

BIOGRAPHY · 2026

Love Riot

Baltimore, Maryland.

Love Riot makes indie rock with a folk heart — acoustic and electric woven together, melodically sharp and lyrically poetic, with Lisa Mathews' voice at the center of everything.

THE NINETIES

The band traces back to Beyond Words, a new wave quintet popular around Baltimore and Washington in the 1980s. Lisa Mathews had answered an ad in *The Village Voice*, sold her share of a Manhattan rehearsal studio and moved down from Queens to sing for them. When new wave ran its course, the core of that band — Mathews, guitarist Mikel Gehl and bassist Mark Evanko — brought in Willem Elsevier on violin and mandolin and became Love Riot.

A self-titled cassette came first, built on Elsevier's strings and Mathews' voice. The band entered it in Yamaha's MusicQuest, an international competition with a field of 25,000 bands, won the American round, flew to Japan for the finals and took the grand prize. The winnings went straight into *Muscle*, produced by Eric "Roscoe" Ambel. *Maybe She Will* followed in 1996, again with Ambel — sharper songwriting, a bigger sound, and drummer Ron Campbell newly aboard. Mathews picked up an electric guitar around the same time, and the band's acoustic frame began to carry real weight.

> *"The band has lost none of its magic. They have transformed since their last full-length studio LP, Heaven Can Wait (1999), with an 11-track self-produced LP, Nothing Is Etched In Stone, with 6 new & 5 recorded in 1999 songs. Two eras of Love Riot are represented. The songs aren't simplistic run-throughs; they're well-thought-out thematic pieces. No tedium, no warts & no noise mongers."*
>
> JOHN APICE, AMERICANA HIGHWAYS

Maybe She Will earned national radio play and took the band to the House of Blues in Los Angeles, Exit/In in Nashville, Nightclub 9:30 in Washington, the Bottom Line in New York, SXSW, and Lilith Fair when it reached Maryland. They opened for 10,000 Maniacs, Wilco, Alex Chilton, Marshall Crenshaw, G. Love and Los Straitjackets. Mathews kept everyone in the loop with *Riot Stuff*, a mailed newsletter of road photographs and journal entries.

The placement that mattered most came in 1997, when the band appeared as themselves in the Peabody Award-winning "Subway" episode of NBC's *Homicide: Life on the Street*, busking "Killing Time" in a station. They released the *Killing Time* EP to meet the moment. *Heaven Can Wait* arrived in 1999, louder and more urgent than anything before it. They had begun tracking the follow-up when Mathews learned she was pregnant.

THE LONG DETOUR

Love Riot paused. Mathews' daughter Jesse was born in 2000; Gehl's son arrived not long after. The two started writing for the audience in front of them and formed Milkshake, a rock band for children. It outran every expectation — a Grammy nomination, videos on PBS KIDS and Nick Jr., a run on the Emmy-winning *ToddWorld*, live shows from Maine to Mexico. Twenty-five years went by.

THE RETURN

As their kids grew up, the well for new Milkshake songs ran dry. Mathews spent that stretch digitizing her old catalog and putting it on streaming services. One day, driving with Jesse, she played an old Love Riot track. Jesse said it was great. Mathews joked about getting the band back together. *Mom, I would totally come see you.*

She called Mikel, Mark, Willem and Ron. Every one of them said yes. The reunited band — the original five, no substitutions — played its first show back at Baltimore's Creative Alliance in November 2025, to a sold-out room.

"Rock and roll isn't just kid stuff. It can be brash and boisterous, sure, but it can also be smart, subtle and sophisticated. Like Love Riot."

J.D. CONSIDINE

"If you were around in Baltimore in the 1990s, and you were into indie bands, then you were a fan of Love Riot."

TOM HALL, MIDDAY, WYPR 88.1 FM

Nothing Is Etched In Stone

The album arrived September 25, 2026 on Deck Party Music, the band's first in twenty-six years. Eleven tracks: six written and recorded since the reunion, five cut in 1999 and 2000 and never released. Woven together, you would be hard pressed to say which is which.

The songs run from toxic passion to steady devotion — a rainy night in Fells Point on "Yeah Yeah Yeah," the exhaustion of enabling a flawed lover on "It Happens Every Time," a quiet rage at greed, a friend lost too soon, and on "Count On Me," a plain promise to show up for someone through the worst of it. The band produced it themselves, with David Nachodsky recording at Stages Music Arts. Ambel returned to mix, with Mario Viele, in Brooklyn — closing a circle that opened thirty years ago. Dave Nachodsky, who had been recording these musicians since the Milkshake years, said the strange part was how easily the five of them slipped back into Love Riot after thirty years apart.

As Ambel told Mathews when she filmed him for *Making the Record*:

> *"You don't add extra stuff. You just play what you are, and what the band is… the arrangements are like a movie. When I'm watching a movie, I want the cameras to show me who's talking."*
>
> ERIC "ROSCOE" AMBEL

They marked the release on September 19 with an evening at FPX Events in Baltimore, pairing the premiere of *Making the Record* — a short film by Mathews about the sessions — with a live set, and an opening turn from the musical comedy duo Griefcat. Fall dates followed at Hank Dietle's Tavern, the Burke Centre Fall Fest and the Fells Point Fun Festival.

The band gives a share of proceeds from shows and merchandise to charity, and in December three of the five will appear in Dan Rodricks' play *Baltimore You Have No Idea* at the Baltimore Museum of Art. Not a return to who Love Riot was — a portrait of who they are now.

OUT NOW

Nothing Is Etched In Stone

September 25, 2026

Deck Party Music

Eleven tracks: six new, five from 1999–2000

Produced by Love Riot

Mixed by Eric "Roscoe" Ambel and Mario Viele

PRAISE

“A long, storied history, punctuated by a 26-year hiatus… All this history in music has led the original members of Love Riot back together as if no time had passed at all.”

HANNAH MEANS-SHANNON, GLIDE MAGAZINE

“One of Baltimore’s best bands from the 1990s (and probably ever), is back.”

DAN RODRICKS, BALTIMORE FISHBOWL

“Transcends genre labels. This is every bit as much rock music as it is anything else… limitless passion, impressive artistry, dynamics and depth. Lisa Mathews sounds like no one else.”

CLEVELAND SCENE

“It has that classic Love Riot sound. Love it!”

BOB “THE PAPER GUY,” WTMD

THE ALBUM

THE BAND Lisa Mathews, vocals and guitar · Mikel Gehl, guitar and vocals · Mark Evanko, bass · Willem Elsevier, violin and mandolin · Ron Campbell, drums and vocals

ALBUMS *Love Riot* (1993) · *Muscle* (1995) · *Maybe She Will* (1996) · *Killing Time* EP (1997) · *Heaven Can Wait* (1999) · *Nothing Is Etched In Stone* (2026)

CREDITS Produced by Love Riot · Recorded by David Nachodsky · Mixed by Eric “Roscoe” Ambel and Mario Viele · Mastered by Joe Lambert · Art by Alex Fine

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TRACK LIST

1	Yeah Yeah Yeah	4:23
2	I’m Not You	3:44
3	It Happens Every Time	3:37
4	One of These Days	3:21
5	So Much	3:33
6	Count on Me	3:48
7	Howling at the Moon	3:10
8	When I See You	4:21
9	Better Now	3:41
10	Standing by You	4:35
11	Lost	4:26