

## BEDOUINE

Azniv Kornejian became a breakout artist in 2017 when her meticulous, self-titled debut [\*Bedouine\*](#) seemed to open a window in time. With striking, direct vocals and simple guitar accompaniment, her folk songs are not so much lullabies as they are imbued with the same loving focus a mother adopts while singing to a child. Immediately dubbed “a modern folk masterpiece” by [\*Fader\*](#) and praised as a “future legend” by [\*The New York Times\*](#), Bedouine’s songs channel the mysticism of the ‘60s, always undercut by her utterly modern songwriting.

Expanding into the cheeky sophomore effort [\*Bird Songs Of A Killjoy\*](#) in 2019, Kornejian proved she can craft tracks with versatility and humor as well as perform the gentle and reflective. Repeatedly tapped to support modern folk heroes like Fleet Foxes, Waxahatchee, Kevin Morby, and Father John Misty on tour, witnessing a live performance from Bedouine feels like a sacred thing, a beautiful secret passed among friends. “[She’s] the sort of musician one will later wish to have seen back when,” *The Times* further declared.

After the lockdown in 2020 led to a canceled stint supporting Mandy Moore, Kornejian began working at home in a newly-designated music room, sifting through old demos and one-offs. Unconsciously, at first, she spent the year in isolation readying what would become ***Waysides***, a collection of older material and a cover that she’s playfully dubbed “LP 2.5.” Given that intimate, in-between feeling, the project will be Bedouine’s first self-release, and it summarizes her creative headspace over the last year and a half, tying together many songwriting threads that act as a prologue of sorts. With more time to focus on the other aspects of self-release, Azniv has been fully involved with the entire scope of the project, from production, to marketing, to video editing, and of course, the songwriting, vocals, and instrumentation.

***Waysides*** represents a moment of reflection and reset for an artist who is still very much exploring the full expression of her sound. Slated for release this coming fall, Kornejian remembers the feeling of “*sitting on a mountain of music, a pile of songs*” as part of the inspiration for pursuing a self-release. “*I’ve enjoyed leaning in and demystifying the process a bit,*” she said of releasing an album independently. “*For one reason or another, these songs didn’t make the records, and I don’t think it’s because they’re not good enough. I didn’t want to sweep them under the rug, but I also didn’t want to continue to pick from this reservoir. So I created a space for them. It feels like spring cleaning, letting go to start anew. It already feels like a stepping stone to the next record.*”

In that sense, ***Waysides*** shares DNA with the likes of Tom Waits’ *Orphans*, the lack of connection between the songs is the throughline that holds them together. Sonically though, the album is more akin to the simple layers of vocals and guitar on Adrienne Lenker’s 2020 release *songs*, even if Azniv insists she cultivates more of “*a beginner’s mind*” when it comes to guitar. “*The luxury of time afforded this whole album,*” she explained. “*It feels like going back in time, uncovering little capsules. I don’t think I would ever get to do this if I hadn’t had the time during the pandemic. It was my sliver of silver in all this mess and gave me some purpose.*”

Produced and recorded on her own and with [Gus Seyffert](#) in Filipinotown and Yucca Valley, **Waysides** includes appearances from **Mike Andrews**, who played guitar and mandolin on album standout **“This Machine,”** **Josh Adams** on drums, **Gabriel Noel** on strings for **“I Don’t Need The Light,”** additional instrumentation from Seyffert across the project, and Azniv on piano, organ, vocals, guitar, and drums (solely on “Sonnet 104”). Some of the songs contain splices of old recordings with new sections added and old fuzz removed, though most of the songs were started by Azniv alone, in the new music room. The ensuing project is a patchwork quilt, co-produced by Korkejian and Seyffert, her long-time collaborator, together. The songs are sentimental, yes, but also reflect a certain level of sparseness due to the context of last year’s necessary isolation.

Anchored by the lead single, **“The Wave,”** Bedouine once again reveals her uncanny ability to explore the surreal poetics of grief. On the opposite end of the spectrum, **“It Wasn’t Me”** hints at a rather Shakespearan comedy of errors; this track speaks to the ephemeral nature of intimate connections, all the little mechanisms that have to go right for love to work. **“This Machine”** is a message about perseverance and self-preservation after the dissolution of young love, and in a different vein, **“I Don’t Need The Light”** explores the relief of making peace with depression, rather than engaging in the exhaustive process of fighting it off.

The sole cover, a take on Fleetwood Mac **“Songbird”** is a summary of this past year for Azniv: *“This song represents this past year in a way. Such an abundance of time that I’ve been able to learn different covers, and this was an important song to me around the same time some of these songs were written. It’s taken on a new meaning and seems to bridge then and now.”* The album is a distillation of an artist coming-of-age, grappling with the essential experiences that make a young person grow wiser, and the complicated emotions that most of us have been facing during this global crisis, and even before it began.

Born in Aleppo, Syria into an Armenian family, Korkejian spent time in Saudi Arabia before her family won the green card lottery and moved to the US, living in places as disparate as Massachusetts, Kentucky, and Houston, Texas. Attending the Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia and receiving a BFA in Sound Design, she finally settled in Los Angeles and began to pursue a career as a music editor, working on film and TV projects.

In between her working hours, Azniv began writing songs on guitar, mostly as a leisure activity, until the intermittent jamming turned serious. Armed with live versions of her bare bones songs, she began recording her debut completely on analog tape with her abovementioned frequent collaborator Gus Seyffert. The pair developed a creative relationship that was evident on her first album — even more so after its rapturous reception, and demand for the quick, equally well-received follow-up.

Evoking comparisons to savants like Nick Drake, Vashti Bunyan and Karen Dalton, Bedouine has become synonymous with the best songwriters of the last few decades, an artist revered among her peers whose work is treasured by her fans — and all those who recognize a

precious and rare gift when they hear it. If **Waysides** is clearing space for the next phase of Bedouine's unfolding, then it's a welcome gift... and a sign of things to come.

— Caitlin White, July 2021