

folkloric. No one went out of their way to learn charranga, or any of a host of Mexican instruments that can be used in this idiom. Instead, they use what they have to evoke the heart of this music of their parents' immigrant experience. The two tracks the band wrote fit in well with the traditional and standard songs, and even Steve Berlin's occasional sax work fits this curious mix, especially when he doubles with Hidalgo's accordion.

Now, from a commercial standpoint, *La Pistola y el Corazón* makes Los Lobos look like a band with a death wish, following up a chart-topping single with a folk album, and not even in English! But commercial considerations never seemed to matter much to them. The bottom line for the band has always been what is most interesting. And that's just one more way the album is true to roots.

—Hank Bordowitz

The Traveling Wilburys
TRAVELING WILBURYS
VOL 1
Warner Brothers

TRAVELING WILBURYS VOL 1 poses three threshold questions: (1) Who are the Wilburys? (2) Where are they traveling to? and (3) What is the meaning of "VOL 1"?

According to their biography, the Wilburys are a remarkably sophisticated musical culture. As they began to go further and further in their search for inspiration they found themselves the object of interest among less developed species such as club owners,



record executives, and booking agents. This contact with the commercial world was a blow from which many of them have never recovered.

Those who did survive managed (with the aid of attorneys familiar with the intricacies of cross-label licensing) to produce a six-figure field recording distributed by Warner Brothers. And if this is the primary artifact of Wilbury

culture, we can assume that they are an eclectic band of guitar playing troubadours who favor a '60s bar band sound filtered through mushy '70s production and plated with '80s digital recording techniques.

The result—like so much FM radio fodder—is the audio equivalent of an insect preserved in hardened amber, fascinating and somehow familiar.

As for where the Wilburys are traveling to, it is back a few decades to a simpler era of good-natured camaraderie among musicians. Charlie T. Wilbury, Jr., a.k.a. Tom Petty, paints the band's middle-age portrait when he sings on "End of the Line": "Maybe somewhere down the road a ways/ You'll think of me and wonder where I am these days/Maybe somewhere down the road when somebody plays 'Purple Haze.'"

The pathos of the Wilburys' excursion is best evinced by the fact that this is "VOL 1" (sic). Even accepting the punctuational deviation of "Volume," the insistence in the title that this is the first of a series of the Wilburys' travels brings a maudlin pallor to the project.

It begs us to believe that this is more than an HBO tribute to an Amnesty supergig. This is an ongoing band of nicotine-stained high-lifers (Roy Orbison, Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, George Harrison, and Jeff Lynne) à la the Rat Pack, who can still party in between solo albums, soundtracks, production efforts, and interviews with Kurt Loder.

Hence the merchandising paradox. Will we buy VOL II because we long for the revisionist '60s camaraderie and sound of VOL I? Or will we buy VOL II because we yearn for the real sound and camaraderie of the '60s?

Can we really merchandise for the future by using something that reflects the past? By posing this paradox, the Wilburys do more than make music, they create an intellectually stimulating consumer dilemma. And that adventurous inquiry is far more exciting, and ultimately more rewarding, than their recorded document.

—Rich Stim

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A poll conducted last May by a prominent British Sunday paper reached some depressing, if unsurprising, conclusions. A majority felt Britain was richer than a decade ago and that it was more unhappy; almost two-thirds believed that it had become more selfish. Was this final proof that money doesn't buy happiness, that a free market system simply encourages greed?

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