



dBpm

RECORDS

wilco

THE WHOLE LOVE BIO

After seven studio albums, various collaborations and countless days on the road over the past 15 years, Wilco tried something new before starting work on its eighth record, *The Whole Love*, due Sept. 27 on dBpm Records: The Chicago band took a vacation. Staying off stage for most of the latter half of 2010 was the longest break from touring that bandleader Jeff Tweedy has had in a career stretching back more than 20 years.

“It was a real breath of fresh air,” says Tweedy, the singer, songwriter and guitarist who founded the group in the mid-’90s. “Wilco has pretty much been recording in between scheduled tours for 15 years or more, so it was really great to have a chance to recharge and forget how to play all the old songs.”

Or, more specifically, to put the old songs out of mind long enough to write some new ones. Although he wasn’t out on the road much, Tweedy was working, writing so many songs that the musicians initially thought they had enough material for two new records when Wilco reconvened last fall in the Loft, the group’s Chicago recording studio.

“We entertained the idea of finishing both of those records independently of each other, and then at some point, the lines started getting blurrier and blurrier and they kind of grew together,” Tweedy says.

The result is 12 stunning songs that showcase Wilco in a new light, on bold rockers, somber acoustic ballads and punchy pop songs, bookended by the propulsive 7-minute opener “Art of Almost,” and a meditative 12-minute closing track, “One Sunday Morning (song for Jane Smiley’s boyfriend).”

The Whole Love is the third album by Wilco’s present lineup, which solidified in 2004 when avant-garde guitarist Nels Cline and guitarist/keyboardist Patrick Sansone joined Tweedy, founding bassist John Stirratt, drummer Glenn Kotche and keyboardist Mikael Jorgensen. Together, they released the acclaimed *Sky Blue Sky* in 2007 and the Grammy-nominated *Wilco (The Album)* in 2009. *The Whole Love*, though, captures the vibrant energy the band brings to its live performances.

“This record happened because we’ve been together longer,” Tweedy says. “Because we’ve played more shows together, because we have a lot more faith and trust in each other, and it sounds more natural than the last two. You just can’t fake that, you can’t make that happen, it’s experience.”

Experience also pushed Tweedy further as a lyricist, something he credits to letting his mind wander away from the band’s extensive back catalog while writing new songs.

“I feel really good about the way the songs have all come together, and the lyrics especially,” he says. “I don’t feel like I’m repeating myself, which is the best I think you can hope for after writing, I don’t know, a couple thousand songs.”

Tweedy produced *The Whole Love* with Sansone and Tom Schick (Rufus Wainwright, Norah Jones, Ryan Adams). The singer describes a deeply collaborative process as the musicians worked together to shape Tweedy’s songs into reflections of their considerable talents.

“There’s just a lot of patience involved in how we’re able to work together as a band of guys who have been in bands for a long time and have made a lot of records,” Tweedy says. “I think we’re very fortunate to be relatively mature as a rock band in our ability to be patient with each other and with the songs themselves.”

Patient, but not *too* patient.

“The environment of the band is as much conducive to people feeling invested and having their ideas entertained as you can have in a band without just spending the rest of your life micromanaging every little decision by committee,” Tweedy says. “We’d still be working on *A.M.* if that was the way it worked. We’re talking about a fucking three-chord pop song: Just finish it, you asshole. Christ.”

The Whole Love is the first album Wilco is releasing on its own dBpm Records, which the band founded earlier this year with headquarters in Easthampton, MA. Anti- distributes dBpm, which debuted the first single from the album, "I Might," b/w a droll cover of Nick Lowe's "I Love My Label," in June at the second-annual Wilco-curated Solid Sound Festival at MASS MoCA (the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art) in western Massachusetts.

The new album is the latest step in the ongoing evolution of Wilco, which Tweedy founded in 1994 after the dissolution of his previous group, alt-country standard-bearers Uncle Tupelo. From its raucous roots-rock origins, Wilco over the years has expanded its sound to encompass classic pop and genre-spanning experimentalism. Wilco also teamed with English singer Billy Bragg in the late '90s at the invitation of Woody Guthrie's daughter, who invited them to collaborate on setting to music some of the folk icon's previously unrecorded lyrics, resulting in a pair of highly regarded *Mermaid Avenue* albums.

Although Wilco has accrued critical acclaim from the start, the band in the '90s increasingly found itself at odds with its record company, Reprise. Wilco proved willing to compromise on 1999's *Summerteeth*, but the relationship fell apart in 2001, when the label declined to release *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* and dropped the band. Nonesuch stepped in to release *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* the following year, and the album has since become Wilco's top-selling effort so far. (The making of *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* is the subject of Sam Jones' 2002 film *I Am Trying to Break Your Heart*.) Wilco recorded three subsequent albums for Nonesuch, including 2005's Grammy-winning *A Ghost is Born*, before the band decided to start its own record company.

Though dBpm (which stands for "decibels per minute") has changed the business end of the band's operation, the creative end remains largely untouched.

Since *Summerteeth*, "We've gone back and gone about things almost exactly the same way every time, and that is, at the end of the day, we want a record we're really proud to put on our shelves and know that we did the best that we could do," Tweedy says. He laughs and adds, "And fuck 'em. Now it's the same thing, except there's really no one to say 'fuck 'em' to. Just ourselves."

In addition to launching Solid Sound and dBpm with Wilco, Tweedy also produced Mavis Staples' Grammy-winning 2010 album *You Are Not Alone*. Outside Wilco, Stirratt and Sansone lead folk-pop group The Autumn Defense, Cline fronts the free-jazz instrumental group The Nels Cline Singers, Jorgensen helms pop-rock band Pronto and Kotche performs solo, in the duo On Fillmore, and has collaborated with Tweedy in Loose Fur.

Wilco will spend most of the autumn on tour, and audiences will get to fall in love with songs from *The Whole Love* starting Sept. 13 in Indianapolis and continuing with a European jaunt that begins Oct. 24 in Glasgow.

“We’re all really excited and really proud of it and really happy with the way it came together,” Tweedy says. “I think everybody in the band feels like they were given more free rein to do what they want to do. I think everybody enjoyed the process of making this record.”

Wilco are:

Jeff Tweedy – guitars, vocals; John Stirratt – bass, vocals; Glenn Kotche – drums, percussion; Nels Cline – guitars; Patrick Sansone – guitars, keyboards, vocals; Mikael Jorgensen – keyboards, vocals

Wilco discography:

AM (1995)

Being There (1996)

Mermaid Avenue (1998)

Summerteeth (1999)

Mermaid Avenue Vol. II (2000)

Yankee Hotel Foxtrot (2002)

A Ghost Is Born (2004)

Kicking Television: Live in Chicago (2005)

Sky Blue Sky (2007)

Wilco (The Album) (2009)

The Whole Love (2011)