

BEN WILKINS



Press kit

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RECORDS



Ben Wilkins: 70s piano pop flashback

May 7th, 2012 by Connie Bernardi

“Besides being incredibly musically inclined, he has a set of pipes on him that may just blow you out of the water.” – ThisBonusTrack

“The amount of polish he brings to intricately arranged piano jams is impressive.” – Herohill



Montreal's Ben Wilkins is in town performing on Wednesday night in support of his self-titled debut album. Ben's music is a piano-driven pop sound that flashes back to the sounds of the early 70s (*think Elton John, Burt Bacharach and Billy Joel* vibe). He's soaked up that era and it's rhythm, textures and grooves and skillfully turned into something uniquely his own (*OK maybe there's a slight comparison to Ben Folds...just a little*).

His lyrics are slightly quirky and that mixed in with a familiar pop piano sound...his is a music that draws you in and just makes you feel good. And happy.

If you qualify yourself as a music lover of any kind, you'll want to check him out.

Ben was born and raised in Ontario and then moved to Montreal to study music at McGill and has composed string arrangements for several artists including Bran Van 3000 and Misstress Barbara.

Ben Wilkins - Wednesday, May 9th @ Zaphod's - 8pm, \$7

Connie Bernardi plays the role of radio announcer on Majic 100 in Ottawa, full time music blogger and seeker of new music.



May 06 2012

We hear it from our elders all the time, but it never really sticks: “Stay in school.”



But this credo stuck with **Ben Wilkins**, and provided influence for what was one of the most remarkable debut albums of 2011. His self-titled full-length utilizes his vast array of influences and experience, creating a timeless and incredibly flushed-out debut that brings to mind the ‘70’s, a time when grand and orchestrated pop music was celebrated.

“What inspires me about that era is the way music was produced,” says Wilkins. “There was something special about the grooves, the distinctive sounds of the recordings and the entire band playing live in the studio. We tried to achieve the same natural atmosphere while recording; I wanted the songs to breathe.”

And breathe they do. Wilkins’ unique combination of piano-driven pop, soulful rhythms and grand orchestration produces songs that grow with every listen. 'Soup For One' begins as a simple ballad but takes flight into a melodic ode to a lost love.

'Back Of My Head' rises and falls, showcasing not only Wilkins emotional side but his ability to command a full-blown orchestra with a groovy, sensible ease. And 'The Road Is Long' is a delicate, harmonious slice of piano pop that would not have sounded out of place on some of John Lennon’s finer solo works.

Simply put, Ben Wilkins is an album that will surely appeal to a wide variety of music lovers; a direct result of Wilkins as a genuine music lover himself whose time studying has given him a unique appreciation and understanding of music.

Born and raised in Ontario, Wilkins moved to Montreal to study music at McGill University. He majored in Classical Trumpet and soaked up as much composition, arranging, singing, theory and jazz harmony as possible, spending countless nights sneaking into the piano studios after hours to write songs. Upon graduation, he received a scholarship to study Mandarin in China, and spent the better part of a year at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the Beijing Language and Culture University.

Wilkins was approached by acclaimed engineer Pascal Shefteshy (Sarah McLachlan, Rufus Wainwright) to record an album and you can hear the fruitful results of two artists working towards one goal: an ageless and enduring classic pop record.

Wilkins is a busy man in his own right. James Di Salvio entrusted him with writing the string and brass arrangements on The Garden, Bran Van 3000's fourth album. Wilkins also did vocal and string arrangements on 2010 Juno nominee Misstress Barbara's new album.

Ben Wilkins is an uplifting listen, providing optimistic sounds that are as delightful as they are engaging.

Ben Wilkins

Thursday, May 10/12, The Casbah
8pm, \$10

21 avril 2012

Le plaisir de la pop avec Ben Wilkins

Divertissement et nostalgie résumeraient en deux mots le son de la pop version Ben Wilkins. Encensé par la critique et fort d'un succès populaire appréciable, l'auteur-compositeur-interprète anglophone s'amène à la Maison de la culture de Waterloo, ce samedi 21 avril, pour y mettre le feu avec ses sept musiciens!

UGO GIGUÈRE
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Adeptes de jazz et de soul, le diplômé de musique de l'Université McGill offre des pièces rafraîchissantes et un son clair qui rappelle l'époque Motown. En entrevue, le chanteur avoue regretter l'époque des étiquettes comme Atlantic qui enregistraient les artistes pour leur talent, pas pour leur potentiel lucratif. «Les labels étaient un peu élitistes, ils avaient du goût», dit-il.

En tournée, alors que n'importe quel nouvel artiste roulerait en mode léger, en solo ou formule trio, Ben Wilkins fait les choses en grand. Au total, le groupe compte sept musiciens, dont une section de cordes!

«Je veux juste donner le meilleur spectacle possible. C'est un choix, mais c'est un risque aussi», explique celui qui doit parfois se contenter de maigres cachets. Un sacrifice qu'il fait au nom du respect du public qui paie une vingtaine de dollars par billet. «Dès qu'ils voient le show, ils comprennent», souligne Ben qui ne peut tout simplement pas rendre justice à ses pièces sans cette formule.

Après avoir fait le tour du Québec, Ben Wilkins s'apprête à conquérir l'Ontario. Pour l'été, le jeune



Ben Wilkins s'amène à la Maison de la culture de Waterloo, ce samedi 21 avril, avec son répertoire pop aux accents jazz et soul.

homme rêve d'une invitation au Festival international de jazz de Montréal et au Festival Osheaga, avant de peut-être s'envoler pour l'Europe... Un programme ambitieux bien à sa portée. Qui sait, vous pourrez dire que vous l'aurez entendu à Waterloo, avant tout le monde.



19 avril 2012

Par Matthieu Petit

Ben Wilkins à entendre à la Maison de la culture de Waterloo



Ben Wilkins mériterait d'être la nouvelle coqueluche de la scène musicale montréalaise, mais peut-être que sa pop – trempée dans le sucre des années 70 – diffère trop de celle de ses pairs. Entre des envolées pianistiques et des cordes luxuriantes, le frisé chante divinement tout en insérant des refrains soul-disco que n'aurait pas refusés un vieux pro tel Elton John. Au jeu des comparaisons, imaginez Jamiroquai, mais avec la candeur mélodique d'un Paul McCartney. Enregistré dans le studio de Pierre Marchand, le premier disque de Wilkins, sorti l'automne dernier, continue de faire jaser, et le chanteur s'amène en concert à la Maison de la culture de Waterloo le 21 avril à 20h. À découvrir!

arts et culture

Ben Wilkins savoure son succès

MARIE-ÈVE
LAMBERT

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WATERLOO — Le nom circule de plus en plus et sa musique gagne chaque jour de nouveaux adeptes. Ben Wilkins est sans contredit un auteur-compositeur-interprète à surveiller, certains allant même jusqu'à le qualifier de « prochain Bobby Bazini ». Et l'Ontarien d'origine, au Québec depuis 10 ans, en est le premier surpris.

« Je n'avais jamais pensé que les gros médias parleraient de moi, que les grosses radios joueraient mes tounes, s'étonne-t-il encore. Mon but a toujours été d'écrire de belles chansons même si elles ne sont pas dans un format commercial. »

Et pourtant, *Through to You* et *Back of my Head* sont des extraits de son premier album, éponyme, sorti en octobre dernier, qui se font entendre sur les ondes radiophoniques depuis quelque temps.

Avec un style tout droit sorti des années 70 et un son si unique qu'on ne peut le comparer à personne d'autre, Ben Wilkins a entrepris sa tournée en mars dernier. Samedi, il s'arrêtera à la Maison de la culture de Waterloo avec son piano, son ukulélé, un quatuor à cordes, un bassiste et un batteur.

« Il va y avoir beaucoup d'énergie, beaucoup de mélodies, c'est sûr que les gens n'auront jamais vu quelque chose de pareil », dit-il.

Université McGill et Pierre Marchand

Pour lui, tout a commencé à l'âge de ses 18 ans, alors qu'il a quitté son London natal pour venir étudier en musique à l'Université McGill. « Mais ils offraient juste

une formation plus classique et jazz, il n'y avait absolument rien pour la pop, pour écrire des tounes, raconte-t-il. Disons que j'ai passé beaucoup de temps caché dans différents locaux de l'université à écrire mes chansons. »

Le jeune homme de 28 ans ne s'en cache pas : il n'essaie de ressembler à personne. « J'ai beaucoup d'influences parce que j'écoute plein de styles de musique différents, dit-il. Mais quand je compose, j'essaie d'être dans ma bulle. Et parfois, je suis aussi surpris que le public peut l'être parce que je découvre mes chansons en les écrivant. Je ne sais pas du tout où je m'en vais. »

Au terme de ses études, l'auteur-compositeur-interprète a eu l'immense chance d'avoir été remarqué par nul autre que Pierre Marchand, qui lui a proposé d'enregistrer son matériel dans son studio, libre pour trois mois. « J'ai vraiment gagné à la loto, illustre Ben Wilkins. Pour le genre de musique que je fais, j'ai vraiment besoin d'une qualité de son exceptionnel. On a littéralement campé dans le studio pendant trois mois. »

Le français

L'anglophone s'est également mis à l'apprentissage du français, mais comme l'immersion n'était pas assez complète à son goût dans cette université où la langue de Shakespeare est d'usage, il s'est expatrié cinq semaines... à Chicoutimi. « Mon rêve a toujours été de vivre au Québec, et c'était inconcevable pour moi d'y rester sans rien comprendre de ce qui se passe », fait-il savoir.

Même si aujourd'hui il s'exprime très bien dans sa deuxième langue, il ne projette pas d'écrire des chansons dans la langue de Molière. « Je suis capable de jaser comme ça, mais je pense que je n'aurai jamais un contrôle de la langue assez profond pour faire



PHOTO ALAIN DION

Ben Wilkins sera en spectacle samedi soir à 20 h à la Maison de la culture de Waterloo.

de la poésie, explique-t-il. Cela dit, je suis ouvert à travailler avec quelqu'un qui composerait mes textes en français... »

Ce sera peut-être pour son deuxième disque, « déjà écrit à moitié », et qui pourrait peut-être sortir aussi tôt qu'en 2013.

Chose certaine, son second album sera « différent » de son premier. « Ce sera dans le même esprit, mais le son sera différent, précise-t-il. Déjà, il y a beaucoup d'évolution dans ma façon d'écrire, je commence à comprendre ce que j'ai à donner. »

On pourra d'ailleurs en entendre quelques extraits *live*, lors de son spectacle samedi à Waterloo.

« Je suis content d'être où je suis rendu en ce moment, j'ai une belle équipe. Ça me donne juste envie de faire d'autres spectacles et d'autres CD », conclut-il.

Le 16 avril 2012

Édition à guichet fermé

Patricia Rainville

(CHICOUTIMI) La 17e édition du Festival jazz et blues de Saguenay aura connu un franc succès. Des salles pleines à craquer, des spectacles à guichet fermé, des artistes de renom; l'équipe du festival peut se féliciter.

Même si le décompte de l'achalandage n'est pas complété, le porte-parole de l'événement, Jacques Dubé, estime avoir vécu une édition exceptionnelle. L'achalandage devrait sans doute tourner autour de 17 000 ou 18 000 spectateurs, comme l'an dernier.

Les coups de coeur du public? France D'Amour, Harry Manx, le Gros Groupe, Coeur de pirate et **Ben Wilkins**, pour ne nommer que ceux-là. «Nous avons tellement une belle programmation, c'est difficile de dire des noms, car presque tous les spectacles affichaient complet. C'est la preuve que nous avons visé juste», souligne Jacques Dubé, très fier de cette 17e édition.

Plusieurs personnes n'ont pas pu assister aux spectacles, car les places étaient comblées. «Disons qu'on a vécu un nouveau problème, car nous avons dû refuser des gens. C'est un beau problème, mais c'est dommage que certaines personnes n'aient pas pu voir les spectacles», note le porte-parole.

Publié le 6 Avril 2012
Joanie Harvey

Piano et ukulélé au rendez-vous avec Ben Wilkins



L'auteur-compositeur-interprète Ben Wilkins offrira son spectacle au public saguenéen le 14 avril prochain à l'International Café.

L'auteur-compositeur-interprète Ben Wilkins est aux anges. Après la sortie de son premier album en 2011, il reçoit d'excellentes critiques et une bonne réponse du public. Accompagné de son piano, son ukulélé et d'un quatuor à cordes, il sera de passage dans le cadre du Festival Jazz et Blues de Saguenay le 14 avril à l'International Café.

« J'adore jouer pour des gens qui m'écoutent vraiment et qui connaissent ma musique. Ils ont acheté mon album et ils chantent avec moi », raconte Ben Wilkins, qui a longtemps chanter dans des bars et des petites salles. Originaire de l'Ontario, il a déménagé à Montréal alors qu'il avait 18 ans pour étudier la musique à l'Université McGill. « Je voulais changer mon environnement culturel. Je ne parlais pas un mot français, j'ai donc tout appris en arrivant ici il y a 10 ans », raconte l'artiste.

Ben Wilkins d'ailleurs pris part à un programme de 5 semaines à Chicoutimi afin d'apprendre la langue de Molière. Il est ensuite revenu à quelques reprises pour voir des amis et il a fait la première partie de David Usher à Alma l'été passé. « J'ai une certaine attache envers le Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean ».

Ben Wilkins a connu jusqu'ici trois extraits radio qui ont pris part aux palmarès, dont « Back of My Head » et « Through to You ». En tournée actuellement au Canada, Wilkins espère bien donner des spectacles partout, dont en Europe. Un deuxième album devrait également sortir en 2013.

« Ça devrait être assez différent du premier. Je compose toujours plein de trucs parce que si j'attends trop longtemps pour créer, je me ferme. Je fais donc souvent du nouveau matériel en spectacle », conclut le multi-instrumentiste.

Publié le 29 Mars 2012

Par: Luc Proulx

En ballades avec Ben Wilkins



Photo Yves Déry

L'auteur, compositeur et interprète Ben Wilkins.

Belle voix et excellent chanteur, aussi très mélodieux au piano, Ben Wilkins s'avère de surcroît un prolifique compositeur. Il se présentait avec un quatuor à cordes, une basse et une batterie, pour nous faire connaître ses jolies ballades, vendredi dernier, à l'église Sacré-Cœur.

La mélodie est une nature pour le musicien originaire de l'Ontario qui s'exprime très bien en français. En fait, c'est à McGill qu'il a appris et il est même passé par Beijing et le Conservatoire de musique de Shanghai, pour apprendre le mandarin.

Difficile de situer Ben Wilkins. Sa musique est très pop, mais les arrangements s'avèrent complexes malgré l'apparente simplicité mélodieuse. Ses compositions auraient pu appartenir à un Paul McCartney et les musiques font penser à Jack Johnson, mais toute comparaison ne pourrait que vous induire en erreur puisqu'il est très typé et fort original.

Un type musical très défini, donc, et bellement approprié, une personnalité sympathique et déjà un disque très fort et d'une parfaite homogénéité. L'auteur, compositeur et interprète aurait très bien pu se produire dans les années 1970 sans détonner.

En français, il nous a fait *Simplement jaloux*, de Michel Rivard, mais le fait de s'adresser au public dans la langue de Molière était déjà suffisant pour qu'on l'adopte, sans qu'il n'ait à faire de balade dans le corpus québécois. Ce sont ses compositions que nous voulons entendre de Ben Wilkins.

Le garçon a déjà un disque éponyme de onze chansons toutes très belles et tout devrait contribuer à son succès avec des pièces qui pourraient fort bien s'accommoder d'un orchestre encore plus grand, c'est en fait très proche du philharmonique par moments.



Divertissement

À la découverte de Ben Wilkins

LES ACTUALITÉS

QUEBECOR Média

Par Sophie Marais

Vendredi 16 mars 2012

Découvrir un nouvel artiste est toujours un voyage enrichissant. Dans le cas de Ben Wilkins, replongez dans l'esprit musical des années 70, ajoutez-y une ouverture d'esprit de l'époque actuelle et laissez-vous bercer, le 22 mars prochain au Vieux Saint-Pierre à Victoriaville.

Ben Wilkins a sorti son premier album éponyme en octobre dernier. Mais son parcours musical a débuté bien avant.

Né dans la province ontarienne, dès sa majorité, il emménage à Montréal. Il y réalise des études en trompette classique à l'Université McGill et poursuit son cheminement en obtenant un diplôme du Conservatoire de musique de Shanghai et de l'Université des langues et des cultures de Beijing.

Il s'enrichit, au fil des ans, de théories, de techniques et d'expériences forgeant l'immense talent qu'on lui reconnaît aujourd'hui. « Je faisais des compositions un peu en secret, pour moi-même. Je suis allé chercher ce dont j'avais besoin à McGill et j'ai fait ma propre école, mon propre programme », affirme l'artiste.

Son style musical est comparé à celui du fameux Elton John ou même du groupe Supertramp, mais Ben Wilkins berce à sa façon le public par sa musique fluide et soignée. Compositeur accompli, il a également collaboré à l'arrangement d'une pièce pour le groupe Bran Van 3000. Une invitation à découvrir un artiste qui ose dans ses compositions pour des résultats riches et authentiques.

Hebdo Rive Nord

Publié le 14 Mars 2012 par Olivia Nguonly

Ben Wilkins: un spectacle intimiste et chaleureux



Stéphane Grégoire

Réunis sur scène avec les musiciens, les spectateurs ont eu droit à une prestation unique en son genre au Théâtre Hector-Charland.

C'est en compagnie de six musiciens que l'auteur-compositeur-interprète Ben Wilkins s'est produit au Théâtre Hector-Charland de L'Assomption le samedi 10 mars.

La « formule cabaret » du spectacle avait tout pour séduire les mélomanes : jonchés sur des tabourets ou confortablement installés sur des chaises disposées à même la scène, l'expérience était unique en son genre.

Ben Wilkins a échangé quelques mots avec son public entre certaines de ses interprétations. Il a enchaîné les chansons de son premier album éponyme, de *Soup for one* à *Through to you*, tout en s'exécutant sur son instrument de prédilection, le piano.



L'artiste originaire de London en Ontario a poursuivi son opération séduction en interprétant le succès de Beau Dommage, *Tout simplement jaloux*, avec son charmant accent.

Pour connaître tous les détails de la tournée de Ben Wilkins, on consulte le site web de l'artiste au www.benwilkinsmusic.com.

Ben Wilkins: la pop imperméable aux modes



Par Nicolas Houle - Le Soleil

(Québec) Après avoir causé la surprise cet automne avec sa pop orchestrale qui semble tout droit sortie des années 70, Ben Wilkins part sur la route. Le Montréalais d'adoption s'arrêtera au Petit Champlain mercredi, avec une formation élargie lui permettant de rendre justice à son riche univers musical.

Des idées claires, du talent et un peu de chance. C'est tout ce qu'il a fallu à Ben Wilkins pour pondre son solide premier album, éponyme, paru cet automne. On pourrait peut-être aussi ajouter de l'expérience. Car même s'il n'a que 28 ans, le musicien a déjà passablement roulé sa bosse. À peine majeur, celui qui est né à London, en Ontario, mettait le cap sur Montréal.

«Je voulais déménager, se remémore-t-il. J'avais 18 ans et je voulais conquérir le monde. J'arrivais à Montréal et je ne parlais pas français...»

Wilkins a fait son entrée à l'Université McGill. Il y a étudié la trompette, bien que le piano soit toujours resté son instrument de prédilection. Puis, estimant qu'il n'avait pas droit à une véritable immersion française, il est allé séjourner à Chicoutimi.

«Là, j'ai commencé à voir ce qu'est le Québec et ç'a changé la façon dont je voyais Montréal.»

Musique faite en... Chine

Comme il avait la bougeotte, Wilkins est ensuite parti en Chine. Il avait la ferme idée de s'installer là-bas. Il y a même appris le mandarin, mais quand il a partagé ses idées musicales, il a constaté qu'il existait un fossé culturel difficile à franchir - ce qui ne l'empêche pas d'adapter aujourd'hui certaines de ses pièces dans cette langue... Notre homme est donc revenu dans la Belle Province, où son savoir-faire d'arrangeur a été requis entre autres par James Di Salvio, de Bran Van 3000. Or, ce que cherchait par-dessus tout Wilkins, c'était de coucher ses propres compositions en studio. C'est là que la chance a tourné pour lui...

«C'est spécial, parce que j'ai été approché par Pascal Shefteshy, qui était l'assistant [du réalisateur] Pierre Marchand. Il m'a dit que Pierre partait en vacances pour quelques mois et que si je voulais, le studio était disponible. C'était comme si j'avais gagné à la loto!»

Wilkins et Shefteshy ont mis pas moins de quatre mois sur l'enregistrement et à peu près autant de temps sur le mixage. Ça paraît : sa pop repose sur de foisonnants arrangements faits de cordes, de cuivres, d'un piano omniprésent, en plus de l'habituelle section rythmique et de quelques éléments-clés tels des cloches tubulaires, un piano-jouet ou encore des timbales. L'ensemble est saupoudré d'un zeste des années 70, le jeune créateur affectionnant des envolées lyriques, romantiques et ensoleillées qui évoquent celles d'un McCartney ou d'un Elton John.

«Il y a quelque chose de cette époque que je voulais faire vivre, explique le principal intéressé. [...] Souvent, j'écoute des albums comme ça et je ne m'en fatigue pas. Ça dure super longtemps...»

Le défi suivant pour Wilkins est de transcrire ses toiles sonores sur scène. Le Montréalais devrait y parvenir sans trop de mal, car il part sur la route avec six acolytes. De toute évidence, le jeune chanteur sait ce qu'il veut faire et prend les moyens pour y arriver.

«J'amène toujours un vrai piano sur scène, je ne joue pas sur un clavier. En plus de la basse et de la batterie, il va y avoir un quatuor à cordes. On va avoir beaucoup de *fun!*»

Hebdo Rive Nord

Ben Wilkins, un sympathique « hippy » aux accents modernes



Publié le 29 Février 2012
Olivia Nguonly

Écouter du Ben Wilkins, c'est s'évader de son bureau, du trafic, de son train-train quotidien et pénétrer dans une bulle mélodieuse figée dans l'espace temps. Échanger avec l'auteur-compositeur-interprète c'est aussi enrichissant, son charmant accent en plus. L'artiste plus que prometteur sera en spectacle au Théâtre Hector-Charland de L'Assomption le samedi 10 mars à 20h.

Son premier opus éponyme est sorti sur les tablettes des disquaires en octobre dernier sous l'étiquette Milagro Records. C'est dans le studio convoité de Pierre Marchand qu'il enregistre son album, qui paraît dix mois plus tard, et que Ben choisit de lancer au Robin des bois à Montréal. Un lieu qui en dit beaucoup sur le musicien.

« C'est un bon coin pour les spectacles et j'ai eu le coup de cœur pour le concept (Robin des Bois est un restaurant à but non lucratif. Tous les profits réalisés par la vente des repas et des produits sont redistribués à des organismes de charité). J'aime aussi beaucoup le personnage de Robin de bois. Ça a du sens avec moi : je suis un peu *hippy* », sourit-il.

Déjà, on compare sa musique tout droit sortie des années 70 à celle de Paul McCartney et Billy Joël, rien de moins. « C'est sûr que ça me flatte. (...) Personnellement, je trouve que ces artistes ont un beau romantisme et une belle harmonie. Je veux faire quelque chose comme eux, qui va durer, pas quelque chose à la mode qui l'on entendra plus dans trois ans. »

D'Ontarien à Québécois...

Pas besoin de lui poser la question, Ben Wilkins le dit d'emblée : « Je réside à Montréal et je me sens comme un Québécois ». C'est à l'âge de 18 ans qu'il quitte son London natal pour venir étudier la trompette classique à l'Université McGill.

« Je voulais rester au Canada, mais aller le plus loin possible à la fois ». Pas très loin le Québec, me direz-vous, mais pour Ben, « loin » signifie aussi loin sur le plan culturel. « Montréal est une ville riche en art et en musique », estime-t-il.

Pour ce qui est de cette langue qu'il ne maîtrisait pas et qui lui a valu quelques notes peu satisfaisantes durant ses premières années universitaires, il entreprendra un séjour d'immersion à Chicoutimi afin de remédier à cette lacune et de sillonner le Québec sur le pouce.

Avide de défis, le musicien séjourne ensuite un an en Chine afin d'y apprendre le mandarin, qu'il parle aujourd'hui assez couramment. « Tout ce qu'on vit peut nous amener quelque chose en création », témoigne l'auteur-compositeur-interprète.

Des compositions francophones par exemple? Perfectionniste, Ben estime qu'il ne maîtrise pas suffisamment sa langue d'adoption pour le moment : « C'est une chose de commander une poutine en français, s'en est une autre d'écrire. Je considère que les chansonniers francophones sont en quelque sorte des maîtres en la matière ».

Pour achat de billet ou information, on contacte la billetterie du Théâtre Hector-Charland en composant le 450 589-9198, poste 5 ou on visite le www.hector-charland.com.

28 février 2012



Ben Wilkins

Pop en douceur et en rythme

Par François C. Guevremont

Culture > Arts de la scène

Le Montréalais Ben Wilkins a lancé en 2011 son premier album solo. Auteur, compositeur, pianiste, chanteur, réalisateur, la liste de postes qu'il a occupés sur l'album est longue. Mais à chacun de ces postes, il a excellé. Les critiques ont été assez élogieux sur son travail.

Le jeune musicien sera d'ailleurs au Centre culturel de Belœil le dimanche 11 mars, avec son jeu de piano rappelant Elton John. Une ressemblance sonore qu'il ne nie pas, où la pop et le jazz se croisent de temps en temps.

«Je n'ai pas étudié leur musique en profondeur, mais j'ai écrit des lignes de piano très pop, explique-t-il. Comme il s'agit d'un des musiciens qui utilise le plus ce style, c'est certain que la comparaison est facile. Ce sont des sonorités qui me sont venues plus facilement au piano qu'à la guitare.»

À l'aise autant en français qu'en anglais, Ben Wilkins a opté pour des compositions dans la langue de Paul McCartney pour son premier album, qui porte son nom. Sur le disque se mêlent les sons de multiples musiciens, autant à la guitare qu'à la trompette. Sur scène, il sera accompagné par un bassiste, un batteur et un quatuor à cordes.

«Ça amène une richesse du côté des sonorités, souligne l'artiste. Ils peuvent changer la couleur de n'importe quelle chanson en lui donnant un style plus disco ou plus orchestral.»

La chance du débutant

En écoutant le disque, on se rend compte que Ben Wilkins a du talent en composition. Et que sa voix cadre très bien avec ses mélodies au piano, autant rythmées que calmes.

Et en plus du talent, il a bénéficié d'un bon coup de chance. Le réalisateur montréalais Pierre Marchand, qui a travaillé sur les albums de Rufus Wainwright, Lhasa, Sarah McLachan et bien d'autres, lui a prêté son studio quand il était libre, pendant un an. Un genre de fantôme de musicien.

«C'est génial, c'est arrivé exactement au bon moment. Il y a un an, je n'aurais pas été prêt à enregistrer. Et comme tout mon album est fait avec de vrais instruments, ça donne un son plus agréable, de meilleure qualité.»

Le nom de Ben Wilkins circule beaucoup dans le milieu montréalais de la musique. Il a d'ailleurs fait les arrangements de cordes et de cuivres pour le dernier album du groupe Bran Van 3000 et a aussi travaillé avec la musicienne électro Misstress Barbara. Deux artistes aux styles assez différents de celui de son album.

«Si je colle dans la vision du projet, j'embarque, exprime le musicien originaire de l'Ontario. Il n'est pas question du style musical; si j'aime, c'est tout ce qui compte.»

Pour lui, faire des arrangements pour d'autres amène une liberté agréable. Beaucoup moins de responsabilités, aussi.

«Quand c'est ton disque, il faut que tu penses à tous les aspects, de la réservation du studio pour l'enregistrement au mixage, mentionne-t-il. Quand tu collabores avec d'autres, une fois que ta partie est terminée, tu ne penses plus au reste.»

À découvrir si vous aimez Supertramp et Elton John.

Ben Wilkins, 11 mars, 20 h, au Centre culturel de Belœil.

Ben Wilkins Takes His Love for Music on the Road



Image credit: Pascal Shefteshy

By Shaelyn Corwin - Maple Ridge Secondary, Maple Ridge BC

London, Ontario singer-songwriter Ben Wilkins releases debut album.

Music has always been a constant in Ben Wilkins' life. He spent weekends as a kid listening to local bands in his hometown of London, Ontario, moved to Montreal at the age of 18 to study music at McGill University and is now turning his passion for music into what he hopes will be a successful career. Having already released a self-titled debut album, it's safe to say Wilkins has taken a big step towards turning his dream into a reality. *Youthink* caught up with Wilkins to chat about his new album, his appreciation for music from the '70s and his plans for 2012.

YT: Who or what inspired your passion for music and how excited were you to go to Montreal to study music at McGill?

BW: It was very exciting. [Music] became sort of a focus in my last year of high school - that's why I really wanted to do that and I really wanted to get in. I had other choices and such but that was really where I wanted to be. So I was really thrilled to get in. It was an exciting move.

YT: What were some of the core lessons and skills you developed while at McGill that have helped you become the artist you are today?

BW: I learned that the program was not going to in itself make me a musician. It really had no focus – not even a seminar about songwriting. For example, it was really specifically classical jazz, or pretty abstract composition. At around third year, I decided there's a lot of stuff at this school I can still learn. I started getting sound recording classes, not because I wanted to be an engineer, but because I knew it was really

important to be able to talk to engineers. I definitely learned a lot about music theory - I'm able to arrange for orchestral instruments on the level that I can right now.

YT: What are your hopes and expectations for your self-titled debut album?

BW: This album was already winning the lottery that I got to record it. It was made completely independently. The album itself deserves a chance in that I wanted to make sure there was proper promotion behind it. I didn't want to just put it out on the Internet and see what happens. I've seen that happen with friends where if it's not in the right hands when it comes out, it can be easily forgotten about or ignored. My hopes are that it just spreads across a large enough radius and people who like it pay attention. I just want people that will love it to hear it.

YT: How would you describe the album and is there one theme that is consistent throughout?

BW: The songs are very personal. And I did that consciously. I wanted to write songs that were true to me. The first album is a collection of songs I've written over a couple of years so there's not one underlying theme. Each song has a theme.

YT: The album has a '70s feel to it. What is it about that era's music that appeals to you?

BW: Music from that time is actually pretty romantic stuff. It's always been an exciting part of music history and American history in general. I've heard this a lot and its fun because I'm being compared to people that I love and from an era that I love. But we weren't trying to make the record actually sound like it's from the '70s. We were just using techniques of recording that was used more in the '70s.

YT: What do you think is missing in the music industry today that was present in that era?

BW: I think there are some things that have happened in the music industry in the last 15-20 years. One of them people refers to as "the loudness war" where everybody is trying to get their single to be the loudest one, because record companies and record labels decided that they would sell more records if the songs were louder. What that has done is destroy the dynamic feeling in music. You can't have really loud moments and really quiet moments if everything is really loud all the time. It's becoming to the point where people really notice now and are complaining about it.

YT: Where do you find it easiest to write and where do you draw inspiration?

BW: I wish I had a really easy formula because I probably would be writing a lot more. I find I write often when I am able to isolate myself at the piano for long enough or the guitar... but I need to be in a place where I feel pretty good. Then songs will start to write themselves. I can't elaborate too much because it works or it doesn't work. It's true or it's not true. I try to no overthink.

YT: What are your plans and goals for 2012?

BW: My plans and goals are to play a lot of shows, to take this show on the road. And that's a pretty fun thing to do because when I bring a real piano to every show, that's a challenge in itself.

LE DEVOIR

Sylvain Cormier 28 janvier 2012

Disques - L'extraordinaire premier album de Ben Wilkins



Devant moi au Presse Café du Dix30 — quelle étrangeté que de se rencontrer un mardi après-midi dans ce lieu maléfique du commerce extrême, planté en plein nulle part —, il sourit parce qu'il est ailleurs, en apesanteur dans sa bulle de bonheur. J'exagère à peine. C'est un frisé aux yeux écarquillés. Grand enfant un brin excité qui a envie d'aller jouer. Ben Wilkins est comme son merveilleux premier album: tout naturellement émerveillé.

Les portes du paradis

«C'est vrai que je suis sur un nuage. Je dois me pincer pour y croire. Cet album, c'est un fantasma réalisé.» En effet. Imaginez un Ontarien de London, Ontario, Montréalais d'adoption, sorti de McGill où il a étudié la trompette classique, jeune homme pétri de chanson pop géniale des années 60 et 70, lui-même auteur-compositeur-interprète de chansons pop géniales dans le même esprit, à qui on aurait ouvert les portes du paradis. À savoir: un studio d'enregistrement rien que pour lui.

«Ma grande chance, c'est d'avoir connu Pascal Shefteshy, qui est l'assistant de Pierre Marchand [le réalisateur des Sarah McLachlan, Rufus Wainwright, Lhasa...] dans son fabuleux studio. Il s'est trouvé que Marchand devait s'absenter un long moment, et Pascal l'a convaincu de me laisser utiliser le studio quand il n'était pas loué. Gratuitement. Un studio à mille dollars par jour. Où l'album idéal que j'avais en tête, pur fantasma de paysages sonores dessinés dans le moindre détail, a pu devenir réalité.» Il s'esclaffe à ces mots: est-ce vraiment arrivé?

Eh oui. Ben Wilkins, prodige de l'arrangement que l'on a aperçu dans les parages de James Di Salvio et son Bran Van 3000, de Mistress Barbara aussi, a pu créer dans le plus grand luxe imaginable son disque à petit budget. «Plein de musiciens se sont offerts; je dois beaucoup à beaucoup de gens.» Ils ont été une bonne vingtaine à l'accompagner, cordes, cuivres, bois et vents, palette aux mille couleurs autour du noyau piano-basse-batterie. Le joyeux Ben en a eu les yeux encore plus grands, sorte de Willie Wonka «lâché lousse», non pas dans une chocolaterie, mais dans une usine à sons, tel Brian Wilson salivant à l'idée qu'il va créer Pet Sounds, tel un p'tit gars à qui on aurait donné les clés du magasin de jouets.

«J'avais en tête un univers complètement différent pour chaque chanson. Je n'avais qu'à fournir des images pour décrire ce que j'avais en tête, et ça se mettait à exister. Exemple, je disais: dans ce bout-là, il faudrait qu'on se sente comme si on était à dos d'éléphant. Et on parlait de là.»

Un drôle d'ovni

A émergé de l'expérience idyllique un disque portant son nom franchement extraordinaire, à l'enseigne de la petite étiquette Milagro, distribuée par Outside: une grande bouffée d'airs pop du genre qu'on ne croyait plus possibles. Pensez Nilsson au temps de One, Elton John époque Madman Across the Water, McCartney échafaudant The Back Seat of My Car pour l'album Ram, Stevie Wonder, Steely Dan, Gilbert O'Sullivan. L'âge d'or des mélodistes enchanteurs dans leurs studios magiques. Plus récemment, incluez-le dans la famille des Ben Folds, Wondermints, Pierre Lapointe et autres partisans d'une pop pas gênée d'être accrocheuse et somptueuse à la fois. «On a fait un disque indie sans être indie. Ça ne correspond pas non plus à la définition de ce qui est pop aujourd'hui, c'est un drôle d'ovni», commente le jeune homme.

Ce que c'est? Une aventure de modulations fascinantes, où la mélodie va son surprenant chemin en empruntant plein de détours aussi imprévisibles qu'heureux. Il y a des séquences à grand déploiement et des scènes intimistes, et des idées, des idées, des idées. À la fin, une seule question reste en plan: y a-t-il encore une place pour cette pop intelligente et sensible? Ça ne se propagera qu'au bouche à oreille: à vous de jouer.

Le site benwilkinsmusic.com vous en dira plus, notamment à propos de la tournée québécoise et ontarienne qui démarre le 7 mars. «Quoi qu'il arrive, et je me souhaite forcément une carrière à long terme, j'aurai fait ce disque...»



23 décembre 2011

Puisqu'il faut se lever

Vitrine du CD par Sylvain Ménard et Paul Arcand

Album(s) de l'année

Ben Wilkins

Un larcin culturel en 2011. Ben Wilkins s'inspire des années 70 avec tellement d'intelligence et de brillance. Natif de London en Ontario, il a « immigré » au Québec pour étudier à McGill. Il est tellement, mais tellement connaissant de la chose musicale, c'est une splendeur.

On l'écoute et on entend un peu d'Elton John, de Paul McCartney et comme je lisais dans un texte de Sylvain Cormier du Devoir, un peu d'Harry Nilsson, lui qui était un expert de la pop dans les années 1970. Ben Wilkins c'est d'la pop indie d'ici, mais c'est très en âge et c'est très accessible.

« Je suis très content de débiter la liste des « Vitrine des Vitrines » avec Ben Wilkins. On avait écouté et découvert son album ensemble en octobre 2011. Il sera en spectacle un peu partout au Québec en 2012. Allez le voir car le spectacle est aussi renversant que son album. »

LE DEVOIR

22 décembre 2011

Les meilleurs disques anglophones en 2011

Par : Sylvain Cormier

BEN WILKINS

BACK OF MY HEAD EP



4- Ben Wilkins, *Back of My Head EP* (Milagro):

Le premier album de l'Ontarien d'origine et Québécois d'adoption a fini par sortir (on en reparlera), mais c'est ce minidisque qui a fait l'effet bœuf: en six titres, c'était joué, sa sorte de pop épatait. Des arrangements qui étonnent autant qu'ils bercent, des mélodies complexes et fluides à la fois, du bonbon sans sucre, du somptueux sans prétention, de l'easy listening jamais facile. Le ravissement sans réinventer la roue, ça se peut.

Ben Wilkins / Ben Wilkins

BEN WILKINS





SWEET 16 - The BEST Albums of 2011

We've compiled a list of Icon Fetch's Sweet Sixteen - The Best Albums of 2011. These are the discs that spent the most time jammed into our car stereo and in heavy rotation on our IPod over the last 12 months. Each album includes a link to a full Icon Fetch review. Plus, we've also added links to each album so you can preview them at Amazon.



Over the Rhine - The Long Surrender (Great Speckled Dog) Hands down a stunning release, hauntingly beautiful. Excellent production by Joe Henry. Gets better with every listen. [Read the review.](#) [Preview the album on Amazon](#)



Smithereens - 2011 (E1 Entertainment) Our vote for "comeback of the year" - the 'reens return with their first new original studio album in 12 years. There's a youthful energy to these tracks. [Read the review.](#) [Preview the album on Amazon.](#)



Davina & the Vagabonds - Black Cloud (Roustabout) A fun listen - nothing like a blazing horn section to cheer you up. We're expecting more big things from leader Davina in the future. [Read the review.](#) [Preview the album on Amazon](#)



Ben Wilkins - self titled (Milagro) A late addition to the list, Wilkins is a young Canadian songwriter, but somehow he's able to channel pop and soul from the early Seventies. Not a bad tune on this one. [Read the review.](#) [Preview the album on Amazon.](#)



Gregg Allman - Low Country Blues (Rounder) We've been waiting for Gregg to make a great solo album like this. Sure helps he's got T-Bone Burnett as producer and the searing guitar of Doyle Bramhall III. [Read the review.](#) [Preview the album on Amazon](#)

Plus 11 more...



By Tony Peters

December 2011

Ben Wilkins - self titled (Milagro) review

BEN WILKINS



The most melodic album of the year comes from a young songwriter from Canada. Ben Wilkins' self-titled debut is full of memorable hooks and echoes of the past. His excellent piano work and pleasant vocals recall a time when singer/songwriters dominated the charts of the early Seventies. But, what truly makes this album a throwback is Wilkins choice of recording technique – choosing to utilize a real string section, horns and background vocals. This, intertwined with his keen melodic sense, make for an album that sounds incredibly fresh amongst all the digital sampling of today.

For a guy who obviously experienced the decade secondhand, Wilkins shows an uncanny ability to meld the pop and soul influences of the 1970's into something original. Take "Soup For One," which begins with just voice and piano (reminiscent of something Todd Rundgren might've written back in the day), then increases in tempo and morphs into a disco-infused chorus, complete with a string arrangement which is absolute ear candy. "Caught in the Rain" begins with a bouncy, Pepper-era Beatles riff before giving way to an acapella section that sounds like Earth Wind & Fire. "Allison," with its breezy melody and ukulele, hides its darker subject matter. The album's first single, "Through to You," with its funky beat, strings and horns, has an almost reggae feel to it. "Back of My Head" is another standout with great background vocals. There really isn't a bad song here, with every single track having a memorable hook.

The sound quality of the album is phenomenal. Because it was recorded "old school", to fully enjoy all the nuances of the lush arrangements, do yourself a favor and actually grab the CD – the difference between it and a compressed version in mp3 is remarkable. Credit for the great sound goes in part to happenstance, where Wilkins was given unlimited access to a big recording studio, while the producer was out of town. The care that went into the record is definitely noticeable.

At present, this excellent debut is only available in import form, and as an mp3 download on Amazon and iTunes. Here's hoping Wilkins can catch on with a US label, and we can get more great songs from this up-and-coming talent. -- Tony Peters

The Gazette

What's on your playlist?: Ben Wilkins

By BERNARD PERUSSE, The Gazette

December 19, 2011



Ben Wilkins

Ben Wilkins plays the kind of musically literate piano pop that's becoming all too rare on the musical landscape these days. Fans of Harry Nilsson, Steely Dan and Ben Folds should seek out the Montreal-based musician's debut disc, released in October. Its highly inventive sense of songcraft and arrangement, with smart orchestration and well-placed background vocals as sweeteners, make Wilkins an artist to watch in 2012.

While we wait for the next local gig, here's a taste of what the singer-songwriter has been listening to lately:

1. **24-25** Kings of Convenience
2. **Ex-Factor** Lauryn Hill
3. **Why** Carly Simon
4. **Sylvie Matthews'** Southern Comfort
5. **Party (featuring Andre 3000)** Beyoncé
6. **A Brand New Me** Aretha Franklin
7. **The Back Seat of My Car** Paul and Linda McCartney
8. **Rough Times** Candi Staton
9. **Live Again** Irma Thomas
10. **I Can See the Sun in Late December** Roberta Flack

Ben Wilkins's self-titled debut album is available now.



Ben Wilkins- Soup For One

17 December 2011

By teepoo



Born and raised in Ontario the now Montreal based singer-songwriter Ben Wilkins shows both his classical and jazz training in his songs. I've heard a ton of guitarist singer-songwriters lately but here's a pianist. That doesn't mean his songs aren't lush though. *Soup For One* starts off as a lovely ballad with bass, piano and Ben's lovely voice. It slowly grows to include things such as strings and other voices. Looks like it became more than just *Soup For One* eh? Lame pun, I know.

Ben Wilkins- Soup For One



By Tony Peters

December 15th, 2011

Ben Wilkins (interview)



You'd never think a young singer/songwriter could make such a classic-sounding album. Ben Wilkins hails from Canada and has just released his self-titled debut album, a combination of his melodic piano work and soaring tenor, augmented by strings, horns and lush background vocals - all adding up to a record that sounds like it could've come out in 1973. Wilkins has a knack for writing hook-laden songs that integrate vibrant pop with soulful R&B with a sprinkling of jazz. Icon Fetch talks to the up and coming talent about the circumstances that led to having literally unlimited recording time in a top-notch studio, where his influences come from, and the making of the clever video for his song "Through To You."

Live interview here: <http://www.iconfetch.com/great-music-interviews/2011-shows/451-ben-wilkins-interview.html>

(cult)ture

magazine

Is Ben Wilkins the next piano pop star?

Written by Renée Rietveld

Monday, 12 December 2011

As an up and coming singer-songwriter, one would think being compared to the likes of Rufus Wainwright would be just a little bit intimidating. But, as Montreal-based Ben Wilkins has proven on his self-titled debut album, maybe all it takes to live up to this comparison is some real talent and a solid understanding of the classics.



Wilkins grew up in London, Ont., but left at the age of 18 to study classical trumpet at McGill University. After graduating, he also lived in China, spending time at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and then the Beijing Language and Culture University.

But something about the indie-rock capital of Canada still beckoned to him, and he ended up back there in 2008, where he was given the opportunity of a lifetime from producer Pascal Shefteshy. Shefteshy, an acclaimed engineer and producer working for famous producer Pierre Marchand (Sarah McLachlan, Rufus Wainwright), approached him to record an album and, with the blessing of Marchand, gave him free reign to make an uncompromising debut.

What resulted is a solid, catchy disc, featuring 24 musicians (everything from strings, brass, winds, orchestral percussion, to a small choir). It sounds like something a lot less modern and a lot more retro -- call it 'optimistic piano pop' with a twist.

The album is very strong, as evident by songs like "Back of My Head," a mixed instrumental track that laments a former lover's sharp words. This track would almost be better suited for the beginning of the album, as it sets up what is clearly Wilkins' style: songs that start with soft piano and light lyrics, eventually blowing up the sound into a frenetic mix of catchy drums, violins, and all other manner of instruments.

This album is, however, even stronger at the points when Wilkins veers away from his comfort zone a little. A good example of this divergence is "The Other Side," which sticks to a slower pace and is probably his most effective attempt at something different. His strength (despite the classical trumpet training) is clearly piano, and this song strips it down beautifully.

But really, Wilkins seems to be going for fun and light more than anything here, and in this he certainly succeeds throughout. He may be tackling some traditionally unhappy subjects, but you'd never know it given how perky they sound. His lyrics are also very conversational, sounding more like coffee date conversations than standard rhyming lyrics.

The standout track here is also very clear. "Through to You" (which was also given a really fun accompanying music video done in time-lapse) is where he really gets creative and goes a bit wild, throwing every instrument at the listener, and letting you go along for the ride.

Then there's "Soup for One" which is pure 70s pop, and "Opening" which sounds exactly like Ben Folds -- in fact, by the time Wilkins gets around to singing about being a "Chameleon," it would be hard to disagree with him. The artist comparisons that he has gotten are also undeniable here with songs and a voice that really mix the styles of everyone from Wainwright and Ben Folds to Jamiroquai and Kings of Convenience.

Wilkins is the kind of pop singer that we need more of nowadays -- unassuming, not overly cocky, mature. This is no doubt the reason he has no trouble keeping himself busy with other projects, like working with Bran Van 3000's James Di Salvio, who entrusted him with writing the string and brass arrangements on *The Garden*, the band's fourth album. He also did vocal and string arrangements on 2010 Juno nominee Mistress Barbara's upcoming album.

It's clear that Ben Wilkins is both passionate and talented, a standard combo that is seriously enhanced by his love of classical music. His optimism is also undeniably infectious. If this debut is any indication, he could be poised for a very interesting career.

Track picks: "Back of My Head," "Through to You," "The Fall," "The Other Side"



Ben Wilkins

Posted by I.R.I.S. Entertainment on 2011/12/11

This week I've got a guest review for your enjoyment. Here's Colin's review of Ben Wilkins' self-titled debut album:

Within just a few seconds of listening to *Back Of My Head*, I was reminded of another Ben very near and dear to me. I'm sure I'm not the only one who would find the lilting quality of Wilkins' voice during the piano/vocal-only sections reminiscent of Ben Folds, and in a very good way.

At full instrumental strength, the songs throw me back to the big band sounds of the 70s... as if I'm back in that time, except, the lyrics are much more down to earth and appealing. It's nice to hear this kind of music with emotional and thought-provoking lyrics, rather than the often inane/insipid subject matter of the songs of that era.

All that said, it's difficult to put Wilkins' in just one category. Jazz, pop, blues, light rock, are all peppered throughout. But still, the album itself flows as a cohesive whole, due to some genius composition. The music is instantly appealing to the pop easy-listener (*Chameleon*), but still melodically and temporally interesting enough to hold the attention of someone who likes a bit more variation in a tune (*Opening*).

Wilkins' in-depth musical education and experience shines through very strongly, making it difficult to believe this is only his first studio album. Not to mention the song design, the playful back and forth of piano and full orchestra, and the strategic implantation of pauses and tempo changes. Wilkins' shows a wide breadth of musical talent that makes this album quite engaging.



CD Review: Ben Wilkins S/T

Posted on December 6, 2011 by Aaron Kupferberg

BEN WILKINS



Ontario-born Ben Wilkins was already a well-rounded musician, having studied classical music at Montreal's McGill University and spent his post grad studies in Shanghai, China, when he began working with musical producers Pascal Shefteshy and Pierre Marchand (Sarah McLachlan, Rufus Wainwright) to put together his debut album.

The warm classical pop sound permeates most of this album, but the disjointed "Opening" has a mix of indie jazz percussive effects, piano and classical strings contrasting Ben's clean vocals. It sounds like he has thrown everything but the kitchen sink into the mix to let us know he's avant garde.

But what comes next is nothing short of a revelation. "Soup for One" is a perfect amalgam of Ben Folds and George Michael, with a simple piano chord that grows into a lushly orchestrated melody. The arrangement and vocals here are pitch perfect and draw you into his world. "Through to You" leans more to the sound of Ben Folds or Adrian Whitehead, with slick harmonies and clean horns.

Next comes the beautiful arrangement of "The Fall," full of minor chords and Pet Sounds styled orchestration. "The Back of My Head" adds a bit of Stevie Wonder styled funk to the melody, but at over four minutes, it drags on too long. A few tracks are guilty of trotting out a melody and having it overstay its welcome, including "The Road Is Long".

However, it isn't long before you get the crown jewel of the album, "Allison." It starts with a sweet, bouncy melody and ukulele and leads to a gorgeous middle eight. An impressive song that will linger with you, but Ben doesn't belt out the main melody here, instead it feels like he's holding back a bit.

The album ends on the gentle, multi-tracked harmonies of "Waltz to the Other Side." Despite the minor shortcomings, this album is a complex mix of classical pop influences that is sure to impress any audiophile and music fan. I expect much more from Mr. Wilkins, as he has the potential to be the next pop superstar.



Ben Wilkins “Ben Wilkins”

Written on December 7, 2011 by [powerpopaholic](#) in [Highly Recommended by Powerpopaholic, Power Pop Review](#)



Ben Wilkins “Ben Wilkins”

Ontario-born Ben Wilkins was already a well-rounded musician, having studied classical music at Montreal’s McGill University and spent his post grad studies in Shanghai, China, when he began working with musical producers Pascal Shefteshy and Pierre Marchand (Sarah McLachlan, Rufus Wainwright) to put together his debut album. The warm classical pop sound permeates most of this album, but the disjointed “Opening” has a mix of indie jazz percussive effects, piano and classical strings contrasting Ben’s clean vocals. It sounds like he has thrown everything but the kitchen sink into the mix to let us know he’s avant garde.

But what comes next is nothing short of a revelation. “Soup for One” is a perfect amalgam of Ben Folds and George Michael, with a simple piano chord that grows into a lushly orchestrated melody. The arrangement and vocals here are pitch perfect and draw you into his world. “Through to You” leans more to the sound of Ben Folds or Adrian Whitehead, with slick harmonies and clean horns. [Read my full review at The Rock and Roll Report.](#)

But trust me on this, several songs have found a permanent home on my ipod – a stunning debut!

McGill News ALUMNI MAGAZINE

December 5th, 2011

Recommended listening – Fall-Winter 2011

Soundcheck



Ben Wilkins, BMus'06

Ben Wilkins might soon grow weary of receiving so many comparisons to Ben Folds, but he is earning them for all the right reasons— his clear tenor voice, his delicately crafted, piano-driven songs, his clever bittersweet lyrics. Burt Bacharach is another name that comes up when considering Wilkins, and that's no accident. Wilkins has a soft spot for the straightforward pop of the late sixties and seventies, music that didn't hit you over the head with how skillfully it was assembled, trusting that you'd appreciate its rich, understated textures on your own.

The multi-talented Wilkins has just released his first full album and the contents, including the biting "The Back of My Head" and the poignant groove of "Soup for One," should appeal to anyone in the market for smart, sharply produced pop.

DM



December 5, 2011

Swapping Notes with Ben Wilkins

We sat down with Montreal based musician Ben Wilkins to find out who his musical influences are, his favourite track on his album, and where he sees himself in five years.

By Giselle San Miguel



Describe your musical background.

I grew up singing constantly, and my parents put me in piano lessons when I was five. I listened to the Beatles a lot on my parents record player and learned to sing everything. At eleven I learned how to play the guitar and the trumpet and began playing in bands at school. Eventually it was my favourite thing to do, and I moved to Montreal to study music at McGill University. I learned a lot about arranging and music theory, but my favourite thing to do was write songs and record them – something that wasn't part of the curriculum. After school I kept writing and performing and made an album.

Who are your musical influences and why?

I listen to everything but I'm influenced by a lot of music from the 1970's or older. There's a romantic quality to those songs that are beautiful and sincere. Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Carole King, Joni Mitchell, Burt Bacharach, and Paul Simon. Those people make me crazy in all the right ways.



What kind of advice would you give to aspiring artists?

I'd say if you love what you do, keep developing and keep at it. It takes a lot of patience and self-sacrifice to make it. But hard work, perseverance and a bit of talent will always rise to the top. I'm an optimist and have thought that way for years. Not because I don't have moments of despair, but because I get better results by being positive.

Which track is your favourite on your self-titled debut album?

That's a tough question. My songs are like children. I love them all differently and can't pick a favourite, but I will anyway. Soup for One came out really well, and it's always fun to play live.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

In five years I'd like to have at least two more albums out, and maybe do more collaborating with other artists. I can also see myself with a little studio on a farm somewhere. I've been living in cities now for a while and I dream of moving to the country.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Aside from all things music, I enjoy people, cooking, spicy food, the outdoors, exercising, water sports, surfing when I can get near the ocean, conversations that go too late, and too many other things to continue listing.

About Ben Wilkins

Ben Wilkins was born and raised in Ontario, and moved to Montreal, Quebec at the age of eighteen to study music at McGill University. He majored in Classical Trumpet and soaked up whatever he could regarding composition, arranging, singing, theory and jazz harmony – spending countless nights sneaking into the piano studios afterhours to write songs.

Ben Wilkin's self-titled debut album on Milagro Records is in stores across Canada.



December 2011 - Toronto

Ben Wilkins, "Self-Titled"

Milagro Records

Reviewed by Vee Manzerolle



The self-titled full-length debut album from Ben Wilkins provides music inspiration with its numerous orchestrated arrangements. Born and raised in Ontario Wilkins decided to pursue an education in music at McGill University before a music career. His studies focused on Classical Trumpet with the addition of composition, arranging, singing, music theory, and jazz harmony. Listening to his debut album it's apparent that school most definitely paid off. From the album's first track "Opening" an arrangement of various instruments is immediately introduced. Wilkins' soothing voice compliments the sound of violin, piano, and soft drums. The song ends with a triumphant brass conclusion. You'll get a nostalgic feeling when listening to Ben Wilkins; "Soup for One" plays on that feeling. Wilkins' vocals share a similar sound with the acclaimed artist Jamiroquai while maintaining a unique signature sound of his own. As a listener you get the vibe that he would put on a flawless live performance. Wilkins shows his versatility with "Back of my Head." The track is more aggressive and powerful than previous tracks on the album. It still taps into an orchestrated pop sound with the dynamic of fast and aggressive versus slow and soft. An abrupt end with piano adds a nice touch. Ben Wilkins could easily be deemed a modern day crooner. The tracks found on his self-titled debut album back his vocals with an orchestra or big band resonance. If you had to classify this album the most appropriate title would be orchestrated pop music. Ben Wilkins focuses on the beauty of instruments and their mechanics. **3.5/5**

The Anti-Hit List for Nov. 26

By John Sakamoto
Staff Reporter

The Anti-Hit List



Ontario-born Ben Wilkins brings jazz and the sounds of the '70s to his broad musical palette.

5. BEN WILKINS

“Back of My Head”

Because this Ontario-born, Montreal-based musician sings and plays the piano, it's instinctive to reach for the Ben Folds or Rufus Wainwright comparisons. Yet there's a jazz and '70s-soul dimension to this single that isn't typically part of those artists' musical palettes. With the help of Pascal Shefteshy (best known for his engineering work for Sarah McLachlan) and a background that includes McGill University and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Wilkins has an intriguing tendency to veer off on a detour and make them sound he intended to take that route all along.



Canadian Music Video Shout Out! – Ben Wilkins!

By J MacDonald | Published November 24, 2011



Ben Wilkins everybody!

Born and raised in Ontario, Wilkins moved to Montreal to study music at McGill University. He majored in Classical Trumpet and soaked up as much composition, arranging, singing, theory and jazz harmony as possible, spending countless nights sneaking into the piano studios after hours to write songs. Upon graduation, he received a scholarship to study Mandarin in China, and spent the better part of a year at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the Beijing Language and Culture University.

Ben oozes musical style and talent, and this video celebrates his hard work and achievements in a classy way. Big sounds, great vocals, superb artistic vision, this is so much great stuff packed into a wonderfully thought out music video.

Do yourself a favor and go to the link above to see Ben's website, which plays the music video in the browser as it loads the page! Very cool stuff, and a very solid presentation on top of his talented tunes.



Interview

By Jesse Skinner
November 18, 2011

BEN WILKINS



I've used the music of Montreal's **Ben Wilkins** to cheer myself up, but it's more than just comfort food. It's finely crafted pop music of the highest calibre, part throwback to the days of Harry Nilsson, Billy Joel and Randy Newman, part modern indie rock drained of brooding and self-obsession.

Before his appearance at this year's **M for Montreal** festival, I spoke with Wilkins about how to make an artistic living in the city, his choice to be a nominally solo artist, and the curious characteristics of his chosen instrument.

Is it easy to live the life on an artist in Montreal?

There's low overhead, so a lot of people are here creating art. Some stand out more than others, obviously the indie rock movement with Montreal bands who have made a mark internationally.

Have you found yourself fitting into artistic groups on a social level, not even just fellow musicians?

Not really. At one point I thought it would be like Paris at the turn of the century, I'd find and hang out with songwriting contemporaries, like Fitzgerald (socializing) with Hemingway. But what I look for in a friend is very different than what I look for in someone to work with. In my personal life I try not to take myself very seriously and that doesn't mesh with a lot of other singer/songwriters. You're supposed to show up and be mysterious and broody. I don't feel like a performer when I walk around, I don't put on this air of artistic mystery. There's plenty of that in town (already.)

How did you draw in collaborators?

It's a delicate thing. The project/band I have with seven people is called "Ben Wilkins." It's me because I write the songs but live it's a very different thing. Someone told me when I moved to Montreal that if you want to make it you have to approach it as though no one will be there. As if you're really the leader, and if you do that collaborators will come to you much more quickly because people look for that leadership. That's essentially what's happened with me. I don't take the leadership role aggressively, I'm always looking for input, but I'm aware of my position and I try not to shy away from that. I try to be the leader I'd want to work for.

In that position though you must have to turn down other people's suggestions, maybe constantly?

At this point I'm working with people who are happy to suggest things and are happy if I trump them with another interpretation. If someone makes a suggestion that goes against the integrity of the song, that's a pretty strong vote. But everyone has their own set of ears. My drummer or bass player will redo their bits if they feel they're off or not tight enough. And that's good: without that my band would just feel like a bunch of hired guns who do what I say. That would make for some lifeless music.

Do you write in collaboration?

Mostly solo. I've dabbled in collaborative writing a little bit. I'm definitely open to it and I'd love to do it more but for now I go into my own practice space and do my own thing.

I imagine that would be a greater challenge on piano. It's not a relatively loud instrument but the sound of it can really dominate a room.

Yeah. There's clarity in the instrument; when you play more dense harmony, jazz chords and things, it really resonates in the human ear. With jazz chords played on the piano versus the guitar ... you can "sing" all the notes on piano while the texture of the guitar is muddier. So when I'm writing on the piano I have to be much surer of the decisions I'm making. This is cool because I have to be sold on an idea before I move on. That gives you a natural confidence when you play.

What does the piano require of you physically?

You're seated, right, so leading the band from a chair is a unique thing. It's easier to be charismatic when you're standing up with a guitar. You can move around, work the room. I'm always sideways to the audience which is a bit of a disadvantage, but at the same time it allows me to be a part of the band. Physically, piano is all in your shoulders, I guess. Your wrists have to be really light but you need the connection all the way from your shoulders to the hammering of your fingers. That has to work smoothly.

I can't imagine the logistical nightmare of having to tour with a piano.

A lot of pianists don't have the luxury of getting to know an instrument very well. If you tour and play jazz clubs you just have to play the instrument they have there. But I move my piano to each gig. This year I bought one specifically for touring and I've gotten to know it well. But up until that point I pretty much had to find them wherever I could. I had to adapt. Some pianos sound very moody and mellow and others sound much thicker. Some just sing like crazy. The one I have now is very clear and bright.

Do you play when prompted, outside of the stage?

Depends how I'm feeling. I don't really like that kind of thing. When you tell people you're a singer they'll say "Oh, sing something for me!" "Right now? We're on the bus." It's tricky. You'll be at a family reunion and someone will ask you to play a song ... I want to say, like, "Well, you're an accountant. Why don't you do my taxes?"



Ben Wilkins ★★★★★

BEN WILKINS



Disc review

By Kevin Laforest – November 17, 2011

Right from the get-go, Ben Wilkins grabs our attention on this sublime debut LP which showcases a sophisticated, timeless brand of pop. Built around his singing and piano playing, the Montrealer's songs later expand to include lavish string and brass arrangements. Sometimes reminiscent of the work of Elton John, Ben Folds or Scissor Sisters, Ben Wilkins' music warmly grooves along, soars into dreamy soundscapes and sneaks into your heart. In possession of an acute sense of melody, Wilkins consistently impresses throughout this impeccable sounding album, which he co-produced with Pascal Shefteshy at Studio PM. Truly exceptional.

Praise for a bigger sound

Monday, November 14, 2011

by Madison Foster



Ben Wilkins' new self-titled record has a big sound sure to hook big audiences everywhere.

The first time I sat down and listened to Ben Wilkins' self-titled album, the first thing I thought to myself was, "Great, another Ben Folds sound-alike. Just what the music world needs." But as I made my way through the album and even the first track, I changed my mind quickly. Although Wilkins does have a voice that could easily be compared to Ben Folds, he is backed by a rich and full instrumental sound that makes the music unique in his own way.

The London, Ontario-born singer/songwriter, whose debut album hit record stores on October 18, has already heard a great amount of praise for his advanced music ability, voice and pop-driven piano melodies. All of these fall into place when listening to tracks such as "Back Of My Head", with its powerful breakdowns of harmonizing piano and strings, and "Chameleon", a vocal-driven jazz influenced number, which I believe to be the stand-out track on the album. It's no surprise that the strong piano sound that plays backup to Wilkins' powerful tenor comes from 13 pianos that were recorded in unison with 24 musicians to create an orchestra of sounds that includes strings, brass, percussion, winds and a small choir.

A genuine music lover, Wilkins left London at the age of 18 to study Classical Trumpet at McGill University in Montreal. It was there that he was able to soak up as much composition, arranging, singing, theory and jazz harmony as possible. After graduation, he received a scholarship to study Mandarin in China, where he spent the better part of the year at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. It was after his return to Montreal that Wilkins was approached by acclaimed engineer Pascal Shefteshy (who has in the past worked with musicians such as Sarah McLachlan and Rufus Wainwright) to record an album. The finished result was fittingly described as "an ageless and enduring classic pop record" by the Morburn Music blog.

Thanks to the positive and rave reviews that have become known in the few weeks since the release of the self-titled album, it will be no surprise for Ben Wilkins to move forward into the spotlight with this debut album, with its rich and warm melodies that will be admired by fans well into future projects by the artist. Released with Milagro Records, the self titled album by Ben Wilkins is available in record stores now. For more information, check out benwilkinsmusic.com.



Review- “Ben Wilkins”- Ben Wilkins

Posted on November 9, 2011 by Michael Thomas



Sometimes the 70's can be celebrated for more than just disco tunes, as is the case with the debut LP from Montreal singer-songwriter Ben Wilkins.

Wilkins' sound is one that isn't heard as often in modern music- he plays piano and is accompanied by strings and percussion. It immediately brings back images from the 70's but thankfully this LP isn't cheesy.

If anything, this LP is really, really cheerful. Even the slower and more heartfelt songs aren't wallowing in sadness; the combination of the keys and the strings makes for easy listening. Think of *Ben Wilkins* as a soundtrack to a cold Sunday afternoon spent sipping red wine and reading a good book.

On occasion the cheerfulness of the album can be a little too much. The one example is in the song “Caught in the Rain” when Wilkins mentions a line about being hit by a car. Accompanied by the gentle music it almost sounds like that was a good thing that happened to him.

The way Wilkins frames his songs is interesting to look at as well. For instance, “Through to You” is written like a letter to a lost friend- or perhaps even a lost love. It begins with the simple yet uncommon first lyrics: “Thank you for the stew/You’ve always been a friend and complementary/A provider of sorts.”

Another interesting frame is the song “Allison” that is sung like any song but is completely in the form of a story about the title character as she’s first sitting on a chair and sipping a drink before going off to a river. A song like this could be really lame but Wilkins makes it rather effortless.

Control is a big element in the album’s music. The piano and strings always work in a balance, one not overpowering the other. In the album opener (fittingly called “Opening”) the strings and keys combine to create a frantic atmosphere while “Back Of My Head” wavers between intensity and softness at the drop of a hat. Wilkins clearly knew what he was doing here.

If I had one criticism it would be that towards the end the songs become a little repetitive. I’m not quite sure how this could be remedied, though; I don’t think Wilkins needs to necessarily experiment with new mixtures of sound. The sound he currently has seems to work for him. It will be interesting to see what he comes out with next, no doubt.

Top Tracks: “Back Of My Head”; “Allison”

Rating: Strong Hoot (Good)

Mardi 8 novembre 2011

Ben Wilkins: Mon coup de coeur musique!

Par Emmanuelle Martinez-Curvalle



Couverture de l'album Ben Wilkins, par Pascal Shefteshy

Depuis que je l'ai découvert, je ne m'en lasse pas !

Ben Wilkins a un piano et une voix, fragile et forte à la fois, qui glisse sur des mélodies aux accents tantôt mélancoliques, tantôt frais et dansants.

Et lorsque violons et violoncelle prennent le relais, je me laisse enrober par la poésie de cette musique folk. C'est bien simple, son album est devenu la bande originale de mes déplacements quotidiens!

Voici le vidéoclip de *Through to You*, extrait de son premier album, *Ben Wilkins*, et tourné au Dépanneur Café, dans le Mile-End:

[Ben Wilkins sur Youtube](#)

Musician adds a dash of pop

Ben Wilkins

By Chris Montanini
November 8th, 2011



When singer/songwriter Ben Wilkins moved from London to Montreal, Que. where he studied classical trumpet at McGill University, the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic secondary school graduate was looking for a change in scenery.

"I wanted to move to a University that was going to have a great music program," Wilkins said. "But also I wanted to live in an environment that was as much like a foreign country as I could get."

After picking up French during his studies, Wilkins took it a step farther, moving to China after graduating and spending time at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and then the Beijing Language and Culture University.

"I wanted to try something harder so I kind of picked China for a few different reasons, but it was pretty close to choosing a name out of a hat," Wilkins said.

But something was missing during his foray into Asia.

"It's different," Wilkins said. "People there don't really know the Beatles, they don't know a lot of the classic bands and songwriters that changed the musical landscape in this part of the world."

Now back in Montreal, it seems Wilkins has embraced that classic sound on his debut self-titled CD, a meticulously arranged, piano-driven 10-track album that touches his penchant for classical music but also his ear for pop.

Wilkins' big break, he said, was getting extra time in Canadian producer Pierre Marchand's studio when Marchand (known for recording Sarah McLachlan, among others) left the country, leaving Wilkins to the studio with engineer Pascal Shefteshy.

"All of a sudden I could work every day in a studio that would normally cost thousands of dollars a day," Wilkins said. "That's pretty remarkable."

Wilkins took advantage of the opportunity, not only experimenting with his own tenor vocals and piano but arranging a variety of strings, brass, winds, percussion and a small choir.

"I consciously wanted a record that sounded a little different than the way a lot of records are coming out now," Wilkins said. "I wanted it to be much more traditional in that, I wanted it to breathe a lot, I wanted warm sounds, I didn't want to worry about the initial punch. I wanted to hook people slowly."

There are 24 musicians recorded on the album, the elements of which combine for a kind of pop that's at times a bit retro.

"I like the way records that were made in those years, '69 to '76, there was something about the way they were using tape and the kind of microphones they had, they found this happy middle ground between low-fi older recordings and what became the eighties sound," Wilkins said. "I'm really happy with the sound, aesthetically."

Wilkins is now travelling with six band members — piano, bass, drums and a string quartet — and although he said they're aren't any London concert dates confirmed yet, Ontario dates are expected to be announced in the spring.



Ben Wilkins - The Drake Underground, Toronto - Saturday, October 29th, 2011



By Vanessa Markov

Ben Wilkins is an old soul with a knack for composing catchy and emotionally charged, piano-driven pop layered with breezy string arrangements fit for black and white dream sequences. Employing a total of 24 musicians in its creation, the 27 year old Ontario native (now based in Montreal) released his self-titled debut LP on October 18, and I haven't stopped listening to it since.

Ben performed at The Drake Underground last Halloween weekend with a more modest-sized band of 7, which consists of himself on piano (and when I say piano, I don't mean keyboard. I mean piano. Ben's piano, which I learned he takes everywhere), William Côté on drums and xylophone, Alexandre Lefavre on bass, and Véronica Ungureanu, Kerry Smith, Maria Demacheva, and Gaël Lavigne on strings – possibly the prettiest string quartet in the business. Smart move, Ben, you sly dog.

As for Ben himself, he looks like he walked straight out of the 70s with his long curly hair, baby face, button down shirt, and flared jeans, and is as easy on the eyes as his wistful, jazz-tinged tenor vocals are on the ears. He's pretty much exactly the guy who girls imagine would show up at their bedroom window for a moonlight serenade.

But not every song is about "blooming flowers, fresh fruit, and red wine". Ben draws inspiration from difficult emotional experiences as well, such as in *Out the Window*, a new song about a true story with lyrics so touching, I had to share some with you:

"You're a brilliant one and the road you walk/Has the perfect point of view.../Well the sun comes up and it's all so new/And they've taken you away/The way you talk and the things you say/Have the doctors watching you.../Then I see you staring out the window/As the day fades away/And you look right into my worry/And you ask me, 'Will you stay?'"

Ben performed for just over an hour, showcasing most of his album along with new songs he is still working on, stopping a few times to talk about the inspiration or writing process behind a song. "I originally wrote this song on piano," he says about the song *Allison* as he tunes his ukulele. "But I wanted a more nostalgic feel, so I tried a ukulele and it worked." It sure did. Everything worked.

There isn't a single aspect of Ben's young career that falls short of outstanding, from his ability to combine components of modern pop with classical elements as if they were made for each other, to his romanticized interpretations of the simplest things in life, to the magical way in which his music can reconcile broken spirits while simultaneously evoking tears.

Heck, even his website is an intricate feat of creativity.



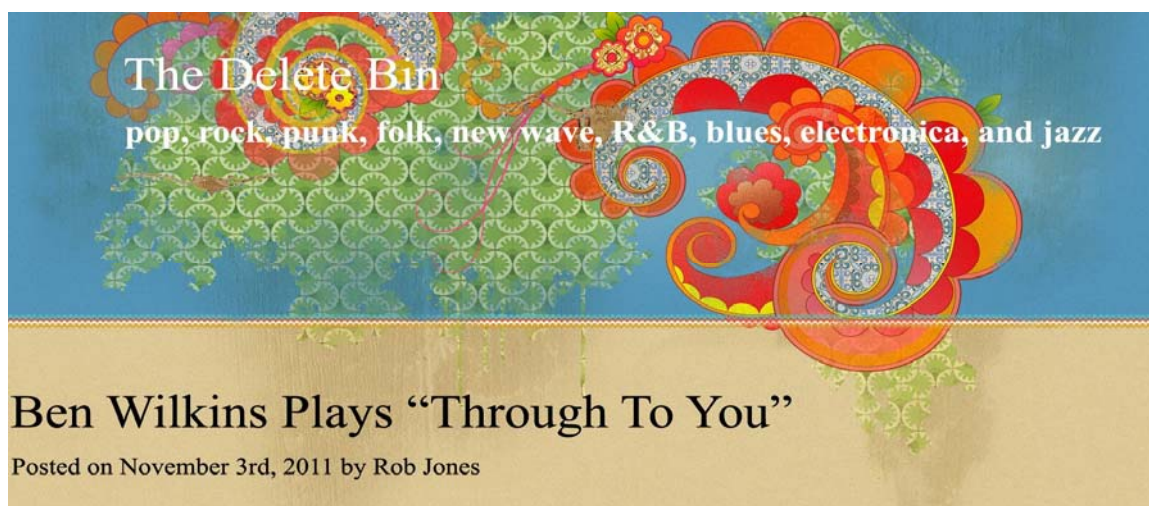


November 4th, 2011

Ben Wilkins Debuts by Two Scoops



I've been hitting up Canada's Ben Wilkins for more songs ever since the 'Back of My Head' EP. Finally the new self titled debut album is out and you can it [here](#) right now. Thanks to Ben, I've been listening to the album over and over. Definitely one of those albums where each song holds its own and you don't have to hit the skip. Track to track, Ben's flexes mad piano jams with lots of instruments all over. The EP tracks are all on the new album but some of the arrangements have changed. Gotta have both but loved the new twists. Get that album now and if you're in Canada, support him on his release tour!



Here's a clip of Burt-Bacharach-Brian-Wilson-Carole-King-Todd-Rundgren classic pop inheritor, and singer-songwriter from Montreal Ben Wilkins. It's the video for his new single "Through To You" a tune featured on last year's *Back Of My Head* EP, and now a shining gem on a full-length debut record of gems, 2011's *Ben Wilkins*.



Formally trained in music at Montreal's McGill University, and the Shainghai Conservatory of Music, Wilkins built up his skills in playing music for the sheer fun of it by developing a solid base of composition, singing, harmonic theory, and some arranger's chops into the mix. A love of AM radio singles of decades past endured all the while. As a result, his approach to arranging and recording involves a seriously sumptuous and lushly-realized sound that pulls from orchestral pop traditions which gelled and became immortal at the end of the '60s. But, here we're reminded that just because a sound is closely associated with an era, it doesn't mean it's stuck there. As such, what we've got here is the kind of thoroughly enjoyable contemporary pop record that we're always complaining never gets made anymore. The decade in which it was made doesn't really matter.

This is classic pop.

After receiving a preview copy of the record, I spoke with Ben via email about the making of this song, the video, the album, about the spirit of classic pop, and the elusive idea that music may or may not be the universal language.

The Delete Bin: *With a song like "Through To You", and on other songs on the record, a lot of thought was put into the business of arrangement. How has being your own arranger, and having a solid background in that area freed you up during the recording process?*

Ben Wilkins: It's definitely given me more control. I didn't have to hand my songs off and see what happens and I was able to use my imagination right through to the end of recording. Arranging and songwriting are different things but they sometimes come at the same time. I sometimes hear the arrangement of a song before it's finished writing. I'm still learning a lot about both.

DB: You've made an incredibly warm record, with lush strings, woodwinds, brass, vibes, piano (of course) and even a small choir that really bring the songs to life. In an age of 'Garage Band' and other admittedly useful tools for many, do you feel that your approach to traditional arranging and recording is becoming a lost art where independently made pop music is concerned?

BW: Anybody can make a record these days, and that's a good thing. Unfortunately many of them, including releases by the major labels, sound harsh and squashed. Many labels think if the album is louder, people will notice it more.

My Engineer/co-producer Pascal Shefteshy and I consciously did it differently – avoiding many production methods that have become conventional. Ironically, this caused the orchestral instruments to pop out more and the whole album to be more dynamic.

DB: Let's talk a bit about the video for "Through To You". What was it like being involved in making it?

BW: That was a hilarious experience. I had to sing in slow motion to the song that was playing three times slower than normal, then the footage was sped back up to normal speed. If I sneezed, or blinked, or made any jerky motion it looked strange once sped up, so I had to practice for a couple days.



DB: To me, the video communicates a man out of time, or perhaps out of step with what's going on around him. How does this relate to where you are in relation to local music scenes in Montreal?

BW: The video was shot in the cafe where I used to do a weekly show. They have six hours of live music a day, and lots of it isn't indie rock. Montreal is a great place to develop and make music. You don't have to sound like the signature Montreal bands to benefit from the enormous talent pool.

Having said that, indie rock dominates the local scene and I don't fit into that. For that I do get some flack, but I'm OK being a bit of an odd duck. It probably helps solidify what I'm doing.

DB: *In addition to writing and recording your own work, you've also been involved in the work of other artists, particularly as an arranger (Bran Van 3000, Misstress Barbara). What's your primary motivation for keeping your hand in creative processes which are driven by another artist, or group?*

BW: Collaborating is always an interesting learning experience. I find when I get in on someone else's creative process it opens up new perspectives and I inevitably learn more about my own. And honestly it's a welcomed change when someone else has the reigns and responsibility and I can just show up, do my thing and walk away.

DB: *You've mentioned elsewhere (and I agree) that there is something special about that late '60s and early '70s orchestral pop sound from which your music draws. I've talked to other artists who say the same, and they all suggest that the sound seems to build the melancholia and the nostalgia right into it. When you approached your album, what was it that kept things on track to bring your songs in line with that same spirit?*

BW: I pretty much kept the production process in line with that same spirit as records made back then. More rehearsals with the band before recording and less need for editing after. Most of the songs on the record were recorded with no click track. There are moments, the chorus of "Soup For One" for example, where the tempo changes on purpose. It's pretty impossible to achieve naturally if you're working to a grid.

Whenever it made sense, I had recording sessions with groups of musicians, so the string parts were recorded by a quartet playing their parts together. Same thing for the brass. It's harder to make a record like that, because you lose some of your post-production safety net, but we were heavily rehearsed and willing to take the risk.

DB: *You spent some time studying music in China. What were some of your most important takeaways as a musician, taken out of your usual cultural context?*

BW: I learned in China that music is not necessarily a universal language. It's very cultural and its ability to affect you is related to your individual reference point. If you've never heard Chinese opera, you may have a tough time feeling anything on your first few listens.

Some of the people I played music for had never heard The Beatles, and when I played them music I was working on they said "I listen but I don't understand what to feel". It's all part of the beauty of music. It's a big ocean and there are many places to drop an anchor.

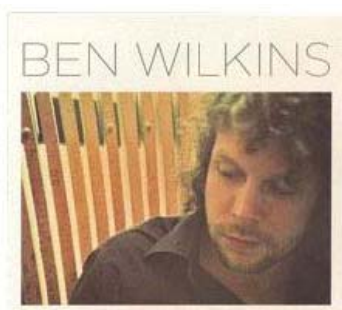
Thanks, Ben!

For more information about tours, and other stuff, check out the Ben Wilkins site. The debut album, just released on October 18, is on Milagro Records.

Enjoy!

30 octobre 2011

Par Marie-Josée Boucher



Ben Wilkins

J'aime beaucoup l'album éponyme de l'auteur-compositeur-interprète Ben Wilkins très mélodieux et charmeur. Ce son pop irrésistible semble sortir tout droit des années 70. Les arrangements musicaux nous bercent, sa voix est splendide et son opus possède une maturité renversante pour son jeune âge. Un album tout en douceur et en chaleur, c'est une musique qui nous attire profondément. Rare sont les chanteurs qui maîtrisent autant le piano aujourd'hui que ce jeune homme.

Sous l'étiquette Milagro Records, il nous livre onze pièces succulentes à écouter. « Opening », « Soup For One », « Trough To You », « The Fall », « Back Of My Head », (au palmares BDF Top 50 pendant plus de vingt semaines), « Caught In The Rain », « The Road Is Long », « Chameleon », « Allison », « Your Love Is Gone », « The Other Side ».

« *Through To You* », de Ben Wilkins, est une chanson qui incorpore de délicieux arrangements de percussions et d'instruments à vent et à cordes finement arrangés avec sa voix douce qui capte ainsi les meilleurs éléments de plusieurs genres musicaux. Je vous invite à regarder son vidéo.

Dans « Allison », cette ballade romantique, on y perçoit l'aspect lyrique et les arrangements en sobriété parfaite.

Diplômé de l'Université McGill en trompette classique, du Conservatoire de musique de Shanghai ainsi que de l'Université des langues et des cultures de Beijing, Ben Wilkins possède une pensée mélodique et ose au niveau de la composition musicale. En plus d'avoir coréalisé son album avec Pascal Shefteshy du studio Pierre Marchand, il a écrit les arrangements de cordes et de cuivres pour « *The Garden* », quatrième album du groupe Bran Van 3000.

Vous pouvez dès maintenant réserver votre spectacle pour 2012 et vous procurer l'album qui est présentement en magasin. Bonne écoute.



Samedi 29 octobre 2011

Les découvertes Archambault

Cette semaine : Ben Wilkins

BEN WILKINS



Je résume en un seul mot: Wow!!!

C'est bon du début à la fin.

C'est son premier album et c'est vraiment super réussi.

C'est un album qui fait du bien. Un gros sourire au visage!

Vraiment, c'est du bonbon du début à la fin, j'ai craqué pour ça!

- Dan Daignault, TVA-Salut Bonjour



Video: BEN WILKINS – Through To You

28 October 2011



Ben Wilkins recently came up on our radar and boy are we glad he did – his brand of piano driven pop is nothing if not catchy. Now's your chance to hear what we're talking about; check out *Through To You* in the video below.

The Toronto release party for the album goes down on October 29th at The Drake Underground – be sure to get out and show your support. For additional live dates and more info, visit *Ben Wilkins* over on Facebook.

• LE COURRIER •

Vol. 2 - Numéro 14 / 25 octobre 2011

Par Roxane Tremblay

BEN WILKINS



Disponible depuis le 18 octobre 2011, l'album éponyme de Ben Wilkins respire les années 1970, tout en étant résolument de son époque. Il réjouira les fans de Billy Joël, des Beatles et de Jamiroqui avec son mélange de ballades et de groove, bercé par des arrangements irrésistibles. Pianiste, trompettiste, auteur-compositeur-interprète brillant, Ben Wilkins a également collaboré avec Bran Van 3000 pour la création de leur dernier opus. En attendant de voir le jeune Montréalais en spectacle à Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu le 8 mars prochain, je vous recommande chaudement cet album qui vous réconcilie avec la vie.



• Ben Wilkins

L'Ontarien amoureux du Québec

Arrivé à Montréal à l'âge de 18 ans, l'Ontarien Ben Wilkins a parcouru le Québec en entier, et s'est même permis un séjour en Asie, avant de lancer son premier album en carrière neuf ans plus tard. L'opus, paru cette semaine, nous plonge dans les années 1970, la principale influence de l'artiste.

Raphaël Gendron-Martin

Le Journal de Montréal

Le parcours de Ben Wilkins n'est pas commun. Né en Ontario, il s'est amené dans la métropole québécoise, où il a complété un baccalauréat à l'Université McGill... en trompette classique. « Ce programme n'était pas fait pour quelqu'un qui veut être chanteur comme moi, dit-il. J'ai décidé de faire le bac au complet, mais j'ai trouvé mon propre chemin par la suite. »

Désirant apprendre le français le mieux possible, il s'est mis à visiter le Belle Province, de Chicoutimi, à la Beauce, en passant par les Laurentides et Lanaudière. « Je connais bien les régions! J'ai aussi eu une copine qui habitait à Jonquière et pendant plusieurs mois, j'ai fait l'aller-retour Jonquière-Montréal. Ça m'a appris à découvrir une culture différente de celle de ma jeunesse. »

Lui qui n'était pas doué pour les langues à l'école, le jeune Wilkins s'est rendu compte qu'en y mettant de l'effort, il pouvait y parvenir assez bien. Après le français, il a voulu se lancer dans un nouveau défi : apprendre le mandarin. « J'avais besoin de changer la routine. J'ai eu une bourse pour aller passer du temps à Shanghai en Chine. Je suis aussi allé à Beijing (Pékin). J'ai adoré. Mais je me suis rendu compte qu'au niveau musical, c'était très culturel. Pour mon premier album, je me suis dit que je devais revenir à Montréal pour le concevoir. »

DE BELLES RENCONTRES

Avant de plancher sur son propre album, le musicien est invité par James Di Salvio à travailler sur les arrangements de cordes et de cuivres pour le disque *The Garden*, de Bran Van 3000. « Ça été une belle expérience de voir un autre style de travail. »

La rencontre avec Pascal Shefteshy, un ancien camarade de McGill et maintenant réalisateur et ingénieur reconnu, est aussi déterminante pour l'artiste ontarien. Ensemble, le duo profite du studio prêté par Pierre Marchand, parti en voyage pendant quelques mois, pour concevoir le premier album.

Grandement influencé par la musique des années 1970, notamment celle de Burt Bacharach, Ben Wilkins lance un disque qui rappelle bien cette époque. « Je voulais un album que l'on pourrait écouter longtemps, qui n'allait pas se fatiguer. »



21 octobre 2011

Puisqu'il faut se lever

Vitrine du CD par Sylvain Ménard et Paul Arcand

Ben Wilkins, natif de l'Ontario et maintenant résidant de Montréal. Un son britannique. Ça fait penser à Paul McCartney, c'est de la pop, de la vrai bonne pop. Ça nous fait penser aussi à Jeff Lynne de Electric Light Orchestra. Il y a un petit Billy Joël dans le fond de la voix, le piano, c'est Elton John, mais au bout du compte, c'est Ben Wilkins. Impressionnant.

Des chœurs qui te font lever les poils sur l'avant bras. On dit toujours que faire de la pop c'est facile. Dans ce cas-ci, c'est un art. Lui il a des études en classique, en jazz, en orchestration et ça parait. C'est un album que j'endorsse complètement. J'en fais une recommandation sans aucune, mais aucune réserve. Un ben bon disque. Une méchante belle bolle de musique.

Dangerous and delicious...

Publié le 21 Octobre 2011

Toula's Take

Montreal is an ever pulsating nerve centre of culture and all things decadent and dreamy; whether we're talking food, music, fashion, or art. We may have bridges and overpasses collapsing around us and corruption inquiries underway, but we just keep on dancing.

It's strange that our city motto is Concordia Salus (Well Being in Harmony), because, let's face it... that's borderline boring. Maybe we should have adopted "We're fools whether we dance or not, so we might as well dance" (Japanese proverb) since it suits this city's temperament so much better. Guess that was too long.

Ben Wilkins' star about to shine

Early this week Montreal musician Ben Wilkins launched his self-titled CD and I have been listening to it non-stop. It's even playing while I'm writing this column. His piano-powered arrangements, which often feature string quartets, bass and drums are reminiscent of a sweet romantic late '60s and '70s vibe. Wilkins, who studied jazz and classical music at McGill, pays an indirect tribute to the saccharine sounds of Burt Bacharach, but has a voice that is really all his own. *Soup For One* and *Through To You* are my personal favourites. I predict big things for this hometown boy.

<http://benwilkinsmusic.com/>



500khz – Tounes, musique et tout le reste

20 octobre 2011

Ben Wilkins – Éponyme



J'ai découvert Ben Wilkins et sa pop *easy listening*, très 1970 dans les sons et dans le style, non pas dans une vente de vinyles usagés, mais en mp3, via un relationniste de presse, plus tôt en 2011. En écoutant son mini-album, « Back of my head », Wilkins était carrément le fils spirituel de Supertramp ou Steely Dan. Ce fut une belle découverte, plutôt surprenante si on considère qu'en musique, on n'ose plus toucher au côté plus festif de la chanson. Le montréalais d'adoption présente cette semaine son premier disque complet, malgré une grande expérience comme multi-instrumentiste et arrangeur, lui qui a collaboré avec Bran Van 3000.

Wilkins c'est avant tout un passionné de musique qui a découvert tout ce qui entoure le jazz pendant ses études à l'Université McGill. Il sait incorporer ce bagage théorique dans un contexte pop. La musique est originale et technique en restant dans le terrain pop. Le résultat est à la hauteur de mes attentes.

Ben Wilkins excelle dans tous les aspects de ce premier album solo. C'est un disque mélodique, sans tomber dans la facilité et dans la complaisance. Par-dessus sa voix et son piano, Wilkins ajoute une complexité singulière via les arrangements, travaillés et nettoyés, qui définissent cet album. On découvre une pop orchestrale sans cynisme, sans prétentions et qui rayonne par son plaisir. Vingt-quatre musiciens ont participé à l'enregistrement de ce disque et tout est à sa place. Rarement on entend des disques aussi élaborés, mais autant naturel; certains segments musicaux semblent spontanés tellement tout est fluide.

La comparaison à « Crime of the Century » et « Aja » va se poursuivre pour Ben Wilkins. Tout fonctionne à la quasi-perfection sur cet album éponyme. Si Wilkins évoque Elton John ou Laura Nyro, ce n'est pas par nostalgie ou parce-que son album est dépassé. On ne retrouve ni de faux mouvements, ni de précarité de la part d'un des rares techniciens de la chanson pop. Un très bel ajout à n'importe quelle collection de disques.

critiquecd

●●●● Chef-d'œuvre ●●● Remarquable ●●● Bon ●● Moyen ● Médiocre

**Ben Wilkins***Ben Wilkins*

POP ANGLO

●●●

Originaire de London, en Ontario, Ben a déménagé à Montréal à 18 ans pour étudier la musique.

Quelques années plus tard (et après un séjour au Conservatoire de musique de Shanghai), on pouvait l'entendre sur l'album *The Garden*, de Bran Van 3000. Il nous présente aujourd'hui un premier album studio aux accents *seventies* ponctué de pianos lancinants et d'une voix envoûtante. Ça promet!

Véronique Harvey



Sections / Actualités, Rythme et Musique, Vedette

Un avant-goût de Ben Wilkins

Publié le 20 septembre 2011 par la salle des nouvelles



D'une maturité musicale renversante, Ben Wilkins sortira son album en octobre

Mélodieux et charmeur, l'auteur-compositeur-interprète Ben Wilkins semble sortir tout droit des années 70. "Ce qui m'inspire, c'est plutôt l'esprit dans lequel la musique était produite dans ces années-là. Il y avait quelque chose dans le groove, dans la batterie enregistrée live, les musiciens qui jouaient tous en même temps en studio, confie le jeune pianiste. On a essayé de reproduire ce côté d'enregistrement plus naturel, je voulais que les chansons respirent."

Diplômé de l'Université McGill en trompette classique, du Conservatoire de musique de Shanghai ainsi que de l'Université des langues et des cultures de Beijing, Ben Wilkins possède une pensée mélodique et ose au niveau de la composition musicale. En plus d'avoir co-réalisé son album avec Pascal Shefteshy du studio Pierre Marchand, il a écrit les arrangements de cordes et de cuivres pour *The Garden*, quatrième album du groupe Bran Van 3000.

L'album éponyme de Ben Wilkins sera disponible dès le 18 octobre prochain.

Le lancement aura lieu le lendemain, 19 octobre au Robin des bois à Montréal.

Ne le manquez pas en première partie de Matthew Good, le 17 octobre au National de Montréal.



19 Octobre 2011

Lancement d'album de Ben Wilkins au Robin des Bois!



Ben Wilkins a lancé son premier album (éponyme) ce soir au Robin des bois et... plus on le regardait, plus on trouvait qu'il avait des airs de **Gavin DeGraw** (en plus cute!). Non?

On trippe sérieusement sur *Soup For Two* de l'album de **Ben**, mais puisque le vidéoclip de l'excellente *Through to You* vient tout juste de sortir, mettez ça dans votre *casqu'* et shakez la tête en fermant les yeux! Le piano est enivrant, sa voix est parfaite et il me semble qu'on pourrait travailler 12 heures en ligne avec ça dans les oreilles. Vraiment inspirant ce **Ben!**

Ben Wilkins, à l'instar des grands chanteurs-pianistes

6 août 2011 - Claude Pinto

Auteur-compositeur-interprète montréalais, le jeune musicien sait déjà exprimer l'essentiel en musique, armé seulement d'un piano et d'une voix.

Il va s'en dire, rares sont les "songwriters" capables d'utiliser le piano comme support principal à leur voix. Depuis Elton John et Barbara, peu de noms sont passés à l'histoire. Certes, il y a eu Billy Joel et William Sheller et, plus récemment, Rufus Wainwright et Vincent Delerm, mais dans l'ensemble, le piano est loin de détrôner la guitare en tant qu'instrument de prédilection pour le troubadour moderne.

Fils spirituel des seventies

Le jeune montréalais Ben Wilkins est de ces auteurs de chansons qui préfèrent de loin l'ambiance feutrée du piano au son chaud produit par la six cordes. À la manière du Tom Waits de la première période, Wilkins surprend en premier lieu par sa voix, qui est d'une douceur et d'une musicalité époustouflante; celle-ci fait immédiatement penser à celle de David Gates, grand gourou de la formation Bread, reconnue surtout pour ses ballades romantiques qui tournaient dans toutes les radios américaines au début des années soixante-dix. Délicatement, Wilkins tempère les tonnerres sous-jacents de sa musique en aiguisant l'émotion à transmettre et en offrant au mélomane des mélodies qui renvoient au son des meilleurs artistes pop de la période du *classic rock*, à savoir les Tom Waits, Nike Drake et Elton John, pour ne nommer que ceux-là.

Un mélodiste comme on en voit peu

Dans *Allison*, une ballade romantique à l'ivresse mesurée, la fièvre qui s'ajuste aux progressions d'accord est montante, pleine d'une désillusion chargée de songes. Cette pièce n'est qu'un exemple parmi d'autres du génie mélodique de Wilkins, dont le souffle à la fois intense et pondéré montre quelques affinités avec l'univers de Todd Rundgren et 10CC. De ces influences, Wilkins tire le meilleur, soit l'aspect lyrique et les arrangements, qui sont d'une sobriété parfaite.

Une réalisation soignée

Ayant étudié la trompette à l'Université McGill à Montréal, le musicien s'est toujours passionné pour le piano, continuant à pratiquer l'instrument-orchestre même durant ses années passées à parfaire sa technique de l'instrument à vent. Puis, il s'est mis à l'écriture de chanson, gribouillant, session universitaire ou pas, des textes et des musiques qui formeront bientôt un corpus de chansons en vue d'un album. Fort d'un enseignement musical rigoureux, Wilkins a assuré les arrangements et l'orchestration de toutes les chansons de son premier album éponyme qui paraîtra sous peu. Réalisé par Pascal Shefteshy et co-réalisé par Ben Wilkins lui-même, le son de ce premier album étonne par sa fraîcheur inouïe. En plus de l'instrumentation de base (basse, batterie) plusieurs de ces chansons (onze au total) sont ornées de la présence d'un quatuor à cordes. Au mélomane expert, ces pièces produiront un enchantement sûr, tandis que le néophyte y trouvera son compte sans exactement savoir pourquoi.

Un écoute virtuelle en attendant la sortie de l'album

L'été durant, Wilkins donne des concerts dans les cafés et bars de Montréal et les environs. Il se sait maintenant prêt à répondre à la demande des nouveaux fans aussitôt que l'album paraîtra. Bien que celui-ci ne soit pas disponible au moment de la publication de cet article, les curieux pourront visiter son site Internet et écouter quelques-unes des chansons qui s'y trouvent. C'est une musique qui regarde en arrière, penseront certains, alors que d'autres diront qu'elle est l'avenir de la chanson populaire. Qu'en pense l'auteur de ces lignes? Simplement que la musique de Ben Wilkins est comme le chant d'un rossignol, impossible à saisir réellement. C'est pour ça qu'elle est d'une beauté qui ne s'épuisera pas de sitôt.



2011, Nova Scotia, Canada, Ketch Harbour

Ben Wilkins



Ben Wilkins – Residing in Montreal, this classically trained, multi-instrumentalist is fixing to release his debut, self-titled and the amount of polish he brings to intricately arranged piano jams is impressive. The touch points aren't shocking – you can hear some *Jamiroquai* and *Ben Folds* in the mix- but the combination of strings, horns and piano with his soulful voice works well and the arrangements hint that this strong debut is simply the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Plus, he's got quite a solid white guy, type fro going which is always enjoyable in my humble.

Le 07 juillet 2011

Par: Katerine Belley-Murray

(CHICOUTIMI) Les 4000 personnes qui ont assisté au spectacle de David Usher, hier, à Place Festivalma, venaient surtout entendre le chanteur de Moist. Elles ont finalement apprécié David Usher en solo, et n'ont surtout pas regretté d'avoir bravé un ciel nuageux pour voir la performance du chanteur canadien.

En première partie, **Ben Wilkins** a impressionné les festivaliers qui, avouons-le, ne venaient pas vraiment pour le voir.

«J'ai appris le français à Chicoutimi. J'aime beaucoup «Chicout»!», a raconté le chanteur bouclé qui était accompagné de trois violonistes, d'une violoncelliste, d'un joueur de batterie et d'un bassiste. Troquant parfois le piano pour le ukulele, Ben Wilkins joue un style de musique presque indéfinissable. Une chose est toutefois certaine, il est à l'aise sur la scène et le public qui l'a connu hier l'a drôlement apprécié.

LE DEVOIR

11 février 2011

Sylvain Cormier

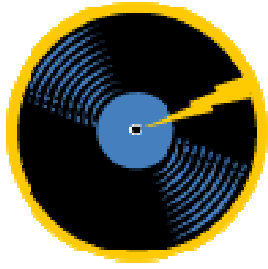


Pop

BACK OF MY HEAD EP

Ben Wilkins

C'est lui qui chante This Day sur le dernier Bran Van 3000. Splendide voix. On devinait une sensibilité d'un autre âge: ce timbre si pur, c'est presque Nilsson en 1971. Voici maintenant sa carte de visite: un minidisque de six titres, extraits d'un premier album que l'une ou l'autre compagnie de disques finira bien par sortir. Ça confirme: Ben Wilkins chante comme sa musique respire. La scène indie locale peut donc mener à tout, même à cette sorte de pop irrésistible et brillante qui renvoie tout naturellement au meilleur des années 1970, évoquant Elton John époque Madman, Laura Nyro, voire Supertramp et Steely Dan. Un doué, ce Ben: les airs, les arrangements étonnent autant qu'ils bercent, c'est complexe et fluide à la fois, c'est du bonbon et pourtant pas sucré, somptueux sans prétention, easy listening mais jamais facile. Je pourrais dire: il ira loin, ce jeune homme bien. Pas besoin. Ben est déjà exactement là où il doit être. Prêt à être trouvé.



Le meilleur de la
musique

January 2011

BEN WILKINS

BACK OF MY HEAD EP



Most people know Ben Folds as a sort of goofy troubadour (or one of the hosts of *The Sing Off*), mixing a certain brand of irreverence into his piano-driven pop/rock. And while that's true, Folds' best work has never really been his humorous songs – at least to me. His best songs are the ones that are honest about relationships and life. There's a reason that "Smoke" was included in Nick Hornby's *Songbook* and "Steven's Last Night In Town" was not.

All this talk about Ben Folds is with good reason, because Canadian artist **Ben Wilkins** sounds almost exactly like him. There are times when listening to his recent EP – *Back of My Head* – that I would have sworn that he had channeled Ben Folds himself. This EP, if you're a fan of Folds' work, is a must have. Wilkins is an excellent songwriter in his own respect, and his jazzy, free takes on his songs are refreshing as well. Think of him as a new member of The Bens, and he kind of looks like Ben Lee.



December 26, 2010

Ben Wilkins: Piano Pop, Beautifully Arranged

By Guy Raz

A musician from Montreal, Ben Wilkins plays piano-powered alternative pop that recalls Ben Folds and Rufus Wainwright. It's a different sound for a city that has more recently embraced dramatic indie rock like that of Arcade Fire and Patrick Watson.

"I guess I don't really fit into that world," Wilkins tells *Weekend All Things Considered* host Guy Raz. "It's always quite challenging, when we're doing a show, to find someone to play with. I didn't really mean to completely stand out or be an oddity. I was just writing songs that were true to what I wanted to do and the music I like to listen to."

Wilkins says he listens to Burt Bacharach, Brian Wilson and Milton Nascimento, among others. "I continue to go back to recordings made in the late 1960s and '70s for the warmth," Wilkins says. "There's a romance in that music that doesn't seem to die."

Unlike many singer-songwriters, Wilkins studied jazz and classical music at McGill College. "Going to music school is a difficult thing," he says. "I remember people warning me about it before I got there. 'You love music, you love playing music. Are you sure you want to go to music school?'... But I was able to use the degree and the experience there to learn a lot more about harmony and arranging."

It's Wilkins' knack for arrangements that stands out on his debut EP, *Back of My Head*, which features string quartets alongside piano, bass and drums. He recorded it at the studio of Sarah McLachlan producer Pierre Marchand, with the help of 24 other musicians.

"I wrote all the arrangements myself," Wilkins says. "As I got more comfortable incorporating orchestral instruments into my live show and recordings, the arranging started to become part of the songwriting. Sometimes, when I'm writing a song, I can already hear what the strings or brass is going to do."

One song that's getting attention is the EP's title track. The video features Wilkins playing the piano in a cafe, surrounded by people moving around in fast forward. "The concept was from [directors] Xuan Pham and Adrien Le Grand," Wilkins says. "The way we actually did it was very difficult, and required a lot of practice. I was actually playing the song and singing along three times slower, and the whole video was sped up afterward."

Blog: ThisBonusTrack.com

Ben Wilkins: Through to You

By Jay. Posted on December 23, 2010.



The other day I came across an artist by the name of **Ben Wilkins**.

If you don't know him, just wait, you will. As a product of Ontario (represent), Wilkins moved to Montreal at the age of eighteen for music studies at McGill University.

While majoring in the Classic Trumpet in university, it is evident that his musical capabilities spread far beyond the instrument.

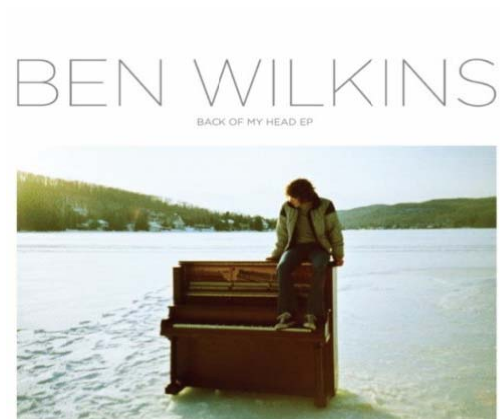
Did I mention that besides being incredibly musically inclined, he has a set of pipes on him that may just blow you out of the water? To be honest it was the music video for his song, **Through to You** that really blew me away.

I don't want to ruin it for you, as I truly believe it'll turn you on to the artist, but it basically features Wilkins playing the piano as the world grooves by to his pace.

So I'd urge you to check out his website and purchase his new EP, *Back of my Head* from iTunes; it's off the wall.



November 29, 2010



With the scent of fresh paint in the air after a brand new launch of, well, just about everything, it seems we may have a brilliant newcomer to the Canadian pop music scene. Ontario-raised and Montreal-residing **Ben Wilkins** released his new EP, "*Back Of My Head*" just last week to an unsuspecting global online audience.

While Wilkins brings a certain degree of familiarity in this piano-based pop delight, there is something a bit more distinct and unusual about his music that has really drawn us in. It may be the comprehensive use of strings and horns, the quirky lyrics, the doubled up vocals, or the cinematic song structure (could easily fit into the '*I Heart Huckabees*' soundtrack), but one thing is certain: **Ben Wilkins** makes you feel good. Really, really good.

A song that incorporates Wilkins' minty fresh vocals with intricately arranged strings, brass, winds, and orchestral percussion, "*Through To You*" captures the best elements of multiple genres and puts them in a warm melting pot of delicious treats. The video (also doubling as the splash page to his website), does a wonderful job of capturing your attention, while keeping things simple in a single room with a stationary camera.

We have fallen in love with Montreal over the past year ourselves, so when Ben Wilkins was brought to our attention via one of our Canadian friends, we had to take a listen. Oh Canada, how jealous we are of your beautifully cohesive and collaborative music scene!

Le blogue arts et spectacles d'André Ducharme

23 novembre 2010

À DÉCOUVRIR / Ben Wilkins sur la bonne voix

Né à London, Ontario, **Ben Wilkins** arrive à Montréal à 18 ans. Des études de musique et de mandarin plus tard, il chante « This Day » sur *The Garden*, le récent album de *Bran Van 3000*. L'auteur-compositeur-interprète-pianiste-arrangeur lance son premier EP sur iTunes et sur son site Web, assorti d'un vidéoclip (« Through to You ») rigolo et enveloppant. Voix, climat, attitude: on va le suivre.