

Carving a niche:
Lili Drumeva and
her band



From the Kentucky bluegrass to the Sofia greybrick

Лили Друмева и Jesse Brock разговарят с Gus WORTH за това как Лили от Запада стига до рождатата сцена.

Do you remember being young and wanting to make some money? Babysitting seems the easiest option so you start searching for someone who needs babysitters. This is what Lilly Drumeva did when she was a student in Vienna and wanted some extra cash. So she took a newspaper and started searching but her eye was drawn not to babysitting but bands, specifically this band, the Flaming Stars, who were looking for a vocalist. Despite never having sung professionally, she thought: "Sounds good

to me." She applied and got the gig even though she had never heard of the music they were playing. The only thing was they weren't very good, so, in time, as she got experience and learned how to play the guitar, she formed her own band, Lilly of the West. She is no ordinary singer for Bulgaria, no chalga for her, instead she sings and plays country, Irish and bluegrass. She trained and worked as an economist but now concentrates mostly on music, through live shows and she also presents shows on BBT TV and Retro radio.

It is an uphill struggle as venues are scarce, and appreciation of her type of music is thin. Still there must be some optimism as her beau, mandolin player Jesse Brock from the home of bluegrass in Kentucky has come over here to give it a try. He hails from a musical family and has been playing since he was a child. He has come from a place where bluegrass is king to a place where it is almost unknown, but hey, they like a challenge. And at least the only way they can go is up! As Jesse says “The important thing is to keep going, to believe in yourself and never give up, many people have finally made it after years of trying”

They met in Kentucky, bumped into each other at festivals and suchlike and finally decided they should be together so he has now packed his bags and has made Sofia his home. Bringing a different sound, a different musical experience to a Bulgarian audience is how they see their mission. Crucial to this is the development of a vital music scene in Bulgaria. The establishment of venues particularly for niche music, folk clubs, blues, traditional, etc so that bands can make themselves known and build up a following. Lilly sees as a restriction on this that bands normally don't come on till late, often eleven, which is too late if you have work the next day. She reckons that Bulgarians have a long dinner, from eight till ten, say, and then will think of going to watch live music. If live music is played in a restaurant it is normally as background music. A series of venues dedicated to live music would solve that problem, but is anyone prepared to take the chance? And would enough people come? She would love to see Bulgarians have a better appreciation of the music that is out there in the world but is realistic enough to accept that it will be a slow process as most people have never heard of her musical heroes.

She plays regularly in Toucan on Rakovski street and has played in the National Palace of Culture but hopes to expand her horizons by seeing if it is possible to take her brand of music to other cities. She sees the Black Sea coast and the ski resorts as areas that should provide this option. Tourists like going to shows and it is, I agree, an omission on behalf of the tourism chiefs that they don't pay more attention to different brands of music. There is more to life than chalga.

For those who are not familiar with it, bluegrass is a lively foot stomping sound that gets a party atmosphere going similar to Bulgarian traditional music. Country and Irish has more soulful, lyrical sounds where emotions come to the fore. Indeed, tears can come to the eyes with some of the sadder tunes such as Red is the Rose

which with the delicate, fragile voice of Lilly Drumeva has a haunting quality that stays with you long after the show. This contrasts with the more lively singing of Jesse Brock who you can tell loves being on stage interacting with the audience. He is mister happy up there under the lights, blasting away on his mandolin bringing the sound of his country to the people.

What is the future then for Lilly Drumeva, Jesse Brock and bluegrass, country and Irish in Bulgaria? I would like to say up, up and up, because

they truly deserve it, but it will be slow, I guess. I hope they persevere and carve out a niche for themselves, because in doing so they make it possible for others in the music business in Bulgaria. I would love to see the day when I can have a choice of many types of music for my entertainment in Sofia. It would be great if two nice genuine people like these were instrumental in making it so. And I give thanks that bands are near babysitters alphabetically in the job lists.

BS

“The important thing is to keep going, to believe in yourself and never give up”

beau [bju:]	приятел, любовник
bluegrass ['blu:gras]	вид кнтри музика
bump [bʌmp]	сблъсквам се, натъквам се
carve out [kɑ:v aʊt]	издълбавам, изрязвам; тук: намирам
gig [gɪg]	концерт, изпълнение на поп група
foot stomping [fʊt stɒmpɪŋ]	потропане с крак
hail from [heɪl frɒm]	произлизам от
haunting [hɑ:ntɪŋ]	натрапчив, преследващ (за мелодия, мисъл)
instrumental [ˌɪnstru'mentl]	който служи като средство/оръжие за, способстващ
omission [ə'mɪʃn]	пропуск
persevere [ˌpɜ:si'veɪə]	постоянствам, упорствам
uphill struggle [ˌʌp'hɪl 'strʌgl]	тежка борба
venue ['venju:]	място за концерт

★ MORE INFORMATION



Jesse Brock, from Bowling Green, Kentucky, is a master of the traditional bluegrass mandolin, with pure and upbeat picking on both sparkling originals and familiar covers.



Lilly Drumeva heads the popular band known as Lilly of the West. Born in Bulgaria, she was raised and educated in a number of European countries including Germany, France, Austria and the Czech Republic.