



portrait of an artist: ann wilson

heart's voice cries out about war and hope

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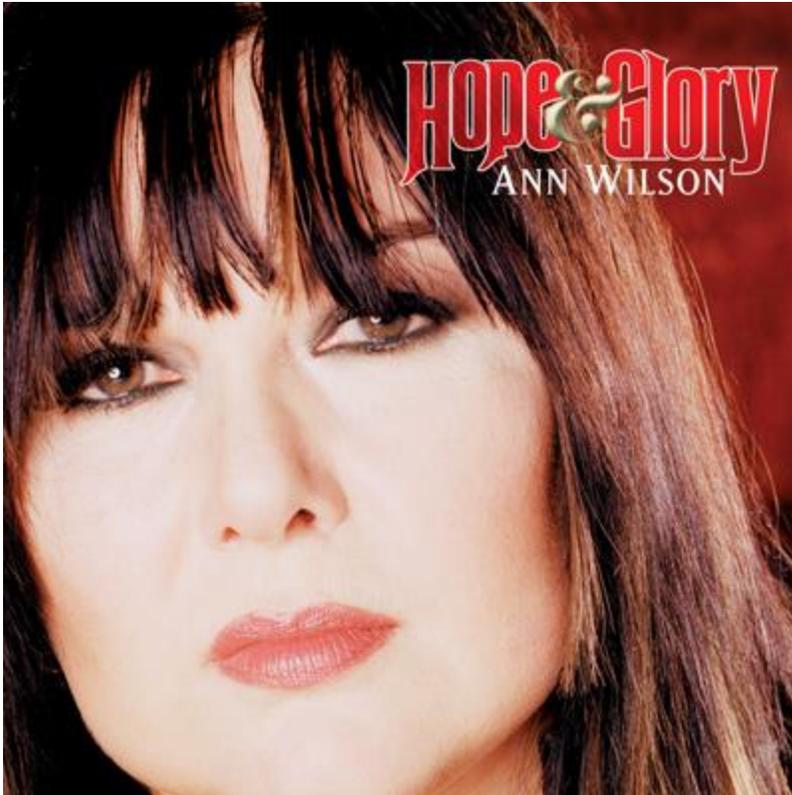
music

Ann Wilson, a self-described peacenik, is also a firebrand. After more than 30 years establishing a foundation for women in rock music, Wilson turned an artistic corner by releasing *Hope and Glory* in September 2007.

This is Wilson's first solo effort: a creative platform from which to rally for what she believes in, a brave step for an artist in today's quagmire of false reality and pop star idol worship. *Hope and Glory* may be Wilson's initial flight from the band Heart, but it's a collage of talent, featuring collaborative experiments on songs first made famous by other artists. These are songs that Wilson believes stir the soul and force the listener to think about what's happening in the world.

In *Hope and Glory*, you explore the world's troubled times through legendary songs by artists such as Bob Dylan ("A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall"), John Lennon ("Isolation"), Led Zeppelin ("Immigrant Song"), and others. Those of a particular generation may recognize these songs as cries from previous conflicts, but what impact do you hope to have on younger people with that selection?

Well, I hope they will listen to these words and these songs and get the message. Take the messages from an earlier time and receive them inside their own time.



How did you approach many of your collaborators, including Elton John, Alison Krauss, Rufus Wainwright, k.d. lang, and Shawn Colvin, about the *Hope and Glory* project? Is this the kind of effort that many other artists say, "Oh, HELL yes!" to?

Yes, it's an "Oh, HELL yes!" experience to both listen to it and be the one experiencing it! My producer and collaborator Ben Mink and my manager Carol Peters were the people who actually made the connections, but most of these artists I've met before. It really wasn't too much of a jump. I just had to get them the music and tell them what I wanted and they said, "Oh, HELL yes!"

Alison Krauss was possibly the only artist I hadn't met but after she sung her part, she called back with this most delightful of responses saying how happy she was. That was the first time we'd actually connected – receiving her recorded voice on my phone saying how thrilled she was over the collaboration.

With the bombardment of 24-hour news and arguing pundits, how can a minstrel's voice be heard above the din?

I don't think it's an artist's place to scream louder than pundits. I don't think that's the point. Music will always serve as a private score in people's lives and when people are tired of the screaming and complaining, the music will be there to be their private sounding board.

There's a saying: "Mommas don't send their babies off to war." Does this hold up to political scrutiny?

I don't know about political scrutiny, but I don't think a mother should ever send a child to war. If a young man or woman wants to be a soldier, it should be of his or her own volition. If my children told me they wanted to be soldiers, I would try to fight them out of it tooth and nail. However, if they really persisted and it was their own choice, I would understand.

What questions do your children have about the current state of affairs, and how do you answer?

I think I've created a couple of monsters, because I have always been outspoken about my antiwar feelings.

I come from a military family with many generations of soldiers behind me, and our family has always been affected by war and especially by post-traumatic stress disorder. I have always been very vocal about war, and my kids scream at the TV when they see Bush on television.

My oldest daughter just received a letter from the Army because she turned 17. The letter said, "If you are interested in doing something after high school, you'll get a chance to serve, and get an education, blah, blah, blah." She ripped it into pieces and put it in an envelope with a note, on which she'd written something really rude, and a list of all her relatives who'd been in the Army, and she sent it off. So that's how just one of my kids responded!

My 9-year-old son still likes the way soldiers look with their guns, but it's sort of a videotape mentality. I just let them know they won't be doing any fighting on my watch.

"We're getting older...the world's getting colder." Nearly 30 years have passed since you, sister Nancy Wilson, and Sue Ennis wrote this line as part of the song, "Dog and Butterfly." Do you feel a loss of innocence since then, or do you still have hope?

Yes, I feel a loss of innocence but, at the same time, I am a hopeful person and despite feeling like I've seen these patterns happen before, I still have a cock-eyed optimism, as they sang in *South Pacific*. I still think there is a chance for us, but it will take a lot of pulling together.

I'm certain I'm not the only woman who sang into a hairbrush to that song. What encouragement do you have for up and coming female musicians and vocalists?

One thing is that, if you are going to sing into a hairbrush, it better be a Mason Pearson, and not some cheap drugstore hairbrush!

Seriously, it's just that there obviously are some snares involved in being a woman in the music industry, so don't compromise. I don't think things have gotten easier; they have just morphed from one thing into another. It is still just as likely that a woman will be used for the image she portrays, rather than for the talent she possesses.

So women should be aware that if they are going to make it they are going to have to work harder than guys. Learn to say no to whatever you can, and say yes only to those things that really matter.

Anything else you'd like to add?

I'm going to see Led Zeppelin in London next month and I can't wait!

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