

Brennan Gilmore

Brennan Gilmore's life and work resist easy categorization. A musician, diplomat, activist, and outdoorsman, he has spent decades moving between worlds that are often kept separate — Appalachian mountain music and African and Arab musical traditions, rural Virginia and international conflict zones, deep tradition and fearless experimentation. His debut solo album, *My Name Is Daniel Leek*, is the record that merges these worlds together.

Gilmore grew up in Rockbridge County, Virginia, steeped in Appalachian tradition. He co-founded Walker's Run in the late 1990s during a vibrant period for Virginia bluegrass, but made the pivotal decision to join the U.S. Foreign Service rather than pursue music full-time — recognizing, as he later reflected, that he lacked the life experience to write songs of real substance. He would go on to fill those gaps in extraordinary ways.

"His America had begun to inch closer to Daniel Leek's Sudan — and the album holds both of those worlds without flinching."

His diplomatic career took him across war-torn Africa, where music remained a constant companion. In Freetown, Sierra Leone, he played guitar in a West African pop band and helped organize HIV/AIDS prevention tours by Russian helicopter into former rebel-held diamond mining regions. In Tunisia, he formed Kantara with oudist Riadh Fehri — blending Appalachian forms with Tunisian Malouf, performing at The Kennedy Center, and earning a State Department award for cultural diplomacy.

My Name Is Daniel Leek traces back to 2009, when Gilmore was stationed in Jonglei, South Sudan. Walking into a crumbling building sheltering hundreds of refugees, he saw scrawled in chalk on the wall: *My Name Is Daniel Leek*. That declaration — by one Sudanese boy he would never meet — became the conceptual core of the album, its 12 tracks building a fictional biography of Daniel from two decades of stories gathered across the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Sierra Leone.

But the album is ultimately autobiographical too. Returning to the United States after fifteen years abroad, Gilmore found a country in upheaval — and found himself in Charlottesville on the day of the Unite the Right rally, recording a deadly attack on counter-protestors before becoming the subject of far-right conspiracy theories. The conflict — and the borders between left and right, digital and real, races and nations — wove its way into his writing. His America had begun to inch closer to Daniel Leek's Sudan.

Recorded at the Galax, Virginia home of singer-songwriter Dori Freeman and co-produced with Nick Falk (Caamp), the album features fiddler Nate Leath, singer Davina Jackson, keyboardist Bryan Holmes, saxophonist and horn arranger Charles Owens, and Steve Hoke. *My Name Is Daniel Leek* stands as a culmination of these efforts: a richly layered, deeply personal project that challenges listeners to reconsider how they understand identity, conflict, and connection.

SINGLES

"New Sudan" — May 15, 2026

"Why There's Something Rather than Nothing" —

June 19, 2026

BIO AUTHOR

Jon Lohman

State Folklorist (emeritus), VA



DEBUT SOLO ALBUM · JULY 17, 2026

My Name Is Daniel Leek

BASED IN
Charlottesville, Virginia

PUBLICITY
Team Clermont

PUBLISHING
BMI

LABEL
Concordia Discors Recordings

SYNC / BOOKING
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