

ARTS

Gonzo guitarist takes music to the edge



photo Zane Harker

The tube coiling into the back of David Wilcox' head contains a volatile mixture of Heineken and Jack Daniels.

David Wilcox
Dinwoodie, Nov. 5

Review by Jack Vermeer

The man is a *crazy* person, playing the devil's music as Satan himself, if only he could strum the guitar. "The Man" is David Wilcox and he brought his own particular brand of dementia to Dinwoodie this past Saturday evening.

The usual laudatory adjectives and descriptive phrases (of the "it has a good beat and you can dance to it" ilk) just can't come close to describing Wilcox's performance and the feelings it generated. Perhaps "completely infucking-credibly gonzo" will serve to give you an idea of what he was like. (Invoking the spirit of the great gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson I particularly find appropriate because what Thompson is to reporting, Wilcox is to live performing. Both share an on-the-edge, ready-to-plunge-into-the-abyss craziness that gives their art both a sense of humour and sense of desperate urgency. Oops, I digress)

Although both of Wilcox's studio discs are fine albums (his first *Out of the Woods* especially so), his metier is definitely live performing. From the moment he stepped on stage, rolled his Marty Feldman-like eyes, and banged out his first fat tune, this clownprince of blues, rhythm and blues and rock roll had a very appreciative crowd thrashing around the Dinwoodie dance floor. Playing nearly all the songs from his two albums, some new tunes and a few tunes that revealed his roots ("Louie-Louie", "Wild Thing" and "Boney Maroney") Wilcox converted even the most jaded of listeners to his combination of wit, wild spasmodic guitar breaks, drugs, alcohol and women. The result was a wonderful time had by all and an unusually large revenue from the liquor sales.

Wilcox, one of the few guitar players with a truly unique playing style, banged, shook, stroked, slapped, caressed and coaxed his Telecaster guitar into producing some incredibly beefy un-Telecaster-like sounds. It was played hard and it was played loud (as it should be of course). The ringing in my ears was a small price to pay for a rare get-your-money's-worth night. If he comes back do not miss him because methinks the self-destructive habits he sings about are not at all foreign to him. (As he says, ironically, in the chorus of one of his songs, "Ya, I know, I'm too cool.") Let's hope he doesn't become another case-study of the "self-destructive artist as romantic hero" syndrome.

Opening for Wilcox was a local reggae group called Krucial Steppers. They provided the crowd with forty-five minutes of cover tunes and originals including a highly danceable, early-English Beat sounding ska tune. Despite some technical problems, a bad vocal mix, and a few missed vocals they turned in an enjoyable performance. Unfortunately for them, the crowd was not that appreciative, finding their laid-back reggae sound too mellow.



photo Zane Harker

David Wilcox

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