

Lili Añel

singer/songwriter/recording artist



On her fifth release, **Every Second In Between** (Wall-I Records), **LILI AÑEL** wanted to continue depicting her love of songwriting, singing and interpretation, but at a whole new level. “I knew when I began putting the songs together for this record that I wanted to work with a producer who would get *me*, what I’m about, and bring out my voice.” Enter four-time Grammy winner Glenn Barratt.

“I was already familiar with Glenn’s work when I heard a record he’d produced over the club’s sound system after one of my gigs,” says Lili. “I was amazed at the way the recording cut through the club’s noise — not only was the vocal well balanced, but I could hear every word. That was paramount for me.”

Every Second In Between is a collaboration of heart, soul, words, music, spirit and technique. The songs’ landscapes accurately capture Lili, bringing her voice to the

forefront, from the classically tinged *Voyager*, with its string quartet and Lili’s voice, alone and in chorus, to her cover of Nina Simone’s *That’s All I Want From You*, and the Latin flavored *Supposed To Be*, the album’s first single, a song of empowerment with the storyteller’s refusal to give up sense of self. **Every Second In Between** proves Lili’s stick-to-it-ness and her continued growth as a songwriter and artist to be, as she likes to say, “good as gold.”

Subsequently, **Every Second In Between** has won **Lili Añel 3 NY Music Awards** 2010/2011 in the categories, *Best Singer-Songwriter (Female)*, *Best Jazz Album -"Every Second In Between"* and *Best Female Jazz Vocalist*.

For **LILI AÑEL**, music is a calling. There is nothing else she sees herself doing.

“I don't think I could be anything but a singer-songwriter-performer,” she says. “I truly believe this is why God put me here.”

The six-foot tall singer-songwriter has had a lengthy and highly regarded career that continues to gain momentum. Growing up in New York City, she discovered her passion for music as a child, singing along to her mother’s Cuban, jazz and pop standard albums. Her mother also supported Lili’s desire to join the church choir. Her grandfather recognized how much joy singing brought, and to this day Lili believes that encouragement is one of the prime forces that sent her down her career path.

“My grandfather was very influential and instrumental,” says Lili. “When I sang in the church choir, he would sneak in to the Mass without telling me. I would ask him later, after letting him know that I saw him in the back, why he came to church at all and then left before it was over. His response was: “To hear you sing. I can hear your voice above the others.””

Not long after Lili discovered she wanted to dedicate her life to music, her mother became ill with cancer. Lili was committed to putting music on hold so she could dedicate all of her time to caring for sick parent. But her mother would not tolerate such selfless generosity.

“She forbid me,” recalled Lili. “She told me if I stopped performing and she died, she'd haunt me. It was her way of saying that I should keep going. She always used to tell me to never let go of my dream of becoming a successful musician. Playing music helped me with the stress of her illness.”

Lili's music reflects her Black/Cuban heritage. She uses her native rhythms as the primary basis of her songwriting.

“I often play guitar as if I were playing a drum of some kind, keeping time, playing against time,” she says. “It's what I grew up listening to at home. It's a reflection of who I am.”

Thanks to her mother's influence, jazz and Cuban music became the soundtrack to Lili's life at an early age. But once the British Invasion hit, there was no turning back.

“When The Beatles arrived in America, the damage was done,” she says. “Mom bought me *Introducing The Beatles* (Vee Jay Records) and brought home *Meet The Beatles* (Capitol) for my twin sister. From that point on I knew what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.”

Lili's music abounds with emotion and passion. Her connection to those feelings consistently draws in her listeners. Her audiences empathize with the heart and soul on display through her unique style. She is frequently compared to Joan Armatrading, Joni Mitchell, and Steely Dan. She readily admits the influence of those artists, but also credits the likes of Janis Ian, Garland Jeffreys, John Coltrane, Patato Y Toticó, and Celia Cruz. Lili is flattered by all the comparisons, but insists her sound is all her own.

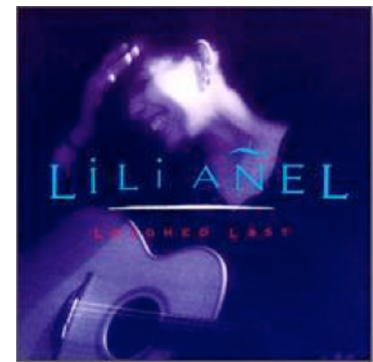
“These artists, these songwriters took me to school as well as made me dance, made me laugh, cry and do a great deal of soul searching,” she says. “I believe I've been successful in incorporating what they've given me, while staying true to my own identity.”

After a successful first year at the Leonard Davis Center of Performing Arts at City College of the City University of New York, Lili found herself at a crossroads.

“I was bored out of my shoes,” she remembers. “I had great grades but didn't know which way to turn. I decided to go after what I always dreamed of doing — to perform, sing, write songs and play guitar.”

Lili studied for a year with legendary jazz singer Sheila Jordan in her vocal performance workshop and continued traditional music training for an additional year, before taking a leave of absence from CCNY. She never returned. Instead, Lili enrolled in Eddie Simon's Guitar Study Center. Only able to afford to pay for one class, she “audited” as many other classes as possible, allowed only to observe without participating. Her diligence gained such respect from her instructors, that they eventually let her participate in class as much as the fully enrolled students. Lili's experience at the Guitar Study Center proved invaluable. By learning guitar, she now had the complete package — an interesting voice, a gift for emotional songwriting, and recognition as an excellent musician.

She began to attend open mics in New York City's Greenwich Village. She put her first band together once she started getting paying gigs. Continuing to hone her skills in the Village's thriving music scene alongside peers Steve



Forbert, Cliff Eberhardt, The Roches, and Carolyn Mas, Lili developed a sound that floats between jazz and acoustic music. The legendary Folk City was the first official “club” to hire her.

“That’s where I developed my performing chops,” she says. “They would book me for a five-night stretch. A definite learning ground.”

It was at Folk City where Lili garnered her first notable review — the lead story in the Sunday Arts & Leisure section of the *New York Times*. Eventually, Lili and her band opened for legendary acts Etta James, Taj Mahal, The Persuasions, and Stuff (featuring original Saturday Night Live Band members Richard Tee, Steve Gadd, Eric Gale, Cornell Dupree and Gordon Edwards) to name a few, while cutting her teeth in top clubs like The Bitter End, J.P.’s, and The Bottom Line.

Along with Cliff Eberhardt, David Massengill and Lucy Kaplansky, Lili was an inaugural member of The Songwriters Exchange, which met weekly at the Cornelia Street Café throughout the 1980s. In 1994, Lili was signed to Palmetto Records, which released her first album **Laughed Last**. She followed that with **Hi-Octane Coffee** on OJB Records.

Lili relocated to Philadelphia in 2004 and was quickly embraced in the region. She became a regular at venues such as World Café Live, Tin Angel and The Point. Lili was asked to participate in Hurricane Katrina benefits shows at World Café Live and the Grand Opera House in Delaware. She also played to a standing room only crowd at the Perkins Center for the Arts in nearby South Jersey. In 2007, Lili recorded her first album in Philadelphia, **Dream Again**, co-produced with bassist Cooke Harvey.

Lili has received airplay at some of the nation’s top Triple A radio stations, including WFUV (New York), WXPB (Philadelphia), WUMB (Boston) and WXRT (Chicago). Stellar reviews have followed her throughout her career. *JazzTimes* recently praised her songs for being “consistently excellent.” *The New York Daily News*, after witnessing a performance, proclaimed “a star is born.” *The New York Post* called her “outstanding” for singing “earthy and sweet.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* dubbed her a “vocal powerhouse whose earthy, jazz-laced tuned stretch the boundaries of traditional singer-songwriter turf.”

Lili continues to appear as a headliner while recently opening for national acts such as Rhett Miller, Alejandro Escovedo, Teddy Thompson, Boz Scaggs, John Hammond, Jr., Alana Davis, Richie Havens, Vance Gilbert and B.B. King. She has become a fixture at Musikfest in Bethlehem, Pa.

Her last CD, **Life or Death**, released in 2008 on German label ESC Records, was a compilation of songs from **Hi-Octane Coffee** and **Dream Again**. Lili’s music has been released throughout Europe and Japan, earning consistent praise around the world as well.

Wherever she’s heard, no matter what country, the result is the same: **LILIANEL** wins them over every time.

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