while also teaching philosophy. Naturally, he has a philosophic view of his own endeavors. "It's been incredibly satisfying, even cathartic," Kearns says. "The scariness of old age is part of the fun; the future can seem uncertain, so you need a reason to cherish the present, and this project has become a big reason for me." jmkearns.com

Lee Zimmerman

SARAH ELAZ NORTH ANDOVER, MASS.

Anything Is Possible

Sarah Elaz's journey to becoming one of the Brooklyn, N.Y. jam-scene's most dynamic new bassists began not on stage but in the crowd. "I was a fan first," she explains, having seen over 150 Phish shows since 2010. A professional dancer who holds a degree in that art form, Elaz possessed a deep knowledge of rhythm and composition, and when the pandemic hit, she picked up a bass and began to add melody and harmony to her musical tool kit. A fearless performer, she documented her progress on TikTok, quickly gaining a following by way of her viral "BASSCAM" series. Now a nationally touring bassist with Bearly Dead and a founding member of the theatrical jamband Boojum—an exercise in "dramato-funkology," as she puts it—Elaz's playing is as unique as her story. Self-taught, she describes her style as "funky, melodic and a bit quirky." She admits, "I do things a little bit weird, and I love leaning into that." Her goal is always to make an audience dance, a mission informed by influences like Tina Weymouth and Bootsy Collins. Beyond the music itself, Elaz is also known for her bold approach to fashion. "The costume is part of the performance," she says, highlighting a value instilled by her late mother, who was a fashion designer. Elaz never repeats an outfit, sourcing looks from thrift stores and clothing rentals in her Bushwick neighborhood and sharing them via her social media "Fit Check" series. For Elaz, her expressive dancing and vibrant outfits are about creating an inclusive invitation for the audience to be themselves. While she tours constantly, her main creative focus is Boojum, which sits at the intersection of improvisational music and stagecraft. The band is currently developing a sci-fi rock opera, and Elaz is preparing to release music under her own name. "What I've learned from this journey," she says, "is that anything is possible." linktr.ee/sarahelaz **Matt Hoffman**

