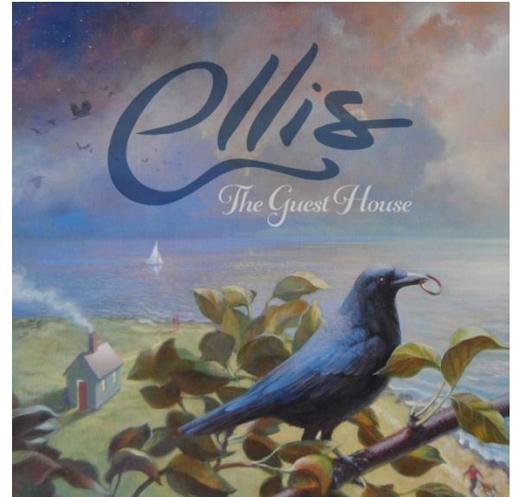


## Why did you name it **The Guest House**?

I've always loved the Rumi poem of the same name.

*"This being human is a guest house. Every morning a new arrival. A joy, a depression, a meanness..."* It goes on to say *"Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond."*

Each song on the record captures a specific emotion and time in my life; all of which came with life lessons. So I thought the title was fitting.... And then, during pre-production, I wrote the song *The Guest House*. At that point, I was 100% sure it would be the title.



## Is there some kind of a **Buddhist or meditation influence on your songwriting**?

Yes, that's true of all my work. I'm very interested in mindfulness practice and being in the present moment. I am truly grateful to Common Ground Meditation Center and its guiding teacher, Mark. What I've learned on those retreats definitely shows up in my songwriting.

## How'd you get **Rob Mathes to do those string arrangements**?

I asked! [laughs] No, really! Oh, and I raised a bunch of money on Kickstarter, so that helped! It was a thrill to work with him and the incredibly talented string quartet.

## Are you playing solo at the **CD release concert**?

I'll have Radoslav Lorkovic accompanying me on piano – he is a truly gifted player and a joy to be with on stage. I've also invited several fantastic songwriters to join me on backing vocals as well as singing their own songs too! So far, I have Vicky Emerson, Desdemona, and a few more local folks. I want the show to have a community feel, a celebration.

## Where did you find those **amazing paintings**?

I asked my fine-art painter friend Ann Getsinger to create a painting or two. She lives in the Berkshires and she made the paintings in August and September – much faster than my album took! I sent her rough mixes as Ben made them and she listened to my music while she painted. I love her work and I'm hoping I sell enough recordings so I can buy one!

## Why did the album take **16 months to finish**?

Oh gosh, I don't know... ADD?! I think that I just take a long time making records. For example, once I got to New Jersey, I completely re-did *Wherever You Are* and also *Five Hundred Crows*. It was like that for **Right On Time** (2010) and **Break The Spell** (2008) too! I'd love to be an artist who puts out a record every year, but probably I just need to make peace that this is how I work...slowly! Slow art. There's a slow food movement, right? Maybe this is the slow music movement! [laughs]

-> **Turn page**

**What do you think you'll do next?**

I have enough songs for a kids album, but I want to do another grown-up one first! [laughs] Actually, I'm hoping to do a modern bluegrass/Americana album. I recently wrote an Americana song with Sally Barris called *Somebody Misses You*. I just sang it as a duet with Garrison Keillor on A Prairie Home Companion on Dec 26<sup>th</sup> [2015]. I have a few other Americana songs already finished too... so I'd like to go in that direction next.

**You've been a guest on Prairie Home Companion how many times?**

Four; most recently the day after Christmas. And every time, I've gotten to sing three or four songs. I feel so lucky! This time I sang four songs including a duet with GK, and he even wrote me into a sketch. I was the ghost of Christmas Present, opposite the Trump/Scrooge character. After the show was done, GK said, "Let's do it again" so maybe I'll even get to do it one more time before he retires! Crossing my fingers! It's wonderful to be on the show and then come home that night to a bunch of CD orders from folks who heard me all over the world. It's a larger crowd than any festival!

**You perform at a lot of folk festivals. What's your favorite?**

Oh gosh! I can't pick. Moab is certainly is one of my most favorite locations... and where I wrote *Moab In November*. Sisters Folk Festival has the most lively crowds. Falcon Ridge is like playing to family – your favorite chosen family! But my home base, the festival I'm at every single year, is the Rocky Mountain Folks Festival. Lyons, CO really is a home away from home for me! Every year I play to a standing-room only crowd in the Wildflower Pavillion and I teach at their song school. This coming year will be my 11<sup>th</sup> year there. Oh wait, did I mention Red Rocks? And Kerrville? I hate to choose because they all are what is making it possible for me to have a music career at all, in 2016.

**Are you having a music career? Do you even sell records anymore?**

I do... which is kind of amazing. I'm certainly not making a killing but it's great to be a folk artist, in part because folk fans still buy CDs. And they came out hugely to support my Kickstarter. And I'm lucky to have a Patreon community ([patreon.com/ellis](https://patreon.com/ellis)) too... with more than a hundred folks who send me money every month just to keep making music. I am so very fortunate. The folks who like my music are incredibly kind and generous. Again, it's not a lot of money. Vance Gilbert famously said, "You can make hundreds of dollars... every year....making folk music." Hundreds! [laughs]

