

Webb Wilder: Rockin' with a twang IN CONCERT

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Webb Wilder, who is lead singer of the band by the same name, admits having a "hang dog" attitude about being from Hattiesburg, Miss. But a bit of trivia got the tail wagging.

"I found out one of the earliest records ever recorded was by the Graves Brothers in Hattiesburg, which is my hometown," said Wilder, whose drawl reflects his roots. "Growing up, I thought all rock-and-roll came from England or something."

Shucks, one Tupelo, Miss., native could have told him about the state's rock-and-roll roots, if he were still alive. Isn't that right, Elvis?

So with a Southern twang and a Stealth Bomber of a sound, meet Mississippi's next musical export. Webb Wilder and his group has emerged as one of the top up-and-coming rock-and-roll bands in the region and is ready to take on the nation.

Webb Wilder is set to go on tour—which will stop Saturday in Detroit at Saint Andrew's Hall—in support of its new album on Island Records, "Hybrid Vigor."

The sound is unusual. No, scratch that. How about indescribable. Nonetheless, it has stopped those in music circles from taking a crack.

"Interplanetary southern roots-rock," "sci-fi psycho-rockability," "swampadelic uneasy listening," and "VFW metal" are a few of the descriptions thrown around.

THE MAN who would know best isn't talking. All Webb Wilder will say is, "There is rock and then there's the rock and roll."

Obviously subscribing to the latter, Webb Wilder definitely pays homage to its roots on "Hybrid Vigor." Though the term roots rocker has al-



The sounds of Webb Wilder have been described as everything from "interplanetary southern roots-rock" to "sci-fi psycho-rockability."

most become a dirty word in music circles with seemingly every British boyo suddenly wearing cowboy hats and following the path of tumbleweeds.

"There's nothing wrong with having roots," Wilder said. "Just being original for originality's sake doesn't always produce the best music either."

Webb Wilder has found the best way to make good music is to listen to plenty of it. Wilder himself said he checks out a wide variety of the new bands.

As a result, Webb Wilder is encompassing new influences all the time. His band's music is better for it.

"Hybrid Vigor" is the first major

label release for Webb Wilder. The group released, "It Came from Nashville," (Independent) in 1987. The problem was that most of the material was recorded in 1985.

"That's what I like about this album: It was recorded in 1989 and was released in 1989," Wilder said.

THAT WAS made possible after Kevin Patrick, director of arts and repertoire for Island Records caught Webb Wilder's act at the New Music Seminar in New York. The band had already garnered a reputation for tearing up the Nashville club scene.

The band formed in 1984 when Wilder, R.S. Field (since replaced by

drummer Les James), guitarist Donny Roberts and Cletus Wollesnak got together to rehearse. The foursome released a short black and white film, "Webb Wilder, Private Eye," which was featured regularly on USA Network's "Night Flight" series.

Band members hail from such places as Arizona and Texas. Wilder being from Mississippi brings "a certain attitude and sound" to the group.

And that's nothing to howl at.

Webb Wilder will perform on Saturday, Sept. 16, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 430 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

The No Right No Wrong way of music

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

With No Right No Wrong, there's a right way and a wrong way.

After nearly four years, the band's founding duo, Erik Ne'Briar and Adam Lacea, finally know the difference. Like, for instance, when it comes to songwriting.

"We wrote songs for other people instead of ourselves," said Lacea, formerly of Westland. "People would tell us, 'Your music is too weird for you to get signed by a record label. You need more dance oriented tunes.'"

Phooey, they said.

The group also followed the No. 1 rock'n'roll rule that said a band should be a four-piece and have a guitarist for awhile.

Bunk, they said.

This is a band that has rebelled against the format, told the naysayers to eat guitar string. No Right No Wrong forces along with three members, a drummer, a keyboard player and a bass player.

THE END RESULT is a dandy cassette tape, "Steroids," which is an airtight blast of Novi new wave. The tape features various works, such as an artist rap "Pushing Harder" and an elegant piano solo "Mannequin from Paris."

Also, there's a sonic keyboard sound that is danceable but not derivative. There's humor, sarcasm.



No Right No Wrong hit the mark, but not without a few misfires.

The band was a four-piece, performing in obscurity for three years. Then, last spring, the guitarist left.

In the search for a new one, Lacea and Ne'Briar came up with the idea of being only a three-piece band.

Yeah, they said.

With a classically trained pianist on keyboards, Tim Knapp, No Right No Wrong was able to create their own whacked-out sound. B-52s could be used as a reference point, but the stuff is original.

"The funniest thing is that people will come up to us and say we remind them of their favorite band," said Lacea, who is lead vocalist and bass player. "We hear so many different bands being mentioned and we think that's great."

"I guess when someone said we sound like L.L. Cool J, we'll give it up," Ne'Briar said.

No Right No Wrong is making a name for itself despite the breaking the first rule of rock and roll by being a three-man band without a guitarist.

Few bands would come up with a song about steroids, at least not looking at the issue the way No Right No Wrong does.

AGAINST THE backdrop of a space-age beat, the tale is one of a person consumed by the muscle-enhancing drug. Lacea said he wrote it as sort of a Shakespearean poem, reflecting stories Ne'Briar told him about weight rooms.

"What we're poking fun at is that it's a humorous thing in the media like marijuana was 10 years ago when all these reports came out... and then it just died out," said Ne'Briar, who lives in Farmington Hills.

No Right No Wrong also possesses a lyrical wit, something that's often lacking bands locally seem to lack. All three contribute to the writing of songs, some like those in "I Need a Brain," which appears to be about a

night well-spent at a frat party: "I told one friend well, maybe two and all of us together have no IQ/Well we went downstairs and stood by the keg/then we went upstairs and stood by the other keg."

OK, it's not exactly John Milton, but it's winning. No Right No Wrong an audience on college campuses. Recently, the group opened for the Romantics before 5,000 students at Purdue University and has performed at Rick's in Ann Arbor and in East Lansing.

All three members are in various states of academic life. Ne'Briar attended Eastern Michigan University; Lacea is a junior at the University of Michigan and Knapp is a junior at EMU.

No Right No Wrong has played Detroit area clubs, such as The Ritz and the Hamtramck Pub. The group plans to expand its tour itinerary, especially with the release of "Steroids."

THE FIRST-RATE production quality of the tape is not a fluke. Ne'Briar has his own 8-track recording studio, Casa de Verde Studios in Novi, giving the band an advantage over most groups.

Despite the new wave sound, the group doesn't use any drum machines or computerized beats in the studio. The three members just wall away.

And it's the three members who make No Right No Wrong click.

COMMANDER CODY
Commander Cody will perform Friday, Sept. 15, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

BENEFIT
Chaos Clothing will present a benefit for the Anti-Cruelty Association of Michigan starting at 9 p.m. Friday, Sept. 15, at Todd's, Seven Mile Road, two blocks east of Van Dyke, Detroit. Those performing include Scott Campbell, Orange Roughies, Fuller, Gangster Fun, Nemesis, Son of Sam, Coven and Grievance Committee. Admission is \$5 at EMU.

COUNTRY
Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on WWW-FM.

1. "Wonder What You Think of Me," Keith Whitley.
2. "Heaven Only Knows," Emmylou Harris.
3. "Above & Beyond," Rodney Crowell.
4. "Nothing I Could Do About It," Willie Nelson.
5. "One Good Well," Don Williams.
6. "Honky Tonk Heart," Highway 101.
7. "Are You Ever Gonna Love Me," Holly Dunn.
8. "Sunday in the South," Shennadoah.
9. "You'll Never Be Sorry," The Bellamy Brothers.
10. "Never Givin' Up on Love," Michael Martin Murphey.

FIRST LIGHT
First Light will perform Friday and Saturday, Sept. 15-16, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

BIG CHIEF
Big Chief will perform with guest, Memories of Tomorrow, Saturday, Sept. 16, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

JOE JACKSON
Joe Jackson will perform at 8 p.m. Monday, Sept. 18, at Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor. For information, call 763-TRKS.

LOCAL
Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4-5 p.m. Sundays (repeated 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays) on WDTN-FM 90.3.

1. "Watch Me Bleed," Son of Sam.
2. "Slowdown," Idles.
3. "Touch," Allison's Ghost.
4. "What the Water Gave Me," Nemesis.
5. "Big White Hog," Rubber.
6. "Steroids," No Right No Wrong.
7. "The Edge," Civilians.
8. "Load, Hard and Fast," Gear.
9. "Little World," Dancing Smoothies.
10. "After Death Experience," Idles.

REVIEWS

STEEL WHEELS — Rolling Stones

The new Rolling Stones album "Steel Wheels" is OK. But it's nowhere near as inspired as their best stuff.

Side one opens with two catchy rockers, "Sad, Sad, Sad" and "Mixed Emotions," the first single from the album.

The chorus of "Mixed Emotions" is one of the album's high points, as Jagger and Richards' soaring harmony settles on a sustained note as the chorus chugs along.

But the melody on the verses is a standout on "Take It So Hard," a luscious song from Keith Richards' solo album.

Then there's "Blinded by Love," one of the album's best-ever songs, with lots of acoustic guitar and an elegant three-part harmony.

Unfortunately, Mick Jagger delivers some choppy, emotionless singing on this number, when heart-felt notes are called for.



SEMINAL LIVE — The Fall

Mark E. Smith. The self-proclaimed king of anti-pop. The vehicle of expression for his brand of lunacy/music is a band called The Fall.

The Fall must be one of the longest surviving bands with a single dedication to abusing commerciality. They live in that rarified stratosphere of cult bands like Pere Ubu or Captain Beefheart, whose dedication to their beliefs earns them enough respect from (smaller) record companies and from sufficient record buyers to afford them the luxury of continuing.

They reward those fans, not only with the quality of their releases but also the quantity. They have been most prolific, releasing at least one LP and two singles every year since their inception in 1976. They are also one of the most exciting bands to see live.

Therein lies one of the attractions of "Seminal Live." This has five new



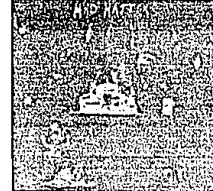
SHUT UP & SIT DOWN — Mad Hatter

As far as heavy metal goes (which, of course, is in the ear of the beholder), Mad Hatter is certainly no worse than any other head banging outfit reaping millions.

To some, that might not be saying much. But let it be said this local group certainly has the guitar riffs and the grit to put any glam rockers on their butt. The package is well produced, crisp and clean sounding.

Which is important. Otherwise, we would be able to hear the typical suburban teenager argot ("hey dude") with a few four-lettered words that are thrown in for good measure (Tipper Gore would be in a tizzy after a listen, not to mention glancing at the cover).

That aside, Mad Hatter at least displays a willingness to deviate from the power riff once in awhile. The Beastly Boy-like rap is the highlight on "Get Bent" as is the



"Fast Times at Ridgemont High-esque" dialogue on "Bad Luck," not to mention, the fine piece of Spanish guitar on "Canadian Club Love."

Those who like their metal loud while there's plenty of that here, too. "Nothing I Could Do About It," "Too Hot to Lick" fall into the guitar gone category.

Mad Hatter could do more to shake the formula that many a metal band seems to be taking. You know, just ear drums for 95 percent of the album and then pull at the heartstrings with one slowed down love song. (At least that's what we think "Canadian Club Love" sounds like).

That might be asking a bit much, though. But at least Mad Hatter tries.

— Larry O'Connor