

HOPE & GLORY

Ann Wilson

Hope & Glory – Ann Wilson’s first solo album ever -- is a singularly powerful and altogether timely song cycle that speaks eloquently to our troubled times.

The world has long known Heart’s Ann Wilson as one of the greatest and most enduring vocalists of her generation. Yet on her ultimately hopeful and glorious solo debut for Rounder/Zoe records to be released on September 11, 2007, Wilson is likely to stun even her lifelong fans with what could fairly be called the mother of all covers album.

On *Hope & Glory*, Wilson manages to reinterpret and reinvent some of the greatest songs of the past forty years that powerfully and poignantly reflect the here and now, including classics from the Sixties (Bob Dylan’s “A Hard Rain’s Gonna Fall,” Creedence Clearwater Revival’s “Bad Moon Rising,” The Animals’ “We’ve Gotta Get Out Of This Place” and The Youngbloods’ “Get Together”), and Seventies (Led Zeppelin’s “Immigrant Song,” John Lennon’s “Isolation” and Elton John’s “Where To Now, St. Peter”) to gems of a more recent vintage like “War Of Man” by Neil Young and “Jackson” by Lucinda Williams. *Hope & Glory* concludes with one heartbreakingly moving new song written by Ann herself, “Little Problems, Little Lies,” yet one listen to the album demonstrates that Wilson has made each of the songs here very much her own and utterly relevant to our world today.

“Just about every single song for me was a complete thrill for me to sing because at some point I was a kid out there loving them, or a young adult loving them, or in a few cases a grown up loving them,” Wilson explains. As for the powerful ways the songs on *Hope & Glory* resonate with current events, Wilson says, “The thing is I’ve been itching to make some sort of comment about our times, but I didn’t want to do it in a way that was really abrasive and just shouting for the sake of shouting. I wanted to bring people some of the most beautiful poetry from different eras when they were facing a similar predicament and apply it to now.”

The thematic way that *Hope & Glory* addresses matters of war and peaces gives the album a coherence and passion missing from the vast majority of cover albums. “Most people don’t really succeed with covers albums because they just try and redo the songs,” says Wilson. “I was so lucky to work with Ben Mink because he would never just do that or settle for that. “

According to Wilson, producer and multi-instrumentalist Ben Mink -- well known for his work with k.d. lang, Feist, Barenaked Ladies, among others -- was an ideal collaborator on *Hope & Glory*. “I don’t throw the word around easily, but I think Ben’s a genius when it comes to getting a sound and knowing when you’ve gone too far and when you haven’t gone far enough. The sounds that Ben gets are just astonishing. Ben did a lot of the arranging and played almost all the guitars, all of the fiddle, a lot of the keyboards. He’s really a presence all through the album.”

Mink is hardly the only musical figure joining Wilson on the album. *Hope & Glory* -- recorded in Los Angeles, Seattle, Vancouver, New York, Nashville and Las

Vegas -- also features impressive guest turns from an eclectic group of high profile artists, including Elton John, Gretchen Wilson, k.d. lang, Alison Krause, Wynonna, Shawn Colvin, Deana Carter and Rufus Wainwright. In addition to those special guests, Ann's sister and longtime musical partner in Heart Nancy Wilson makes a number of appearances on assorted tracks, as do two current members of Heart, drummer Ben Smith and bassist Ric Markmann and a number of players who had worked with Ben Mink on many of his projects.

For all that, *Hope & Glory* finally comes across as very much the statement of one woman seeking to make sense of the world around her. Rather than seeming like a heavy handed political diatribe, the album feels intimate and homespun -- a musical exploration of the very personal consequences of global tensions through some remarkable songs.

"I just wanted to go to each of these great songs and find the one thing that still resonates now," Wilson says. "It wasn't so hard once I made my wish list of songs for the right ones to just float their way right to the top. And Ben was so great about that. We took a couple of days up in Vancouver and just went at every song we could possibly think of and some of them were clearly not right. So I guess all the songs we chose were those that we felt could live in the same family, and live on the same album."

Asked if she feels especially proud of *Hope & Glory*, the first album she has ever put her own name on, Wilson says, "It feels really different and I don't even necessarily know how that's going to manifest itself yet because I have yet to go out and do gigs yet and play this material live. But I already know that I learned a hell of a lot from working with Ben Mink on this album. Nancy and I have a really big comfort zone together, and when she's not around it's a whole other deal. Making this album, I had to reach down into places of myself that really didn't know if they were there. Ben demanded that much of me. And in the end, that was a *really* good thing for me."

A good thing for Wilson -- and a great new album for the rest of us.

HOPE & GLORY: SONG-BY-SONG WITH ANN WILSON

GOODBYE BLUE SKY: On Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, "Goodbye Blue Sky" is a pretty short track, but I always got so into the song that I wished it were longer. For this album, I wanted to extend the song and develop the nightmare scenario that it presents. Ben Mink suggested this image to keep in mind of an old patriotic World War II poster -- the kind that says "Join The Army" with a picture bomber on it. Nancy's on this track and a few others on the album. She told me, "Whatever you want me to do, I'm there." Of course, she understands this album is an Ann Wilson thing. Everyone around us was like, "Make sure no one confuses this with Heart," but Nancy and I never have any hesitation to be there for one another.

WHERE TO NOW ST. PETER: I have always loved this Elton John-Bernie Taupin song. I'm a *Tumbleweed Connection* addict -- that's my ultimate Elton John album. When we went to Las Vegas to record Elton for the song, he required a chart because he hadn't really thought much about the song for thirty years. Soon Elton was hearing the song in a different way – as a much more powerful and angry song. So he put down his piano and his vocal, and I had to go back and record my vocal because he had gone up like four clicks. Elton was so giving and so strong on this version. He got up after doing his “The Red Piano” show the night before, played tennis, took a shower and then reported to duty for me. Thank you Elton.

JACKSON: Some people heard the title and figured that I was doing the June Carter-Johnny Cash duet. It will be a fine surprise when they realize this is actually a great Lucinda Williams song from her *Car Wheels On A Gravel Road* album. I'm such a fan of Lucinda's and everything she does. I just think she's one of the finest writers of this particular time. I especially love how deceptively simple her lyrics are and how blue she can get. *Damn*, the woman just can get so far down and it's so beautiful the way she takes us with her.

WE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS PLACE: I was looking for a song that would relate to the whole idea of just busting out of this negative cycle we're in these days. It's my way of saying, “Let's just get out of this damned repeating cycle.” When I thought about doing a song in those terms, “We Got To Get Out Of This Place” came to mind. In that context, the line “My little girl you're so young and pretty” was to me a mother speaking to her daughter. Maybe they're both stuck in some backwater place and the mother is old before her years and the daughter is on her way. Of course, she's a single mother – the stereotype . . . just like me. Wynonna and I – our paths have crossed a few times and we just hit it off. We're two of a kind. I thought of her and Naomi and their history and figured it would be so cool to do this song with her, especially if she starts it out because she has that whole deep Elvis Presley, May West-y thing going on in her voice.

IMMIGRANT SONG: My love of Led Zeppelin is very much a matter of public record. Have I heard from the guys yet? No, and as Helen Mirren said when she was asked about the Queen seeing *The Queen*, I don't think we'll ever really know what *they* think of this. If you're going to re-record a Zeppelin song, I think you have to reinvent it and that's where Ben Mink just shone. Ben said, “Why don't we just start you out like Yma Sumac and take the song way, way North African?” Our version starts a little like a little dot on the horizon, but by the time it's done you've been overrun by all the barbarians.

DARKNESS, DARKNESS: Here's one of two songs on the album made famous by the Youngbloods – a band I really loved back in the day. This one was written by the group's Jesse Colin Young. As Ben said about this song when we were working on it, “That song comes from back when darkness could be your friend.”

BAD MOON RISING: We did the great song John Fogerty wrote for Creedence with Gretchen Wilson. Recently Gretchen stood up with Alice In Chains at the VH! Rock Honors and sang “Barracuda” and was awesome, *really* awesome. Gretchen wants so

much to be a rock singer and I think she's shown that she can do it all. The song itself is on the fence between rock and country – it's very swamp rock like Creedence could do sometimes. I thought Gretchen brought a lot to the track. She's very pure and it was great of her to find the time for us.

WAR OF MAN: A great song from a great writer -- Neil Young and one of my favorites. Our version has extra added angry because it was written about the first Gulf War and here we all go again – except much worse. The backup vocal on our track is pretty evil – it's kind of Stonsey, like a bunch of wolves howling. Of course, right now seems like a pretty good time to howl. Having Alison Krause join me on the song was fantastic. I was thinking about what voice we could use to be the little girl in the lyrics to that song. I thought of Alison because her voice is *so* pure and angelic. When we were mixing the track, and Alison sings her part and I come crashing back in like a sledgehammer, Ben goes, “Wow, it's like Bambi and Godzilla.”

GET TOGETHER: We realized that doing this Youngbloods smash -- written by Dino Valenti -- could be inviting scrutiny because it's sort of the ultimate hippie anthem with its whole peace and love type message. So it could have been a real Spinal Tap moment, but then we decided we love the song so let's just take a moment and figure out how we can do it for now. And when Nancy started singing on it, it just became this beautiful new thing and we thought that yeah, this works. Why not? It's still a very beautiful musical statement, and there ought to be room for that even now.

ISOLATION: For me this brilliant John Lennon song was always a very personal, very human response to being messed with -- to being totally kicked around. It's about what it feels like to be on “the human trampoline,” as Paul Simon would say. Because my own response to being treated that way is always to get very isolated this song means a lot to me. Recording “Isolation” meant even more because I cut that vocal and that track only a few days after our mother passed away. That's actually the first take. We didn't add much of anything. We didn't have to.

A HARD RAIN'S GONNA FALL: We were thinking about that one and it's daunting because it's like six and a half minutes at verse after verse. Ben was like, “Why don't you take a shot at editing the lyrics.” Like go ahead, Ann Wilson, you try and edit Bob Dylan. I tried three times but it was ridiculous. So we went back to the drawing board to try another way. Ben did an amazing job on the arrangement, and obviously Rufus Wainwright and Shaun Colvin brought their own hearts and soul to it. We had done Decades Live with Rufus and I'm fan and we hit it off. He's a great talent. And I've known Shawn as a fan for years now and our paths would cross and we got to know each others as mothers really first. I thought how cool it would be to have those three very distinct voices on that brilliant Dylan song.

LITTLE PROBLEMS, LITTLE LIES: We decided to write from the very first day, but it took me a really long time to figure out who I was and what my lyrics could be inside this album. But then I thought why don't I be a soldier in Iraq lying down to die, bewildered and summing things up. I wanted to keep it simple and use the language

someone would use at a time like that. When we first started working on the album, some people were like “Do we dare take some sort of global, political stand?” Because generally there’s music and there’s this other thing *way* over there – politics. But it’s become so pervasive, it’s all infused together, now so I don’t think anyone has to worry. I believe this is good music for people to hear and help to contemplate our world now