



LiLi Roquelin is an Astorian who is releasing her fourth album, *Be Inspired*, due out on December 6.

Rise Above, the biggest arrangement on the album, has an important message of unity, understanding, and compassion, with a powerful gospel choir. Her piano cover of Come As You Are by Nirvana is ethereal and atmospheric, and her angelic, distinctive voice gives it a haunting and mysterious character.

Her new song, Don't You Know It's Christmas, is on the official entry list for consideration at the 61st Grammy Awards. Four of her songs were on "Dance Moms" (Life-Time TV); one of them was chosen for a Solo Number by dancer/actress Maddie Ziegler, who has performed in several videos by singer Sia.



"I will go to the United States and have a music career there," LiLi told her friends as she was just 14. Growing up on La Côte d'Azur with a multi-instrumentalist father, she learned music as it was all around her. She started pursuing music in middle school, writing lyrics, recording vocals, program-

ming, and performing live with numerous bands. Once in the US, she released *A Taste of Departure* as the lead singer/writer of her first American pop-rock band, Phizzy Lager. She soon went on to record an alt-rock album, *Neverending Sundown* with the band, Hate Dies Hard.

Locally, this star on the rise shot her video for *The Only One* in Astoria Park, and the new album was made at a recording studio in Long Island City. She studies the ukulele at Astoria's Uke Hut, and holds rehearsals at Astoria Soundworks.

LiLi will be playing at the landmark nightclub, The Bitter End in the Village on Thursday, December 6, at 7:30 pm. She will perform the new songs from the album, as well as Don't You Know It's Christmas.

QG: What inspired your holiday song, Don't You Know It's Christmas?

LR: I wanted to write a holiday song that's for everybody, not focused on religious lyrics and without the bells or what we hear so much in the production of Christmas songs. I composed it and released it just a year ago. I wrote it on the ukulele and it came out as a fresh upbeat acoustic little tune. It's a cute story to remind people that life is not just about working but enjoying that special time of the year. The bright tone is a

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great transition from my previous music into my new album.

QG: What's the most challenging thing about being a musician?

LR: I feel as musicians we have to do a lot of soliciting, we get a lot of rejection, a bit like actors. It can get tiring. But I believe in infinite possibilities and I think that's what has helped me keep going and finding the right opportunities for my music.

QG: How long have you lived in Queens?

LR: Just as long as I have lived in New York City! Eleven years, in Astoria.

QG: Any favorite hangouts in Queens?
LR: I got one of my ukuleles at the Uke

Hut and they helped a lot in getting me all set up, sharing their expertise and servicing my instrument, plus they have fun shows there.

My favorite places to grab some great food or a drink are Bonjour Crêpes and Wine, Omonia, The Strand, and Bare-burger!

QG: You seem to take a lot of responsibility for all the phases of your music production. That's less common in women artists. Why do you think that is?

LR: I directed and managed the entire album: I wrote, composed, arranged the songs, recorded the vocals, piano and synths, directed the musicians, the mixing and mastering engineers from start to fin-

ish. I knew exactly what I wanted and I selected a team of a dozen top-notch people myself. I have come across that idea many times over the years that to make a good album or get some credibility a woman has to hide herself behind the name of a well-known male producer. I've met quite a few and to me it has always come down to "why would I work so hard in trying to make them understand my music and my vision when often they don't see it as clearly as I do?" So I would end up just doing it myself, because I am capable of it.

Less than 10% of record producers are women and that can be intimidating for girls. I want to say to all the women songwriters in the world: "If you have a vision you can do it too. Yes it takes hard work and learning a lot of different skills. Do not believe anyone that tells you that you cannot do it. Be firm and a great communicator when directing your team and making requests. When you work with the right people you'll get the respect that you deserve."

QG: Who do you love to listen to? Who were your early influences?

LR: When I was a kid I listened to a lot of older music like The Beatles, ABBA, or some soul music like Stevie Wonder, and also French music like Mylène Farmer, Francis Cabrel - a very broad music culture due to my father being a guitarist and my uncle being a vinyl records collector. Growing up in France, I was exposed to a lot of UK music like Noel Gallagher, Blur, and The Cranberries. I think my present inspirations are Ingrid Michaelson, Sarah Bareilles, and the contemporary pianist, Ludovico Einaudi.

QG: What kind of concerts do you prefer to give?

LR: Since I've lived here I have performed in almost every place that's playable in New York City and Queens, but I must say the most fun ones to me are the private parties or living-room concerts. I like the intimate feel and to see people's faces and the effect of my music or lyrical messages on them. My most memorable ones so far are the performance I did of God Bless America at Terrace on the Park in Flushing Meadows, and when I performed as the opening act for Bruce Sudano, the legendary musician and producer for Donna Summer (his late wife) and Michael Jackson. I am looking forward to meeting new people during the live performances of this new album!

—Annette Hanze Alberts

This column was originated in July, 2013 by Nicollette Barsamian.

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