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English 122

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### Elephant Revival: Secrets of Connection

I'm sitting back in my sister's lavender-scented car traveling up the twisting road. It's a little rainy, and the roads lay sleek like a Slip and Slide. I'm worried sick because my parents remain in an old (front-wheel) white Windstar van. The Fourth of July is finally here, but the cold weather wraps itself around my chilled bones. The sun slowly moves behind the rainy mountain tops, and it gets darker and darker outside. We're on our way to see Elephant Revival in their hometown Nederland, Colorado. "They play indie, acoustic, bluegrass music," says my sister. "The show's free, and afterwards fireworks will bloom over the lake!" I'm very excited to see Elephant Revival, yet I have a stubborn idea of what kind of music I like. Since I am looking forward to having a good time with my loved ones, I keep on smiling.

We finally arrive at the park in Nederland. I see smiling faces everywhere, all bundled up in colorful raincoats and scarfs, hovering underneath umbrellas like mice under mushrooms. Elephant Revival sets up their equipment underneath the park's picnic area. People begin to head down to the show like flocks of birds, but first my family and I need to eat. My father brought his delicious pasta salad. He grabs it from the back end of the van, and the pasta tips over and falls all over the graveled ground. Trying to get all the rocks out of the pasta, I bite down, and get an uncomfortable crunch.

The sounds of a fiddle squeeze their way into my ears as a foot stomp makes my head slowly rock back and forth. Then suddenly, I hear banjos bouncing, guitars plucking, and the

bass scaling. The sweet sounds of melody flow out from the show, and I can't stop my body from grooving. My knees sway like a boat in the water, and soon enough my feet sweep me off the ground. I twirl down the muddy trail, heading straight towards the music. I arrive and the song switches; the guitar is sweetly plucking up and down. I stand there looking at five stunning musicians making the most beautiful music I have ever heard: Bonnie Paine, Bridget Law, Dango Rose, Daniel Rodriguez, and Sage Cook. The fiddle's motion is like stokes of birds soaring through the sky. A beautiful voice peacefully fills the air, yet you can still hear the interplay of the instruments.

The music begins to tunnel my mind like a train, thoughts are flying past me focusing on things that make me feel open, free, and together. The song "Forgiveness" deeply, slowly, and calmly comes onto the stage, and my head begins to sway back and forth as my hips and shoulders wave to each other. There is a slight pause in the music. Then out of nowhere an uplifting skipping tune bounces out of their instruments, and I whirl in my own little space. The music grows stronger like burning fire that continues until the end of the song. I skip up and down, my arms move in motion that looks as if I'm running and swimming, and my shoulders crash like waves against gravity. The end of the song slows down like someone quietly falling asleep. I secretly look around, and I notice all different types of people: young, old, and new. Little kids dance in circles, old men slowly rock, and young men and women let their bodies drift in an ocean going all different directions.

Every person I talk to, make eye contact with, and dance by connects through the love of music. You can see, feel, and hear everyone having an extraordinary experience. Elephant Revival creates a sanctuary for people to feel loved, connected, and accepted. A place where we can be together not worrying about the outside world's complications. Just dancing, dancing till

we can't dance anymore, and then swaying some more. They have created a night, moment, and time to be free, to let loose, and to be yourself. People dance on picnic tables, dance out in the rain, and dance in circles all around.

I close my eyes and the people slowly recede, "Sing To The Mountain" trickles out of the speakers like raindrops and pours over me. The guitar begins with a rhythmic vessel that carries throughout the whole song and quickly the double-bass, banjo, washboard, and the fiddle jump in with a new bouncing rhythm that grows with the first. The fiddle lets long and short flowing sounds fill the air like the wind on a breezy day. A harmony of voices fill my mind with words that mean something powerful to me. Together as one they peacefully sing,

"Let the fires burn tonight/ Let the jugs and wine get drunk/ Let the truth be known tonight/ Don't go  
let yourself hide/ Go and sing to the mountain/ Go and sing to the moon/ Go and sing to just about  
everything/ Cuz everything is you."

The bouncing rhythm skips back in, but it's louder and faster. The banjo comes hopping out of the music like rain bouncing off water. They begin to sing harmonically again,

"Listen to the river/ Of your heart play like a drum/ Listen to the night call/ Singing songs from all around/  
Go and sing to the mountain/ Go and sing to the moon/ Go and sing to just about everything/ Cuz  
everything is you/ And let your voice go/ Let it pierce through your soul/ And let your voice go/ Let it piece  
through your soul."

Again comes louder that repetitive rhythm, yet the fiddle is creating a strong outburst of beautiful music that lifts off a branch like a blue bird taking off into the night's sky. The fiddle's sounds represent the beauty that arises when one lets their true voice flow out of their heart. The music soars like fluttering feathers through the wind.

"Sing To The Mountain" reminds me to be myself, to shine without a doubt in my mind. The song tells me to not be afraid to speak my mind. When the fiddle blooms like a flower over

the other instruments, I visualize speaking my mind and being myself; therefore, the beauty will arise, just like the beauty arose through the fiddle.

Under the tab “Band” on Elephant Revival’s website, we see that Elephant Revival was “Brought together by a unified sense of purpose - the spirit of five souls working as one, in harmony, creating, sounds they could never produce alone.”

I was able to obtain an interview with Daniel Rodriguez through email. I thought of a couple of questions focussing on the song. I wanted to know what thought process they had when they wrote the song “Sing to The Mountain.” I slowly read his response over-and-over. He explained in detail that:

“I think alot of times when I am writing songs that I am almost void of thought. That there is a certain feeling that I want to express, and somehow it comes out with words and music. For "Sing to The Mountain," I was feeling sort of unadulterated by the types of emotions that hold us back from our own personal and collective greatness. I think alot of times fear exemplified in our being holds us back from alot of great experiences that we could have seen through clearer lenses if that wasn't so. So this song is sort of an ambitious song asking everyone to be free of those things that hold us back.”

I thought it would be interesting to know what kind of emotions they felt when they wrote the song “Sing to The Mountain.” Considering the bouncing vibes that the song “Sing to The Mountain” gives off when I listen to it, Daniel’s response was a perfect match. He claimed, “I was feeling joy and the jubilation of a young heart” (Rodriguez).

Considering what I took from the song, I thought it would be cool to see what they want their listeners to take from the song “Sing to The Mountain.” Daniel’s response made my hair stick up on the back of my neck. He said, “I want those who listen to the song to be motivated by it. Not to get drunk on wine per se, but to attempt to move about with joy and less judgment

and fear... and to literally sing to the mountains, and sing to the moon... give yourself goosebumps” (Rodriguez). I believe that what *I* took from the song is what they intended the listeners to take from it, but I related it to my life and what I needed, to not be afraid to speak my mind.

Elephant Revival strongly believes that, “Where words fail...Music speaks” (“Band”). Music connects us all in one way or another, Elephant revival states that, “Even when we don’t understand one another’s languages-we can be moved by a rhythm, soothed by a song” (“Band”).

I slowly open my eyes to see crowds of smiling friends swaying together to the rhythm of the music. I notice my sweet family. My sister Genoa and her husband Larry hold each other as they dance in motion with the crowd. The sparkles in my parents’ wrinkled eyes glisten like stars in the foggy red light. Elephant Revival smiles and thanks us all. They have created this memory that we will cherish forever. As they exit the stage, colorful fireworks canopy the lake.

#### Works Cited

- "Band." *Elephant Revival: Indie Acoustic Quintet From Colorado*. Elephant Revival, 2012. Web. Sept. 2012. <<http://elephantrevival.com/band/>>.
- Elephant Revival. "Sing to The Mountain." N.d. CD.
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