



Ordinary Elephant to Perform at February 22nd Americana/Folk Concert

INTERVIEW BY EMILY SINK

*Mesmerizing folk duo Ordinary Elephant has spent the better part of the last decade on a never-ending tour that's earned married couple Crystal and Pete Damore widespread critical acclaim and made fans of luminaries like Tom Paxton and Mary Gauthier. In 2017, the pair took home the International Folk Music Award for Artist of the Year on the strength of their breakout album, *Before I Go*, and two years later, they returned with the similarly lauded *Honest*, which the Associated Press hailed as "one of the best Americana albums of the year." Ordinary Elephant will be performing February 22, 7 pm at the Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland Park Ave. as part of the Americana/Folk Concert Series, and you can learn more about Ordinary Elephant at their web site, <https://www.ordinaryelephant.net/>.*

Emily Sink: What's the significance of the name "Ordinary Elephant"?

Ordinary Elephant: To us, there are no ordinary elephants. Even your everyday ordinary elephant is a magnificent creature, and there are so many things in life like this.

[See Ordinary Elephant, pg 2.](#)

A Different Strummer Newsletter Highlights

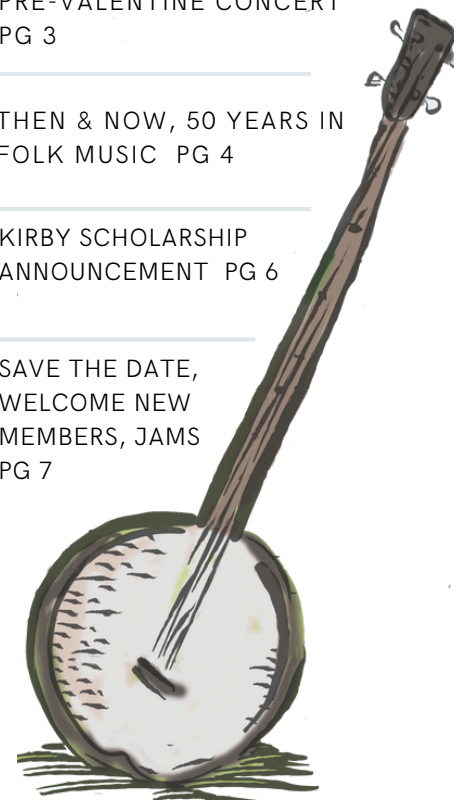
ORDINARY ELEPHANT TO PERFORM
FEBRUARY 22ND PG 1

PRE-VALENTINE CONCERT
PG 3

THEN & NOW, 50 YEARS IN
FOLK MUSIC PG 4

KIRBY SCHOLARSHIP
ANNOUNCEMENT PG 6

SAVE THE DATE,
WELCOME NEW
MEMBERS, JAMS
PG 7



'Love is all you need.' the Beatles

Ordinary Elephant, from pg 1

Everyday things and moments can hold so much depth and beauty if you take the time to look. So our name is a reminder to us, to always take that time.

Emily: How would you describe your music to someone who has never heard it before?

Ordinary Elephant: For us songs are stories, told through lyrics, music, and arrangement. What the song wants is always at the heart of it, and we try to be the best conduits we can be, using our writing voice, vocal harmonies, acoustic guitar, and clawhammer banjo or octave mandolin.

Emily: Storytelling is a huge part of your songs, exploring both personal experiences and societal issues. What inspires your songs? What themes do you find yourselves drawn to?

Ordinary Elephant: Anything that moves us, makes us feel something deeply, can inspire a song. If we are moved, others could be too, and by creating something we can share around this experience, we can contribute to connection, and connection fosters empathy, which is a theme we are always drawn to.

Emily: I understand you both came from unique professional backgrounds before making the shift to music. What influenced you to take that risk? How did this part of your past shape your present as songwriters and musicians?

Ordinary Elephant: The need to be true to ourselves became louder than the noise of others' expectations. The shift was a



Ordinary Elephant, by Olivia Perillo

gradual one, but that transitional time allowed space to return to the creative parts of ourselves, and we recognized how much that felt like home.

It continues to shape our present by helping us to remain grateful for where we are, and where we were willing to go. The experience of being in a place that was not sustainable long term and was not serving us, and therefore others, as well as the place we are in now, is a beautiful reminder of the power of listening to your gut.

Emily: How has your music evolved through time? How has life on the road shaped your music and personal growth?

Ordinary Elephant: It feels like we're always changing and growing. Not changing in a going on a different musical path kind of way, but more like honing and distilling down to what feels most genuine and finding what we can give. Neither of us went to school for music, or were professionally trained, so we are always trying to learn and get better, trying to be of service to the

The Ups & Downs of Love: Our Pre-Valentine Concert



Serious and comical love songs, fun trivia questions, and delicious home-made sweets will highlight the 15th annual Valentines concert by Bill Cohen and friends from 7:00 to 9:00 pm on Saturday February 1.

With guitar and piano, Bill will sing favorites from the 1940's through the 1990's, made famous by John Denver, the Everly Brothers, John Prine, Sam Cooke, James Taylor, Sting, Patti Page, and even "Weird Al" Yankovic.

Ann Fisher will be on hand to add some romantic flute accompaniment on several songs. David Maywhoor will keep the beat on percussion, and Brian Szuch will add extra sparkle on lead guitar. Plus, the all-girl trio, The Harmonettes, will sing smooth backup vocals.

While the songs will reflect the ecstasy, warmth, heartache, and pain that love can bring, there will be a lighter side too, as Bill poses trivia questions about famous and infamous couples and love songs throughout the decades. Plus, expect a couple of surprises.

The concert takes place at the Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland Park Avenue. \$15 per person donations are suggested at the door, with proceeds helping put on this May's Central Ohio Folk Festival.

Did we mention the free and delicious home-made cookies and goodies right after the show? Yep, we'll have them, so stick around till the end, enjoy the treats, and schmooze with the musical cast.

WHEN: Saturday, Feb 1 at 7 pm

WHERE: Columbus Mennonite Church,
35 Oakland Park Avenue, Columbus 43214

Free parking along Oakland Park Avenue and in nearby lots owned by North Broadway Methodist Church.

Come alone or bring your sweetheart!

For more information, call Bill at (614) 263-3851.



Bill Cohen

Then and Now: 1975 → 2025

50 Years Ago in Folk Music + A Look at Today's Scene

BY CIGAR BOX SCOTT ATKINSON

2025 is a great "milestone year" from which to look back at the past. Fifty years ago it was 1975 and folk music was as varied as it is today. Folk music has always been an amalgam of past and the present: honoring the tradition but moving the music forward for the next generation. In that spirit, let's take a look at the past and present of folk music for 2025.

THE PAST: 1975

Fifty years ago, folk music had moved beyond the 1960s revivalist period. The growing singer-songwriter genre was the focal point of folk at the time, but there was still a commitment to the tradition. Artists were blending the rootsy sounds of traditional music with the modern sounds of the current pop scene in original songs while traditional bands and singers continued to have an impact on the music

Bob Dylan was still at the forefront with two notable albums: *The Solo* and *Blood on the Tracks* and the collaboration with The Band, *The Basement Tapes*. Fifty years later, he's still top of mind with the Christmas 2024 release of the biopic, *A Complete Unknown*.

After the Dylan releases, Janis Ian's *Between the Lines* was probably the 1975 release with the most lasting impact. The album and its single "At Seventeen" went on to be nominated for multiple Grammys and the single won Pop Performance of the Year in 1976.

Diamonds & Rust, which was classic Joan Baez, blended rootsy material and even a Stephen Foster song while helping push forward contemporary songwriters with

covers by John Prine, Janis Ian, Jackson Browne, Bob Dylan, and Joni Mitchell.

Other notable albums for 1975 included the self-titled debut from Kate and Anna McGarrigle, and two double albums: *Unrequited* from Loudon Wainwright III, and Doc Watson's *Memories*, featuring mostly traditional songs. Doc also won the Grammy for Best Folk album in 1975 with his prior year release with his son Merle, *Two Days in November*.

THE PRESENT: 2025

Similar to 50 years ago, present day folk music spans diverse musical styles. The rootsy, twangy sound of Americana music remains popular at music festivals across the country. Singer-songwriters continue to drive the music forward and a growing number of bands from a younger generation are driving a resurgence in old-time and traditional music.

The upcoming 2025 Grammys are a great start to blending past to present. Four-time winner Taj Mahal will be honored in February with a Special Merit Award for lifetime achievement. Taj's career has featured reinterpreting traditional

old-time and blues with funky sounds from around the world along with his own songwriting.

In the same vein, Gillian Welch & David Rawlings are touring throughout 2025 on their recently released 2024 album Woodland. This is the first album of original songs credited to the duo known for songwriting that blends sounds from 1930s country with the lonesome haunting stylings of old-time and rural traditions. They continue to set the standard for releasing poignant songs that sound timeless and familiar.

Lake Street Drive also blends new and old, but in a completely different way. If you like Carole King, and some soul and r&b in your folk music, you'll love this five-piece band founded in Boston in 2004. Soulful lead vocals carry the songs and the band is tight as they weave between rootsy and pop styles. Their broad appeal has them appearing as guests at bluegrass festivals and folk events in addition to r&b and pop venues. Their 2024 album Good Together has earned them a 2025 Grammy nomination.

If you want something more "folky," look no further than the new self-titled album from Willie Watson. Known as a founding member of Old Crow Medicine Show, this is Watson's third solo album, but is billed as his "debut" since it's the first to showcase original material. Alongside his songs, he includes the traditional "Mole in the Ground" and a cover of "Harris and the Mare" by Stan Rogers. Be sure to check out Watson's two earlier albums, Folksinger Vols 1&2 in which he revisits traditional folk classics in stripped down, live performances.

We don't have the space to mention all the amazing folk veterans and up-and-comers doing great things in 2025. While you're listening to the well-worn vinyl of your favorite albums, be sure to try some of today's contemporary artists. Buy an album, download a track, or better yet, support them at a local venue or festival.



Central Ohio Folk Festival, 2024

Folk Alliance International is a great place to find new artists. Look here:

*Folk music awards nominees:
<https://www.folk.org/news/announcing-the-nominees-recipients-for-the-2025-international-folk-music-awards>*

*Showcase artists for the 2025 Conference:
<https://folk.org/conference/2025-official-showcase-artists>*

Ordinary Elephant, from pg 2



Ordinary Elephant, by Ron en Pief

songs by gaining as many tools as we can.

As far as the road, it has allowed us to have so many experiences, and meet so many people, that we wouldn't have otherwise. Experiences and relationships influence personal growth, and help us better learn about who we are, which leads to more authenticity in our music.

Emily: How has working so closely together as a married couple influenced your creative process and the way you approach songwriting?

Ordinary Elephant: We often joke that between us, we are one musician. We've learned what each of our strengths are and combine those. But we also have not abandoned for ourselves what the other person is naturally more adept at. Instead, we explore those areas, and we are each other's teacher. We are both very gentle with one another, without judging, or making each other feel inadequate. It provides a safe space to grow and explore, which is so important when you're trying to learn something.

Emily: What can audiences expect from your upcoming performance in February?

Ordinary Elephant: Our concerts invite you to lean in, listen closely, and be part of a musical conversation. We share stories, songs, and poetry, created with intention, and through searching for truth. Vocal harmonies, clawhammer banjo, octave mandolin, and acoustic guitar are intertwined and heard in their authentic tones by using carefully placed microphones rather than instrument pickups. We aim to create an intimate atmosphere where every note and lyric can be taken in to resonate in whatever way the listener needs, allowing a sense of connection through shared emotion and experience.

KIRBY MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

The Kirby Music Scholarship committee is now accepting 2025 application forms!

This form with guidelines is located online at:

<https://www.columbusfolkmusicociety.org/>

The Kirby Music Scholarship is open to any central Ohio student in grade 3-12.

The deadline for submission is March 20th.





Welcome NEW Members

Scott Brubach Susan Dalton-Miller
Paul Butler Cotton Jackson

...and Welcome Back RENEWING Members!



Save the Date!

Americana/Folk Concert Series

Ordinary Elephant

Saturday, February 22, 8pm

6pm open jam / 7pm Open Mic (pre-sign-up) / 8pm Ordinary Elephant Refreshments. \$15 door donation / \$10 CFMS members

Venue: Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland Park Ave, Columbus

2025 COFF Fundraiser

Pre-Valentine Concert, Saturday, February 1, 7-9 pm

Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland Park Avenue, Columbus

Zoom Jam Sessions

Mondays and Thursdays

10am -12 noon. Please contact Jane for information: vanaukj@gmail.com

In-Person Jams

Mondays 6-8pm. 4th Avenue Christian Church, 296 W. 4th Avenue

Wednesdays 6:30-8:30pm. Gillie Center, 2100 Morse Road

Saturdays 9:30-11:30am. Whetstone Community Center, 3923 N. High St. Register at front desk for free "Music Jamming with Others" class.

Contact Jane at vanaukj@gmail.com for other Saturday locations.

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A note to all Folk Festival Volunteers

Remember to earmark the dates of May 3 & 4 on your calendar for the festival! COFF volunteer coordinators will be reaching out later in February for the many volunteers needed for the festival!

Looking for opportunities to play (music) nicely with others? Join the Cbus Jammers!

The Cbus Jammers meet several times a week, in person and via Zoom to jam together. These informal sessions are a great opportunity to practice your instrument while getting to know some fellow folk music lovers. We also sometimes play at farm markets, metro parks, nursing homes, children's events, etc. All folk instrument players are welcome, regardless of skill or experience! To learn more, check the CFMS website: www.columbusfolkmusicsociety.org/jam-sessions.html

For questions, to schedule a session, or to be added to the jam list, contact Jane VanAuken at: vanaukj@gmail.com



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BECOME A MEMBER OF THE COLUMBUS FOLK MUSIC SOCIETY

Date _____ New Renew Preferred Newsletter Format: Digital Hard Copy **[NOTE: if you choose hard copy, we request an additional \$15 contribution over & above dues to cover postage & handling]**

Name(s) / Band Name (if applic) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

General Age Range – Born: 1930s-40s 1950s-60s 1970s-80s 1990s-2010s

Phone _____ (Cell) _____ If Band, website _____

E-mail Address _____ Additional e-mail (if a household or band) _____

We are also a growing, vibrant community of volunteers; the awesome force behind our work! Please at least 1 box.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> May folk festival | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | <input type="checkbox"/> Musician | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CFMS concert events | <input type="checkbox"/> General Help | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Web Design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking / Baking | <input type="checkbox"/> Graphic Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Musician | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing / Newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cbus Jammer Musician | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Instructor | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Data Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal | <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE ANNUALLY ON DECEMBER 31. one of the membership levels listed below.

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Band \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Silver \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Household \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Good Friend \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$200 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member \$500 |

I have included an additional \$15 (postage & handling) to have a printed version of newsletter mailed to me.

To join/renew by credit card, visit CFMS' website: columbusfolkmusicsociety.org (About Us/Join)

OR click here: <https://tinyurl.com/CFMS-Join>

To join/renew by cash or check, please mail completed membership form with payment to: *Columbus Folk Music Society, PO Box 20735, Columbus, OH 43220.* Membership amounts may be tax-deductible.

My place of work matches donations:

