

# What happens in the bedroom...

## Singer-songwriter Oren Lavie, fresh off his SXSW Jury Award for best music video, brings us 'Bedroom Crimes'

• By JENNIFER GREENBERG

Oren Lavie's sophomore album, *Bedroom Crimes*, is like dark chocolate: bitter, yet oddly addictive.

From film to music to children's books, Lavie is a jack of all artistic trades — even his natural speaking voice sways to a slow, dreamy compound meter. The Israeli singer-songwriter's extensive cultural palate shines through in his new album, an inspirational tasting menu combining an amuse-bouche of Raymond Carver's minimalism, an appetizer of Lewis Carroll's whimsy, an entrée of Debussy's dreamy melodic tonality and the somber laments of Leonard Cohen for dessert. The show-stopping main course, however, is entirely Lavie.

Finally resettled in Tel Aviv, *The Jerusalem Post* caught up with Grammy-nominated musician, director and published author — who just took the SXSW Jury Award for the 'Second Hand Lovers' music video he directed, impressively beating out rapper-mogul Jay-Z.

### What exactly are "bedroom crimes"?

The crimes are of course emotional crimes. The mere fact that we're separated from each other — that we're not all the same entity — means that we can't always be entirely honest. The truth is not always what's needed from us. Sometimes we need to give love instead; sometimes we need to tell little white lies; sometimes we need to take responsibility over somebody, while sometimes we need them to take responsibility over us. I've decided to call them crimes, because everybody is guilty of these manipulations and the bedroom is where they occur most often — it is the most interesting crime scene.

There is so much storytelling in your long narrative. Would you say that the album is one long narrative divided into chapters, or several independent stories?

I like to look at the songs as these moments that are all happening simultaneously in an imaginary city at a certain twilight universe. The camera might enter the window of one bedroom, spend a couple of minutes there, then travel onto the next.

I'm attracted to things that are slightly larger than life. So I look for moments that are more intense, more cinematic, containing a legend or tale of an enhanced reality. The album is like a film noir where the crime isn't really the issue. It's not about the fact that he's being chased by the police for killing somebody, it's more about human behavior, ego, and what drives us psychologically.

And is this secluded space of the bedroom psychological? Or physical? Safe? Or threatening?

It is the safest, but also the scariest. It is the space where you end each day, the one where you start the next, full of mornings and late nights, it's where you spend time with yourself, and your partners, it's where you could be at your most sincere, and your most insincere. Your entire day leads up to that moment right before you fall asleep. I've tried to capture who we are in that moment in my music.



GRAMMY-NOMINATED musician, director and published author Oren Lavie. (Hannibal Hanschke)

### Are any of these songs autobiographical?

I think when you look at an artist's work, it isn't necessarily about what happened to him, but rather about how he looks at the world in general. The only autobiographical song on this album is the last one, "Note To Self." It contains a series of notes written in the first person and that first person is me. The notes are self-reminders of what to do, what not to do. They stray from the usual bedroom crimes, that take place between two people, but make an impact nonetheless.

Love bleeds through the entire album, though it is more of a tortured love. Does 'Bedroom Crimes' contain any traces of hope?

True, there are more disappointments in relationships here than recipes on how to make them work. Honestly, it's more interesting to paint a picture of universal pain. There's pain in everybody and everything, wherever you go. In the supermarket, for instance, people don't choose the chocolate that they like (because it's too fattening, or too expensive)... everything we do is driven by an emotion. We constantly suffer pain, disappointment and self-criticism. I wished to bring these emotions closer to the surface.

I don't think that my point of view in life is more. I'm a very optimistic person who believes that love is essential. There are difficulties in life. This album is about those. Perhaps the next album might examine the

other side of the coin.

How have you ever been compared to Leonard Cohen? I discovered similarities to "You Want It Darker," especially in the eerie lyrics of "Autopsy Report" and the dark, low vocals of "Note to Self."

I am often compared to Leonard. While I do admire the comparison, I am my own person. I sound the way I do because of my internal rhythm — I take a slow approach to music and life, so singing faster or in a higher pitch is outside of my personality.

Speaking of preserving a consistent voice, "Look At Her Go" really digresses from the album's tone. That synth-pop sparkle comes out of left field and launches us back a few decades.

This song belonged in terms of content, but certainly not in terms of style. I wanted it in anyway, so I tried to find ways to produce it. Eventually, its color, nostalgia and mood fit, but it does feel like a third nipple, there's no doubt about it. What's wrong with a third nipple?

Based on your trilogy of sonatas, I take it that you're classically trained?

I'm not classically trained. In fact, I'm not trained at all. I'm self-taught. I wasn't anal about traditional form in the three sonatas of *Bedroom Crimes*. They act more as a reference to the overall sound; they are



LAVIE'S DIRECTION on the 'Second Hand Lovers' music video garnered him the prestigious SXSW Jury Award. (Courtney)

very piano-driven, and very naked. They became my interpretation of how a sonata might sound if it were written in the modern day. I do love the French classical composers, especially Debussy.

You've got this exquisite cinematic collaboration with Vanessa Paradis in the music video for "Did You Really Say No," not to mention your Grammy-nominated stop-motion short "Her Morning Elegance." When did your passion for directing form?

I've always done both. I studied theater directing in London in my early twenties and I've been writing plays since I was very young. My interests in theater, cinema, and literature were always there, my music simply went public before my other love affairs. Recently, I've published two children's books, and have a third on the way. I plan to do a lot more directing and writing in the near future. Eventually, it's going to be difficult to define me.

It's been 10 whopping years since you released "The Opposite Side of the Sea." How do you feel you've grown in this time?

I think I've naturally matured. For better or worse, we become more of what we are, so I think on the first album, I was younger and in search of a voice. I don't think I've found it here, but I've managed to understand my sound better.

Putting things out in the world for me takes much more time than writing and creating them. Part of maturing is understanding that there is an equally important relationship with the outside world that you need to maintain.

You've performed with puppets on "Jimmy Kimmel Live!"; you've directed films, written books, albums, plays... what can't you do? Whistle? Curl your tongue?

You've listed the things that I can do. I'm terrible at everything else. I'm unorganized and time-optimistic. I think that somewhere between another children's book and my third album my next talent to acquire is time management.

*Bedroom Crimes* is available in most local record stores, including Third Ear.