

# By The Way

THE JOURNEY OF A WONDERING SOUL

DESERT TRACKS UPDATES

AUGUST 2020

## Dessert Tracks



If you plan to be at my launch party, you're expecting the release of my single, *Rosebud*.

Recording this song was not only a life long dream come true, it was a symbolic step into my future. It was me clothing myself with purpose and answering a long-time call.

It was an incredible adventure, to work with an experienced musician; to sing into a mic and hear my voice play back; to listen to *my* song ring through the speakers of my vehicle as I drove off. From start to finish, the project was a joy ride.

Arland Finney was generous in his leadership and guidance for a first-timer. He turned out to be not merely a producer, but what I would consider a mentor. He put me at ease when I was a bundle of nerves. He played songs for me, pointing out strategic and artistic techniques from an array of artists with impeccable talent. He created space for me to consider ways to improve my own work. But he also helped me form savvy business decisions and upon his recommendation, I decided to record an EP rather than the single I planned to release at my launch party. "Give the audience a feel for your variation" he told me. And so, I obliged. Shelter in place orders *did* have their benefits. I was given extra time to work on the additional tracks and will have the EP complete for the new launch date, (stay posted).

The second time I went to record, I went in with two songs, eager for Arland's opinion of which to record next. He encouraged me to record both and made a couple of suggestions: add a chord here. Change the tempo there. He turned my songs into *songs*. And he always has encouraging words for me. Headphones on, sweat dripping down my back I fell into a more

comfortable space behind the microphone.

Ultimately, I am working my way toward the completion of an album called *Desert Tracks*. It's so titled because these are the songs I wrote from the dry spaces of my heart. From a stage of life where I was unfruitful because I ran from the thing I was supposed to chase after. And as I recently heard a pastor say: impression without expression is depression. That is precisely what I experienced. But that is not the end of my story.

The songs on the album are my expressions. They are my fight against the depression that has sought after me. They are my personal experiences given rhythm and melody to tell my story. How can I tell the stories of others or encourage them to tell theirs if I'm not willing to share my own?

My EP will have three songs: *Rosebud*, *Natural Disaster* and *Wasted Time*. I am excited to track my progress with you as I record these all the way through to the completion of the entire album. And I'm so grateful to have you along for the ride.

# Stories in the songs

*“Livin’ this life vicarious; scared to take it serious; escape from the real world”*

- *Wasted Time*



## **Rosebud**

In 2016, after years of running in fear, I stepped into my identify as an artist. I took my first trip to Nashville for a gathering of storytellers, claiming my victory over a years-old battle between my passion and insecurity.

Upon hearing that I was finally taking that step, my aunt sent me a card of encouragement with a gift in the mail. Tears streamed down my cheeks as I read her words. It was evident she believed in me, as did so many others. I was surrounded by support. I was the only one who lacked faith. Overwhelmed with emotion I sat down in my bedroom at my parents’ home to write. I snagged the title from a poem that same aunt had written when I was born: Rosebud. And the song blossomed.

## **Natural Disaster**

The summer of 2018 was a brutal one for California. The entire state was set ablaze with wildfires that practically leveled entire cities. Everyone in my hometown knew someone directly whose homes were either demolished or at the very least, evacuated.

In the midst of it all, I picked up the newspaper at work one day and was aghast at the destruction. But really what I saw in those pictures was a portrait of myself.

I had been headed down a dark road: involved with the wrong person, lacking self-respect, making atypical decisions for my character. I went home and penned the song Natural Disaster—a memoir for the broken road I veered off on.

## **Wasted Time**

Before I set out on the road to actually follow my heart, I found myself wasting a lot of time—and money—on superficial things. I have always had a pretty good sense for who I am and what I want out of life. But I wasn’t very good at owning my identity and going after those things. I dated a lot of “wrong” guys, failed to invest my time on creative pursuits where my attention belonged, jeopardized my health with bad eating and drinking habits, and tried to drown the hurt and pain out with a number of different distractions.

I encapsulated those experiences on my bedroom floor in this song when I suspected the guy I was dating probably didn’t care for me in the way I wanted him to and realized I was just wasting time.



## The Cover

A good friend of mine came up with the idea and executed the front cover of the EP. And I am thrilled to have his artistic fingerprints graze this project with an added layer of imagery and symbolism.

After a conversation about various colors and their symbolism, we decided on the blue rose which signifies many things that are laced through the lyrics: mystery, imagination, dreams and thoughtfulness, surprise, change and inventiveness, attaining the impossible.

This project, is obviously a new beginning for me. The message in the collection of songs is about the overall change I am experiencing from an inhibited artist to a liberated one. The creativity and imagination, dreams and thoughts that go into the songs make them a piece of art and me, an inventor. But it is also a little slice of impossibility for someone whose lack of faith was too deep to see a project to fruition. But I'm well on my way.

I was given the suggestion to reshoot the image with the the guitar right-side-up. At first, I agreed. But the more I thought on it, I felt that "upside down" perfectly depicted my state as I wrote the songs, with the exception of

Rosebud—which is the surprise in all of it.

My story to date has been nothing short of a mystery. It's deep with things I don't understand; its rich with compelling twists, turns and outcomes; it's just interesting enough for me to live up to my identity as a Wondering Soul. And my EP is essentially that story in song.

I would bet that your story is the same. That it is full of mystery and uncertainty, unsuspected change and exciting surprise. I hope we can search together for the why behind it all. After all, no great story lacks meaning. The author *always* has a purpose. ♪  
With Love, Leah