

the wiyos

We started out as an acoustic trio playing vintage country blues, ragtime, swing, and old-time after the three of us – Michael Farkas (vocals, harmonica, washboard, kazoo), Joseph Dejarnette (vocals, upright bass) and myself – Parrish Ellis (vocals, archtop guitar, resophonic guitar, guitar-banjo) met up in 2002 and discovered we shared similar musical tastes, a love of playing ‘... and suffered from itchy feet.

Those influences spanned a vast spectrum of traditional American rural and urban roots music, ranging from The Hoosier Hotshots, Washboard Rhythm Kings and Milton Brown & His Musical Brownies to Fats Waller, Arthur Blake, Willie McTell, The Skillet Lickers, Gary Davis, Gus Cannon & The Jug Stompers, The Carolina Tarheels and The Mississippi Sheiks.

As street entertainers we busked in New York and New Orleans, performing mainly vintage country blues and ragtime and began to build in some Vaudevillian capers to bring an additional dynamic to the performance.

Having made an early declaration of intent to hit the road and never stop, that was very soon our destiny. We started getting offers to play bars, then clubs, then festivals.

Within two years, we had been invited to the Newport Folk Festival and that led to appearances at the prestigious Kennedy Centre Arts Festival and The Carnegie Hall Neighbourhood Concert Series.

It was in 2003 that we self-released our debut recording, *Porcupine* and that proved invaluable as product to sell at gigs and help to keep the show on the road.

We continued to develop and expand our repertoire and in 2006, after a busy summer touring Europe and the US, went into New York’s PIE Studios to play entirely live through some of the world’s best vintage gear to cut the follow-up, *Hat Trick*, recording all thirteen tracks in three days to 1” analogue tape using only two microphones. The project was overseen by an amazing producer, Perry Margouleff, whose credits include many big rock names including The Rolling Stones and Jimmy Page.

We started to write our own material and introduce originals to the set and, as each of us had always shared a common passion for the old-time stringbands, blues singers,



jugbands and hot jazz ensembles of the 1920’s and 30’s, the new material was destined to retain that feel and sound.

The line-up expanded when we were joined by Teddy Weber (formerly of The Hunger Mountain Boys), who brought his considerable song-writing abilities and outstanding musicianship (vocals, console steel guitar, acoustic and electric lap steel guitars, parlour guitar, alto horn) to help broaden out the sound and direction.

We had first teamed up with him while recording *The Wiyos* (Pie Records PIE014) in 2007 and he guested on four of the tracks.

The band has continued to tour relentlessly in USA, Europe and Scandinavia and this past year has been our busiest ever. We started off 2009 appearing with Seasick Steve at The Barbican in London as part of the American Folk series that was televised by the BBC.

In the summer we were invited to tour with Bob Dylan, joining him, John Mellencamp and Willie Nelson for appearances at 27 baseball parks across America and in the process playing to half a million people.

We return to the UK for a short tour in January and February, after being included in the big Celtic Connections Festival in Glasgow, where we have our own headline show at the city’s Royal Concert Hall.

This latest visit coincides with the production of our fourth album, *Broken Land Bell*. We broke some new ground here by working with

the renowned NYC human beat box, Adam Matta, who brought his extraordinary talent and an element of sound sculpturing to the process. The album, our first to feature all-original material, has been winning really great reviews.

The Los Angeles Times recently described the band as “a pure joy” and we heard Seasick Steve telling folks they were “in for a surprise”.

Some might say that we have done it the hard way, but actually we are very pleased to have got to where we are in the way we have.

After seven, solid years of touring (200-plus dates a year), all independent of a record label or manager, The Wiyos have suddenly emerged as one of the hallmark groups in the resurgence of traditional American music.

It is an amazing achievement but has been possible because we have believed all along in what we are doing and have not allowed ourselves to be moulded or guided by any outside force.

Tour Dates:

Tuesday January 26: BBC Radio Scotland
 Wed 27: Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow
 Thurs 28: Celtic Connections Festival Club
 Sat 30: Eastgate Theatre, Peebles
 Sun 31: The Buccleuch Centre, Langholm
 Wed 3 What’s Cookin’, The Sheep Walk, Leytonstone
 Thurs 4 The Maze, Nottingham
 Fri 5 Brooks Blues Bar at The Telegraph, London
 Sat 6 The Ropewalk, Barton On Humber
 Sun 7 The Civic Theatre, Bedford
<http://thewiyos.com>

The Wiyos: *Broken Land Bell*