

Eli Conley

Long Bio 2017

Eli Conley titled his sophomore album *Strong and Tender*, but he might well have been describing himself. On stage he's an earnest yet funny storyteller. His songs address big themes like love, aging, and death through the concrete and immediate details of daily life: a stolen truck, a flopping fish, a dime in the pocket.

Since releasing his debut album *At The Seams* in 2013, Eli has been featured in the *Huffington Post* and the *Advocate*. He's opened for Grammy-winner Kimya Dawson and the Reverend Peyton's Big Damn Band, and founded Queer Country West Coast, a regular series featuring LGBTQ country artists in the Bay Area.

Eli's music is grounded in folk tradition, and he comes by it honestly. He grew up in a small town in central Virginia, and got his musical education listening to his parents' collection of hundreds of albums by singer-songwriters and roots musicians. He also spent years studying classical singing and picking out Broadway hits of the 40's and 50's on the piano. By the time he picked up a guitar at 15, he already had a working knowledge of song structure and music theory – tools that helped him grow into the careful craftsman he is today.

For *Strong and Tender*, Eli brought his touring band into the studio for the first time. Cellist Conrad Sisk (Blue Line Highway, Rattlemouth) and multi-instrumentalist Joel Price (ellipsis, Open Hand) joined him at Tiny Telephone, an all-analog studio that has hosted such notables as Mirah, tUnE-yArDs, Jolie Holland, and The Magnetic Fields.

Strong and Tender tells rich stories ranging from the highs and lows of love to fierce political anthems. "Maybe the ozone will open up and we'll all go to our graves/Maybe we'll end this mess we're in, I believe we can still be saved," he sings on the humorous yet pointed "All That Ends." "What I'm Worth" is told in the voice of a transgender man dreaming of escape from his hometown, yet demanding in the here and now "don't try to tell me what I'm worth." On "Get In My Own Way," Eli laughs at himself for procrastinating on songwriting yet again. "Strong" is a tribute to the Movement for Black Lives that also reflects on losses Eli has faced in his personal life.

At heart, Eli is a clear-eyed songwriter with high hopes for the human race. His songs urge us to love ourselves even when it feels like the world does not. You can't help but sing along.