

# WILLIE NILE

## STREETS OF NEW YORK

The critically acclaimed new album from the legendary singer/songwriter in stores

February 21, 2006



WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT STREETS OF NEW YORK

"★★★★★... a platter for the ages."

UNCUT

"This record is a head-twister and heart-wrencher. It's rock and roll at its best. It's New York at its best. And there's nothing better than that."

JAY COCKS

"A great album!"

BONO

"Willie Nile continues to live somewhere below the radar, crafting his songs from street-level observations and the leanings of his heart. *Streets of New York* may even be his best record yet!"

JIM JARMUSCH

WWW.WILLIENILE.COM  
WWW.2MINUTES59.COM

00:02:59

# WILDERS

## Smashing success

### KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

FALLING OUT of love with old-time music broke Ike Sheldon's heart. It was like falling out of love with a person, and he can't listen to bands like the Skillet Lickers anymore. "But," he says, "we'll always be friends."

Sheldon's failed relationship with recordings makes some sense. As guitarist and lead singer for the Wilders, he still loves to pound out old-time music live, and being onstage is core to the band's craft. They've never relied on recordings to produce their career. In fact, it's hard to imagine the Wilders in a studio setting, although they're releasing their fourth album, *Throw Down*, in April.

Live, the Wilders cluster around a single mike and croon through Hank, Lefty and Acuff songs. They stomp and they headbang while Betse Ellis tears through old-time fiddle tunes. "There's still danger of injury at every show," says mandolin, dobro and banjo player Phil Wade, whose right eye lives near Ellis' bow.

The quartet has worked to brand both ends of the country spectrum — from riotous honky-tonk to wrenching gospel — with their own intensity. It's the tradition of entertaining that's most important to the Wilders, and their slim western suits, cowboy hats and retro dresses are all part of the job. In 1996, Sheldon, Ellis and Wade came together to start playing old-time. Today, they remember it as a bunch of people doing shit they didn't know anything about. But, Sheldon remarks, "We're lucky [this music] moved us all at the same time."

The three decided to get serious and find a bass player. Nate Gawron lived across the street from Ellis, and he'd just gotten an old upright from his grandpa.

The Wilders credit two communities with raising them up right in their beloved Kansas City. First, there's Rural Grit, a group of musicians who run an acoustic music happy hour in a local bar. Rural Grit Records is also the Wilders' label.

The Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas, is the other community. The Wilders got their first big break there in 1999, when they got a main stage slot

after performances on the campground's Stage 5.

In 2004, Wade did a brave thing: He quit his real job. The Wilders did a test-run tour to the southwest in July with no AC in their RV. They made it out alive and decided to scrap their "weekend warrior" status for full-time. The move has elevated the band's level of instrumental chemistry.

*Throw Down*, produced by Dirk Powell, is the Wilders' first venture into recording original material, and it initially challenged their seasoned nerves. But their own songs fit snugly between covers of Hank Williams' "The Blues Come Around", Johnny Cash's "Belshazzar", and the traditional "Squirrel Hunters".

Ellis' "Goat Creek" was inspired by



The Wilders.

Art Stamper and written to sound like Kentucky. Gawron's anthem "Honky Tonk Habit" fulfills its rowdy title. "It'll Never be Thru With Us", by Sheldon, is a fast-rambling lament that emphasizes the Wilders' pounding rhythm. Wade's "Together Apart" is a labored waltz about loving or leaving.

"Levee", written by Sheldon and Wade about Kansas City's flood of 1993, taps the old-time tradition of fusing happy sounds with tragedy. After Hurricane Katrina, the song's lyrics — "Watch that old black water start to climb/And when it's rising you won't have much time...when the levee is gone" — gained new meaning. They eventually wrote a slower ending for live performances.

In the last two years, the Wilders' road schedule has been gaining mileage. This year they toured with the Foghorn Stringband, and they'll be back at Merlefest and Rockygrass. In August, they'll head to Ireland and Scotland.

Meanwhile, Sheldon's musical vision for the band remains clear: "I just want the Wilders to keep smashing stuff."

— KATY JUNE-FRIESEN