

# ...MORE ENTERTAINMENT

## Wilcox riding the musical crest

by Chris Herodek

On stage David Wilcox, radiates a highly contagious energy one simply does not find in most performers. From the beginning of the performance through to his "Hypnotizin' Boogie," a contact-high runs rampant between musician and audience, and David's pure clean slide guitar lines feed this communicative medium beautifully. His band, bassist and drummer, support him exceptionally well, but Wilcox is truly the center of a peak musical experience.

In the mid-seventies, he was somewhat of a cult figure, immensely popular in Toronto bars and in an assortment of other Eastern cities. At that time one would have recognized Wilcox as a wild-eyed rendition of Salvador Dali, with a waxed mustache and long curly hair flowing over his shoulders. But today, at 37, and still very much the wild-eyed performer, David Wilcox is completely severed from his cult status, and, as the following interview would suggest, he is riding on the crest of many years of musical experience.

**Gateway:** How do you know when you've had a good night — on stage, that is?

**Wilcox:** I never know really, because my perspectives are different. I have had nights where I've played what I thought was fabulous and friends who I've respected thought I stunk. And there were nights when I've thought I was really excellent, and I was better than ever. So I can't judge myself. I have my own feelings about it and it's a very deep intuitive thing.

**Gateway:** Could you tell me about what you have done since your last album (*Bad Reputation*)?

**Wilcox:** Just basically playing music, trying to learn, hanging out, you know, just trying to go deeper. I am going to England, not to perform or appear, but to record. My producer lives in England now and she said "come on over and cut a couple of things." We get to record material. I listen to their suggestions, but it's all our own.

**Gateway:** How strongly do you feel about increasing your exposure in the U.S.?

**Wilcox:** I like to get exposure in the U.S., Canada and everywhere, but it's the people who are important. Music is more important



David Wilcox: the centre of a peak of musical experience.

to me than countries. Countries come and go; music and people don't. And I'm not saying that in any unpatriotic sense. I'm very thankful that I was born in Canada.

**Gateway:** Your music is always changing and evolving. While never knowing what it would be until it happened, at what point in your musical career did you find within you the image you had always aspired to obtain?

**Wilcox:** It's an on-going thing because everybody has days when they have some questions or they feel, perhaps, depressed or down. And everybody, hopefully, has some days when they feel really amazing. There are people who tragically go to the more depressed extreme and they are depressed most of the time. I go up and down inside so I can't really point to a particular time. Sometimes I feel that it's flowing through me and I feel real good and positive about it, and other times it won't happen that way. It's part of the growing process which doesn't allow me to be stagnant.

**Gateway:** In a lot of ways growing and changing inside and out is true to so many musicians, such as David Bowie and Joni Mitchell.

**Wilcox:** Fabulous! Because I've changed my image once. I had a very different image back about eight years ago, around the time when I was with the Teddy Bears. I had a moustache and a suit. I did different material. It was my own thing but it was very much a particular image, what some people might call a cult form. And when I changed it I had a terrible time. I lost thousands of dollars because of a fire. I had stuff thrown at me and the audience hated me because I had changed. For David Bowie to change as many times as he has is an incredible demonstration of inner courage.

**Gateway:** Do you foresee any significant changes coming along your way that would alter in some way your approach to making music?

**Wilcox:** I can't predict what I'm going to do or I'd be doing it now, but I'm always search-

ing and looking for things that might add to my experience musically.

**Gateway:** Early styles of jazz, ragtime, blues, '50s and '60s rock and roll are styles that you admire the most. Do you feel your music is in any way a continuation of these influences?

**Wilcox:** Not in terms of style anyway. To have a career as a musician I have to put my music in some kind of format that people can relate to. I don't think in terms of style. I studied everything I could, that I could learn from, and I don't think in terms of categories. So anything can affect me. A feeling is at the bottom of it; not a style.

**Gateway:** Is there any music today that you simply cannot tolerate?

**Wilcox:** Well, the same music I can't tolerate today is no different from the music I couldn't tolerate in the past, whether it be back when the flower-power thing was big or disco. It's music that makes me feel like it's apathetic, where the musicians aren't caring or trying.

**Gateway:** Or being themselves?

**Wilcox:** Ya — imitating other performers too much, for the sake of slavery or to have a hit. But the thing is, that's not just now, it's any period of music. If I don't feel a buzz from it, then I don't like it — but I try not to think in terms of good or bad music. I try to think in terms of what I like and don't like.

**Gateway:** What music today do you see as promising or what do you enjoy listening to?

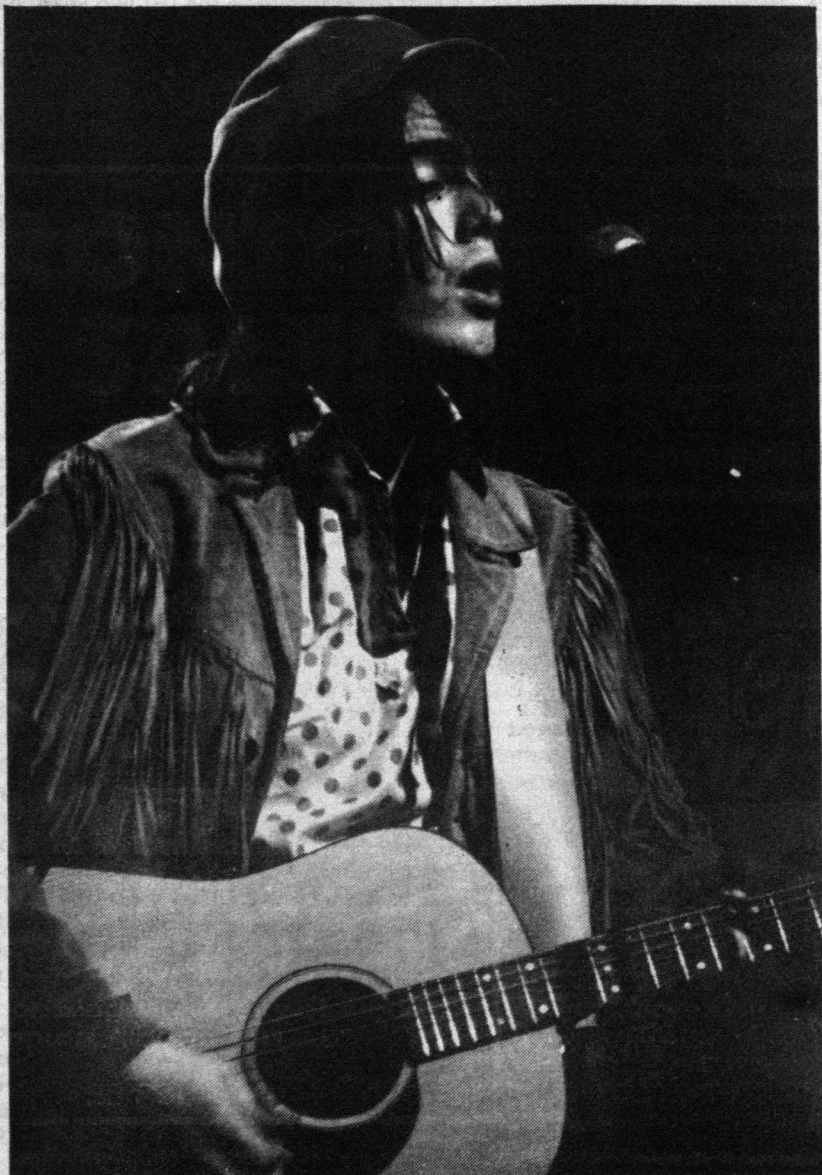
**Wilcox:** I can't say that, but I know what I like. I like the Eurythmics, Tangerine Dream, ZZ Top, George Jones, Joan Armatrading. After that, I like individual records.

**Gateway:** Tell me more about your "Riverboat Fantasy"?

**Wilcox:** Life is to be enjoyed and Riverboat fantasy is about being on a riverboat cruise. In the 1890s, you could actually take a six-week return cruise up the Mississippi River from New Orleans to Davenport with a great unrecorded jazz band in the lounge, some flower tops, and a beautiful woman. But it's a deeper song than that.

**Gateway:** So just how bad is your reputation?

**Wilcox:** That depends. Whatcha got?



Mike Sinatra (left), of both Dusty Chaps and Jr. Gone Wild, played before Los Lobos on Thursday night in SUB Theatre. On Friday night, Johnny Winter (below) starred in SUB Theatre while Jim Gray (right) and Darkroom rocked Dinwoodie.

Photos by Bill St. John

