

About The Eli Young Band

The Eli Young Band's music has all the hallmarks of youth: passion, energy, excitement. The band's story is the definition of commitment: years spent honing its sound while building up to their first national album launch.

The band combined a range of elements—vocalist Mike Eli's ingratiating resonance, guitarist James Young's elastic bag of sounds, bass player Jon Jones' inventive foundation and drummer Chris Thompson's energetic propulsion—to create a 12-song CD that paints even the difficult turns in life with an underlying optimism.

"That's been a theme through a lot of our music," Jones observes. "It might be raining today, but it might be sunny tomorrow, so it's worth sticking around for."

Sticking around is a major tenet of the Eli Young Band. The eight years of lugging equipment to small Texas clubs, of losing day jobs because their music held priority, of saying goodbye to relationships torn by their weekend travels, only solidified their dedication.

The four weren't sure initially what they had or where they were bound. But they knew they needed to keep pushing forward, that there was something special in their boundless mix of modern country and solid roots-rock inspirations.

Young, Jones and Thompson all arrived at the University of North Texas in 1998, and played music together informally at a friend's house that first year to recapture the spirit they'd felt in their respective high-school bands. In 1999, Eli enrolled and became quick friends with Young. They started performing as a duo, and in short order, the entire foursome began making music together, debuting live in October 2000.

They built a local following, each of them often holding down two jobs at the same time they were attending school and fitting in rehearsals and gigs. The stress would have decimated most bands, and they certainly had their share of tense moments.

"We got all the really good arguments out of the way the first couple of years," Jones reflects. "It also helped that we knew each other before we were a band. We really were friends. We figured if we could keep our friendship together, we could keep the band together. After a couple of years, we really found our identity, and all those other little things started to seem like really little things. Because they are little things."

The band befriended another young musician, Miranda Lambert, before her performances in the first season of the USA Network's Nashville Star brought her a national audience. Shortly after she signed her first recording contract in the fall of 2003, she asked EYB to front a show for her at Dallas' Gypsy Tea Room, then told Frank Liddell to make a point of seeing the opening act. He was impressed and formed the independent Carnival label to give the Eli Young Band an outlet; the first album, *Level*, arrived the following year to glowing reviews.

Over the next several years the band toured the region developing their fan base. The band was embraced early on by CMT (Country Music Television), GAC (Great American Country), Country Weekly, Guitar One and Billboard. After their video for single "When It Rains" was picked up on both country music channels, fans across the country poured into venues night after night and would sing the words back to the band. The buzz around the band and their independent single caused a stir among concert promoters and radio programmers who began to add their single to play lists from Denver to Kansas City and Chicago. The single was soon working its way up the Billboard Hot Country Singles Chart. While being worked independently to radio, the song spent more than 30 weeks on the chart, an amazing feat considering the band had not yet signed with a major label.

After signing to Universal Republic / Universal Records South the push continued for "When It Rains." The song ultimately became the longest running single in the history of the country chart. That momentum helped the band to launch their national debut *Jet Black & Jealous* in September of 2008 landing the band in the Top 5 on the Billboard Top Country Albums Chart.

Upon its release, the album was instantly met with critical acclaim. Garnering coverage in USA Today, People, Billboard, American Songwriter, Country Weekly and in major newspapers across the country from Chicago Sun Times and Atlanta Journal Constitution out to Arizona Daily Star and the Denver Westword. The year following the album launch would prove to be a year of major milestones and firsts for the band. They made their late night television debut with a performance on Jimmy Kimmel Live as their single "Always The Love Songs" was moving up the radio charts. The song would eventually become their first Top 10 hit at country radio and helped them to land a subsequent performance on The Tonight Show With Jay Leno. The band made their debut at The Grand Ole Opry, earned their first ACM nomination, CMT nomination and a performance spot at the CMT Awards.

As their national profile began to expand, the band flourished out on the road. In the past year they have developed their ticket selling draw to selling out big clubs in such places as Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Kansas City, and a number of other places as well as taking their home region's success to even greater heights by selling 5,000-6,000 tickets headlining in Houston, Austin, San Antonio, and even getting as high as nearly 19,000 headlining a single show in Dallas/Ft. Worth. All this has also helped lead them to being

offered key opening spots with Dave Matthews Band, Alan Jackson, Jason Aldean, Pat Green and most recently were offered the opening spot on Gary Allan's national Get Off Of The Pain Tour.

Given the success of the album, it's hard to believe that when the band started recording *Jet Black* at Nashville's Omni Sound in 2007, it was unclear where the project would ultimately land. But it did guarantee the foursome would stay true to its unique sound, coalesced around the commandeering, Randy Meisner-like edge of Eli's vocals.

Produced by Mike Wrucke and Frank Liddell, who jointly oversaw Miranda Lambert's award-winning *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, the band had fine-tuned their sound in the studio seamlessly combining familiar elements of roots-rock and country.

The disc draws eight of its 12 songs from songwriters Eli and Young, who inevitably fashioned their material around characters with distinct determination. The on-the-run guy in "Throw And Go," the emotionally torn woman in "Guinevere," and the at-a-crossroads protagonist of "Mystery In The Making" all have their focus on the future, even when they're uncertain what that future will be.

Those attitudes distinctly mirror the real-life philosophies of the EYB, who infuse *Jet Black & Jealous* with sonic backdrops cherry picked from such disparate sources from Rodney Crowell, to the Eagles, to Foster & Lloyd.

The album's driving sound and never-say-die lyrical core capture the free-wheeling nature of their concerts, which have built them a solid base of fans.

"We wanted to have an album," Thompson says, "that really sounds like what we're doing every night out on the road without being a 'live' album." Unlike some of the group albums made in Music City in previous eras, *Jet Black* is truly an Eli Young Band CD, with the four musicians and Wrucke augmented only in a handful of spots by other players. Wrucke inspired the guys during the Omni sessions to push themselves, and that resulted in a sound that captures both urgency and confidence.

"Mike (Wrucke) can play any instrument that you put in front of him, and he can play it well, so as a producer, he knows three ways he wants something," Thompson maintains. "He wants for you as an artist to play the song the way you're gonna play it, but he's also got an idea in his head of what he'd like to come out of your instrument. In that regard, he was definitely more hands-on without being hands-on than any producer that we've worked with before."

From the invigorating opening strains of "When It Rains" to the closing contemplation of "Home," *Jet Black & Jealous* succeeds in pushing the Eli Young Band to the next level as a musical force. It's the next step in a slow-building process that's become uncommon in the 21st century, a band that purposely evolved in small advances rather than trying to blast its way in a single firestorm.

"We were young and 18 and just trying to make music," Eli says, recalling the journey. "We just wanted to be popular in our hometown. Then once we captured that, I thought, 'I want us to be popular in DFW—Dallas and Fort Worth. Then once we did that, it was, 'Let's take over Texas.' Then next thing you know we're saying, 'Let's take over the South.' Now it's, 'Let's take over the country.'"

Eight years into the journey, that national target has shifted from a hazy, optimistic dream to a reality. Throughout their advances, the Eli Young Band has maintained an internal enthusiasm that's easily apparent in *Jet Black & Jealous*. Where their journey ends—as Jones says, that's worth sticking around for.