

# Israel Nebeker speaks on inspiration, loss and community

Blind Pilot's new album 'And Then Like Lions' comes out Aug. 12

By DWIGHT CASWELL

For some of us, ideas come as pictures; for others they take literary form. For Blind Pilot co-founder Israel Nebeker, ideas may come as song, "usually in a dream, or a hike, or a random moment in the day."

"A line and a melody will come intertwined, without explanation of its meaning," he says, "and I'll have to work to figure out what it means. The lyrics are there to be found, but it is hard to find them."

The indie-rock musician's father, the late painter Royal Nebeker, was "my biggest

mentor in songwriting. We had an ongoing conversation about the creative process, and we would get really excited to talk for long sessions about it." He also appreciates singer-songwriters like Neutral Milk Hotel, Joanna Newsom and Bob Dylan for their ability to find "a universal core in a deeply personal sentiment."

Blind Pilot's new album, out Aug. 12, does exactly

**'I WANTED TO MAKE AN ALBUM THAT WAS AN INVITATION INTO CONVERSATION ABOUT LOSS, FROM A PERSPECTIVE THAT IT'S NOT NEARLY SO HARD IF WE EXPERIENCE IT TOGETHER.'**

that, capturing grief, loss, sense of place and community — universal themes — in a personal way, as in the single "Umpqua Rushing," in which loss, memory and longing mingle in

the waters and forest of the Umpqua.

Nebeker also mentions the influence of favorite writers like the beat novelist and poet Jack



PHOTO BY DWIGHT CASWELL

Israel Nebeker, who grew up in Gearhart, is the co-founder of Oregon indie-rock band Blind Pilot.

Kerouac and the iconoclastic Charles Bukowski, whom many remember for his aphorism, "An intellectual says a simple thing in a hard way. An artist says a hard thing in a simple way." In writers like Kerouac and Bukowski, Nebeker says he found, "these strange gestures of writing. They were not on solid ground. They wrote on an emotional level."

## IN CONCERT

8 p.m. Friday, Aug. 19  
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8 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 20

Liberty Theater

1203 Commercial St.,  
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The songs in "And Then Like Lions," Blind Pilot's new album, are, "strung together through themes of loss and courage, and the idea of looking at loss from all angles, not just the sorrow and grief, but also from the perspective it gives you in life and closeness to community and family."

About three years ago, Nebeker lost an important relationship. At the same time, his father was diagnosed with the cancer that would take his life. "I went through a chapter of my life where those were the things coming to me. I hadn't really experienced

loss in that way before," he says.

He found it strange that he had no vocabulary for it.

"Our culture doesn't have a good vocabulary for loss, especially death. It's not easy for us to share," he says.

In the course of experiencing loss and learning to speak of it, Nebeker achieved a perspective that pervades the third Blind Pilot album: "I wanted to make an album that was an invitation into conversation about loss, from a perspective that it's not nearly so hard if we experience it together."

Nebeker first found a sense of community in Gearhart, where he grew up, writing his first songs as a teen to sing to friends around bonfires on Little Beach. "And Then Like Lions," he says, "is about what it means to be with each other, and place, and home."

It's been five years since the last Blind Pilot album, in part due to the losses that led to "And Then Like

Lions." Nebeker scrapped some of the first ideas he had, and band members needed time to work on personal and family issues. Now, though, the band's fall tour and Astoria CD release concerts Aug. 19 and 20 approach, and Blind Pilot is eager to be back touring.

"We're rehearsing a lot, figuring out how to play the songs live," Nebeker says. "We recorded them to the album, and now it's a different story."

Blind Pilot has been around eight years. "I'm incredibly fortunate to make a living doing it," says Nebeker. "It's super fun but a lot of work."

More important than longevity or work, though, is the opportunity he has to relate to the community, saying, "It's astonishing to find I can write something that other people can relate to."

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## Buy buttons, support Astor Street Opry

ASTORIA —The Astor Street Opry Company announces the 13th annual Miss Vivian and Macie Contest. Sponsored by NAPA Auto Parts of Warrenton, this fun contest is running now through Aug. 26. The winners will be announced Aug. 27 at the first intermission of the show.

This is how it works: Local bars and hair salons choose an in-house representative to compete as one of two characters from ASOC's original musical melodrama "Shanghaied In Astoria," now running at the ASOC Playhouse. Each representative has a button with their name on it. The basic goal is pretty simple — sell the buttons for

as much as they can get, with a recommended minimum of \$2. Proceeds help ASOC keep the lights on. To top it off, each contestant will put together a basket to be raffled off throughout the completion at the show Aug. 27.

This truly is an election that can be bought. And the fun part is, whoever raises the most cash for ASOC will be awarded the coveted title of Miss Vivian or Miss Macie 2016, complete with prizes and bragging rights.

This season's contestants are: For Miss Vivian: Paula at the Wet Dog Café & Brewery, Sarah at The Chart Room, Rebecca at WineKraft, Tieler at Port of Call, Terry at Merry

Time Bar & Grill, Cathy at the The Big O Saloon, and Alaina at Finns Fish House.

Competing for Miss Macie are: Betsy at HYGGE, Ronell at Aura Salon, and Ashley and Patricia at The Shop for Guys and Dolls.

The 32nd season of "Shanghaied In Astoria" is halfway through its season. The musical melodrama continues at 7 p.m. every Thursday, Friday and Saturday through Sept 10. Sundays matinees are 2 p.m. Aug. 14 and Sept. 4. The ASOC Playhouse is located at 129 W. Bond St. For more information, visit [astorstretoprycompany.com](http://astorstretoprycompany.com) or call 503-325-6104.