REVIEW · BLUES

Don't Ever Let Nobody Drag Your Spirit Down | Eric Bibb

Pain can scratch and dig. It does not have to hold the pen that writes the ending.

SJB SELECTION · NOVEMBER 2026

The chorus comes back like a footstep on the floorboards: **thump, thump**, steady and faithful. It sounds a century old, yet Eric Bibb sings it in the present tense. Pain can scratch, dig, leave bruises; but it does not have to hold the pen that writes the ending. The title line is a barrier, **thin, firm, quiet, stubborn and bright**, like a guardrail on the edge of an uphill road: it lets the wound through, but never hands over the keys.

Bibb grew up in Greenwich Village, in a house where music and civic commitment walked the same streets. His father, Leon Bibb, was a singer and an activist; around him moved the voices of the folk scene and the civil rights movement. As a boy, Eric talked guitar with Bob Dylan and got one piece of advice: keep it simple. There is no need to credit that meeting with the birth of the song. It is enough to

remember the lesson while listening: a few words, well planted, can carry the weight of an entire story, like sturdy beams under an old roof.

Written with Charlotte Höglund, *Don't Ever Let Nobody Drag Your Spirit Down* first appeared on *Good Stuff*, recorded in 1997. Double bass, low kalimba, slide, banjo-mandolin and harmonica weave together like wood, metal and strings in a small sound workshop. In 2001 Bibb returned to it on *Painting Signs*: Wilson Pickett took a central vocal role and the song opened up towards gospel. There is also a later version with Rory Block and Maria Muldaur.

It needs no dazzling solo to work. The line is **simple, resonant, memorable, communal and immediate**: a thread anyone can pick up and pass to the person next to them. The song does not erase what can knock a person down; it sets a limit on what that pain gets to decide in their place. Dignity stays there, like a flame sheltered from the wind: it flickers, but it does not give in.

> ***How much does it weigh to grow up in a house where music and civil rights speak the same language, when you decide to tell the story of pain without letting it write your voice?***

LISTEN

***Don't Ever Let Nobody Drag Your Spirit Down* — Eric Bibb — is in our playlist Acoustic Blues, Roots & Dust.**

Eric Bibb. Updated every Friday. Selected by ear.

LISTEN FIRST. SELECT SECOND.