

The Who, What, Where, When:

David Wilcox's 'Open Hand' was recorded in 7 days from start to finish in December 2008 on 2 inch 16 track analog tape. No computer tricks were used, all of the songs on this release were recorded live, just 4 human beings playing music together. Very minimal overdubs were used, so most all of what you hear is exactly as it was played together by David and the other musicians live. Dan Phelps produced and played guitar and keyboard, Jon Evans: bass guitar and upright bass, James McAlister: drums and percussion.

'Open Hand' is David's 16th release. Since he performs solo acoustic almost exclusively, he is able avoid the common 8 or 10 week tour, preferring instead to strike a balance between traveling for shows and being at home in Asheville NC with his family. It's more than just a good balance for his life, he compares the two worlds of touring and creativity at home as being akin to the in breath and the out breath - inspiration and expression.

The Why:

David loves music for how it has tuned up his life. More than just entertainment, music has been a compass to navigate a life worth singing about. Some people describe the effect of what David does as if he were a mystic or a healer. So here are three different views from **Gary Jules**, **Elizabeth Lesser**, and **Brian MacLaren** of what David does with this simple sound. First, Gary Jules describes the effect of David's musicianship.

Gary Jules writes:

For most of us who are referred to as "singer-songwriters", there is more to a good song than just words, music, and performance. Each is beyond important of course but, to pummel the cliché yet again, we want the whole (song) to be greater than the sum of its parts (words, music, and performance). With really good singer-songwriters, these three elements become akin

almost to the three dimensions of the physical world - a well-written song performed by someone who is really feeling it becomes a *real* "thing". Recordings, then, are like photographs of "things". Yeah, like Pinnocchio, only with feelings.

David Wilcox is just this kind of singer and songwriter, and the songs on *Open Hand* exemplify perfectly what can happen when the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts. The first song I heard from this collection was *Winter at the Shore*. The opening chords move simply and inevitably toward their resolution, like seasons. At one point before the vocal starts, it sounds as if Dave's fingers might just stop playing. But they can't. The approaching resolution is . . . inevitable, as the passing of time. The images are pregnant. "The ghost of you/ dances through/ the memories of this town". Winter in a beach town means "off season". I think most days of a life are "off season", though we rarely take pictures on those days. Songs remind us to. Eleven words in it's already a sonic photograph of a magical world -- the passing away manifest in chords, fragility in the performance, the story on the way.

One of my favorite quotes is from Alexander Pope's *An Essay On Criticism*:

"True wit is nature to advantage dressed/
What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed".

That's really the gig with songwriting. You talk about experiences that folks will find familiar to their own experience, though nobody's ever talked about it before. Kinda like when Seinfeld says "did you ever notice how . . .".

Each of us has returned to the scene of a sunny memory of a loved one to find Winter and ghosts . . . we've oft thought of it, but ne'er heard it so well expressed.

Elizabeth Lesser writes:

The dictionary describes Shamans as "intermediaries between the human and spirit worlds. They can treat

illness and are capable of entering supernatural realms to provide answers for humans. Shamans perform a variety of functions depending upon their respective cultures: healing; preserving the tradition by storytelling and songs; fortune-telling; and acting as a guide of souls in this life and the hereafter."

Hey! I know one of those dudes! And I didn't have to go to Siberia or Ecuador to find him. He's David Wilcox and he's right here in the USA. I have known David for many years; he has come to Omega Institute, the conference and retreat center I co-founded 30 years ago. I've known him as a superb performer and songwriter--he never disappoints an audience. But I have also known him as a healer. When he comes to Omega he not only takes the stage and touches people through his music, but he also practices what he calls "musical medicine." I've been around many healers and therapists and spiritual teachers in my years at Omega, but I have never seen anything quite as magical as what Dave does in a little room with his guitar and his amazing capacity to read the heart of a person, create a song on the spot, and use it to help that person let go of old burdens and move into a new way of seeing the world. Re-read the definition of Shaman above. That's what David Wilcox does. He's a homegrown shaman. Hallelujah!

And Brian MacLaren writes:

People who discover David's music immediately know that there's this "other" dimension to what he's about. They can feel something ... something different ... which they might call "spiritual" or they might call "humane," but either way, they know it's not just good, it's *good*. This other dimension comes through just as strong in songs that make no overt reference to spirituality ... a song about healing a fracture in a relationship, for example, conveys a kind of covert tenderness and disarming honesty that brings words like "virtue" to mind. You start to think, "Wow, if I let this guy's music really get into me, I might become ... like a better person or something!" I guess David occupies that sweet spot where music and poetry and spirituality all overlap, and where there are layers

upon layers of meaning and hope, so that what's broken inside us gets healed a little bit, and what's afraid gets comforted, and good things that are trying to be born in us get a push toward light. I don't mean to minimize David's amazing musicianship - either on the guitar, or with his voice, or with his extraordinary songwriting skills - but I guess I'm trying to say that I think there's holy work that happens when David plays ... there's a big beautiful whole into which all the excellent parts get taken up, so each of his songs becomes a little bit like a parable, and it gets stuck in your imagination and won't leave you alone until you're changed for the better. Thank God for people who have this kind of gift and share it so generously with the rest of us.