

Willis is a guaranteed crowd-pleaser

Those who didn't go see Wesley Willis at John Henry's on Monday night are among the millions of poor souls who have not been enlightened by Chicago's own king of rock 'n' roll.

I'll try and make it up to those less fortunate by describing the show. But first, a little background on Mr. Willis.

First of all, he's a schizophrenic. Really. This is perhaps his most interesting and defining facet. He swears at the voices in his head, is prone to shouting out random gibberish and liberally sprinkles profanity through his lyrics and his dialogue with the crowd.

Physically, Willis cuts an imposing figure: He's well over 6 feet tall and surpasses the 300-pound mark by a country mile. He has an enormous gap between his two front teeth and a sizable scar in the middle of his forehead from head-butting his fans.

Appearances aside, however, Willis is one entertaining mof. His music is a bit hard to describe. Willis is a one-man show, and his instrument is a simple keyboard. He

doesn't exactly "play" the keyboard; rather, he hits the demo button and simply changes the key based upon whatever song he happens to be singing at the moment.



Dave
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In Stereo

And the songs! Most of Willis' tunes have titles like "Vultures Ate My Dead Ass Up," "Rock Saddam Hussein's Ass" or "I'm Sorry That I Got Fat." However, many of his songs simply celebrate (or ridicule) various celebrities, forming the kernel of such masterpieces as "Apollo Creed," "Dave Grohl" and "Megadeth."

Monday night's show saw Willis in top form. During the opening acts, he alternatively sat down at his merchandising table or walked around, mingling with fans and dis-

pensing head-butts with gleeful abandon.

By the time Willis took the stage, the sizable crowd filling the floor and the bar was exploding with anticipation. Requests for past classics such as "Cut the Mullet" flew through the air before he even had a chance to fire up his keyboard.

Willis coolly shouted, "Shut the fuck up!" back at the crowd and debuted what is destined to become an indisputable classic: "Osama bin Laden." This incredible number had lyrics along the lines of: "You are a terrorist. You are a real jerk. You planned the September attacks on New York City. Your ass is gonna get whipped by the United States!"

Throughout the song, I was moved to observe a patriotism rarely seen in Eugene's 20-something contingent. Yes, "Osama bin Laden" would have made the \$6 price of admission entirely worth it to me. But instead, I was treated to more terrifically amusing tunes for more than an hour.

At the end of every song on his albums, Willis shouts "Rock over Lon-

don! Rock on Chicago!" But during Monday night's show, he changed "Chicago" to "Eugene, Oregon," a friendly gesture that did not go unappreciated by the audience.

The hits kept coming: "Santa Claus Was A Car Thief," "You Wrecked Your Daddy's Cadillac" and "Lick a German Shepherd's Dick" all graced the air before he closed the show down with his two best-loved songs, "Rock and Roll McDonald's" and "Cut the Mullet."

Despite rapturous applause, Willis did not perform an encore. Instead, he stoically gathered up his lyric sheets and stepped off the stage, wading through a sea of adoring fans and giving out much-coveted head-butts.

All in all, it was a night to remember. Wesley Willis comes through Eugene every couple of years, and I highly recommend his next show. I can guarantee you that you will never see anything remotely like it ever again.

E-mail columnist Dave Depper at davedepper@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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Make a resolution to try some unusual new wines

By Fred Tasker
Knight Ridder Newspapers

The trouble with New Year's resolutions was demonstrated years ago by "Calvin and Hobbes," the much-missed comic strip about a cute/nasty little kid and his fleabag live/stuffed tiger. Calvin decided not to make a resolution because he was already perfect, and Hobbes replied that he had vowed not to be so offended by human nature, but might already have blown it.

To avoid such transcendental tangles, I make the same resolution every year and always keep it. The trick is not to vow something hard, like losing weight or being nicer to people. Instead, I always resolve to try at least one new wine a month — something I've never tried before, maybe never even heard of.

It's very rewarding. If you'd like to join me, here's a list of some of the lesser-known wines I've come across this way:

- **Malbec:** In France, where it originated, this wine is inky-black, hard as nails, used as a minor blending wine to add color to Bordeaux red wines. But in Argentina, where the sun gets the malbec grapes toasty ripe, the wine is generous and plump and soft, tasting like chocolate/cherry candies. Even better, since it hasn't really been discovered yet, it's usually under \$10 a bottle.

- **Gewurztraminer:** Seldom ordered because few can pronounce it (it's guh-VERTS-trameen-er), this full-bodied wine tastes like white grapefruit, litchis and mint. When it's made in France's Alsace region, it's full-bodied, powerful and bone-dry. When it's made in California, it's more often lighter, more delicate and lightly sweet. Either way, it's great with spicy, white-wine foods like Cajun fish or barbecue pork.

- **Retsina:** This is not a single wine but a group of white wines made in Greece of various grapes and flavored with pine resin — a throwback to when ancient Greeks sealed their ceramic wine containers with it. Today's retsina is much milder than the old ones. To me, they still taste like Pine-Sol, but

you might like them; as always, it's a matter of personal taste.

- **Pinotage:** Grown almost exclusively in South Africa, this is not a wine blend but a crossing of two grape varieties — pinot noir and cinsaut. For decades, naturally occurring acetones sometimes made it smell like paint, but thanks to new growing and fermenting methods it's deep, tarry and opulent, rich in flavors of raspberries and plums.

- **Torrontes:** Another hard-to-pronounce wine (torre-own-TAYSS), also from Argentina, it is feather-light, bone-dry, crisp, with citrus flavors. It's great as an aperitif or with simple fish dishes. It's cheap, too.

- **Madeira:** This is a fortified wine from the Portuguese island of the same name off the African coast. It's creamy, rich, smoky, slightly sweet, with flavors of toffee, nuts and tropical fruit. Great as an aperitif or with the richest, sweetest desserts.

- **Prosecco:** This pale, straw-colored grape makes a positively vivacious wine — light, soft, dry, fruity and lightly sparkling. It comes from Italy's Veneto region, near Venice, where it's served as an aperitif and with the region's trademark shrimp scampi.

- **Bull's Blood:** This hearty, red Hungarian wine got its name centuries ago when local warriors, under siege by invading Turks, ran out of water and had to drink wine. The Turks, seeing the defenders' red-stained beards and renewed vigor, concluded that they were fortifying themselves with bull's blood and fled. Traditionally a blend of four Hungarian grapes (kadarka, kekoporto, kekfrankos and medoc noir), it's often given an infusion of cabernet sauvignon today.

- **Tannat:** Originally grown in southwest France's Gascony area, where it made a tough, ink-black wine, the grape ripens in Uruguay to a softer, richer style.

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