



## Paul Brill's Electricana

*Singer-songwriter melds folk  
and electronics on new record*

### **Electronic folk singer**

Photo by Stuart Hawkins

Paul Brill's defining moment did not occur with a guitar in his hand. Instead, in the wake of his San Francisco band SF Envelope's breakup, he found himself in his native New York, working at an East Harlem middle school for at-risk kids.

"I was really burnt-out on playing music, so I ended up doing development work, cooking lunches and teaching," says the soft-spoken singer-songwriter. "It was a transformative time for me. I became interested in social justice and equity for children of color. And after a year working there, the inspiration returned to keep going with my music."

The time away also gave Brill a chance to digest new sounds, as evident by his latest album *New Pagan Love Song*, which blends electronic textures with a folk-rock sound. He dubs it "electricana" -- half electronica, half acoustic Americana. "I was listening to a ton of electronic music," he explains. "I really had a strong desire to completely reinterpret what I was doing. With this album, I did most of it myself with all the electronic gear at home."

Of the new songs -- sung in Brill's gentle, heartfelt voice -- his favorite is "Powerlines." "I was really struggling. I wrote that as a folky, singer-songwriter thing, and I didn't want to do any songs like that on the record. So I decided to throw away the guitar and go for the loops."

Brill's songs are melancholic anthems for the weary and down-and-out. He singles out the title track as the closest to anything upbeat. "It was the starting point for the record," he says. "Images of late fall, an Indian-summer kind of vibe."

Although he's now focused on music, Brill -- who plays a string of California dates starting November 30th -- still volunteers his time in East Harlem as a tutor, even putting in the occasional middle-school performance. "I did some shows with my band, and the kids came and sang and danced with me onstage," he says. "They knew the songs! It was amazing."