

Mention of music pushes Wilson to mind

By Shane Hall
Reporter

Mention College Station's music scene to almost anyone and the name Dru Wilson is likely to come up in the conversation. Wilson first made a name for himself in College Station as lead guitarist for 4 Hams on Rye, who were considered the most popular band in the Bryan-College Station area. After the band's breakup, Wilson went on to show that he had other musical sides to him. He now performs with the punk band Street Pizza, and the rock band the Kerouacs. Wilson also performs solo acoustic shows at Eastgate Live.

With his collar-length blond hair, faded blue jeans, and black t-shirt, he would probably fit many people's stereotyped image of a rock 'n' roller. The bedroom of his Bryan home is undoubtedly that of a true music fan: a Sanyo stereo system surrounded by wooden crates filled with dozens of albums; posters of the Beatles, the Who, Jimi Hendrix and Jeff Beck; and at the foot of the bed, an acoustic guitar lying on top of a black guitar case. As he sat upon the bed, he seemed a man who is right at home with his surroundings.

On the bed before him were several scraps of paper with song lyrics written on them. Wilson explains that he has been working on a new song. "Don't know what I'm gonna do with it yet," he says. "It sounds kinda country-rock."

Wilson, 26, has been playing music for 13 years. "Everyone in my family's kind of musical," he explains as he lights a cigarette from his package of Marlboros. "My brothers Scott and Randy were both all-state choir, my mom played piano, my dad plays

some guitar." Hearing his dad play guitar was a major influence in taking up the instrument, Wilson says.

He adds that hearing Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze" for the first time was the thing that really gave him "the bug."

Wilson goes on to describe himself as being brought up in a "musically schizophrenic" setting. "My brother Randy would be in one room listening to a record of some Broadway musical," he says. "And my other brother (Scott) would be in another room listening to the Doors or somebody like that."

At 13, Wilson says, he bought his first guitar, which was a far cry from a Fender Stratocaster or a Gibson Les Paul. "My first guitar was made in Korea," Wilson says, laughing. "It had one pickup and one knob. It didn't even have a name, it was just a generic made-in-Korea." After that guitar, he got his Gibson L6, which he plays onstage with Street Pizza. He also owns two other guitars, an Ibanez acoustic and a Fender Stratocaster.

Wilson says he started out playing songs by British rock bands Led Zepplin, Cream, the Yardbirds and the Who.

"I was into that whole wave of British bands at the time," he says. "Jeff Beck is one of my heroes."

By age 15, Wilson says he was performing with his first band, Trix. "We played in a battle of the bands at the Texas World Speedway," he says, exhaling a long stream of smoke. "We were playing songs by people like Ted Nugent, Aerosmith, Led Zepplin. My first gig was in front of 2,000 people and I was nervous."

After Trix, Wilson says he played with several different bands, but that most of them were bands that just

got together and played at garages, or at friends' parties.

"It was more of a learning phase than actually performing," he explains. "We got to hang around a lot of older musicians and stuff like that."

By late 1984, however, Wilson was back in a performing band. The band was 4 Hams on Rye. He says he met the band's vocalist, Scott Oldner, at a Halloween party.

"I was playing with this band called Albatross, which was based in Brenham," Wilson says, taking a drag off of another cigarette. "I was getting kinda tired of playing all these heavy metal covers and playing mostly rhythm guitar. 4 Hams was more fun to jam with. I got to play all this rockabilly and roots-rock that I was into, but hadn't really studied."

After nearly four years as a group, playing all over Texas and getting to open for the Ramones in front of a crowd of about 11,000 people, 4 Hams on Rye called it quits as a group. Wilson emphasizes that the band's breakup was on friendly terms.

"Basically, it was time for a change," he says with a resigned tone. "Everybody was wanting to do something else."

Wilson says the band knew ahead of time that they were going to break up, so he decided to form another band. After talking with 4 Hams' drummer Jeff Zwolinski, Wilson said, the two decided they wanted to keep playing together. Wilson says he then talked to Brian Lippman, owner of the College Station music store Lippman Music, about joining a band with them.

"The night we found out about the breakup, I talked to Brian and he said 'Yeah, I'd love to,'" Wilson says. After Lippman joined Wilson



Battalion file photo

Local singer Dru Wilson

and Zwolinski, the Kerouacs were born.

Wilson's other band is the thrash band Street Pizza, a band characterized by obnoxious stage behavior, vulgar language and songs that parody everything from sorority girls to AIDS. Street Pizza came together, Wilson says, after he and the other band members discovered mutual interests.

Street Pizza bassist Bill Allen, who says he's known Wilson for four

years, describes the band as a group with no real leader. Wilson, he says, is great to work with.

"He's always willing to compromise," Allen says.

Most of Street Pizza's songs are collaborations, Allen says, with all of the members doing the lyrics, and Wilson writing the music.

Wilson says he began writing songs when he was with 4 Hams. Most of the lyrics, he says, are semi-autobiographical.

Joblessness across Texas shows decline

AUSTIN (AP) — Statewide unemployment all across Texas dropped from June to July, reflecting an improvement in the economy, according to figures released by the Texas Employment Commission.

The latest figures show that Bryan-College Station had the lowest jobless rate in Texas. Bryan-College Station's jobless rate for July was 4.4.

The statewide jobless rate fell to 6.6 percent in July, compared with a revised June rate of 8.0 percent, said Terrence Travland, assistant chief of the TEC's Economic Research Department.

Travland said the decrease from June to July is basically seasonal in nature as young people who do not find summer work drop out of the job market by July, which is "fairly common."

This is a positive statement announced Tuesday by the TEC for July, compared with revised June figures (in parenthesis) included:

- Abilene 5.7 (7.0)
- Amarillo 5.3 (6.0)
- Austin 5.7 (6.8)
- Beaumont-Port Arthur 9.4 (11.3)
- Brazoria 7.4 (9.0)
- Brownsville-Harlingen 12.1 (14.5)
- Bryan-College Station 4.4 (5.4)
- Corpus Christi 8.7 (10.6)
- Dallas 5.3 (6.5)
- El Paso 9.8 (11.9)
- Fort Worth-Arlington 5.8 (7.0)
- Galveston-Texas City 8.1 (9.9)
- Houston 6.3 (7.7)
- Temple-Killeen 7.0 (8.4)

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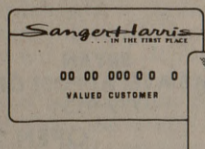
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