

WILLAMENA

Long-form Band Bio

Contact: Ten Lanes Wide

Lance Hendrickson, Esq.

231-375-7533

lancehendrickson@yahoo.com

Band Contact: www.willamena.net



Willamena is a rarity -- a nationally-charting genuine indie band. And with its fifth release “The Light Ahead” hitting the streets and the airwaves in January, 2015, Kalamazoo Michigan’s #1 rock act is setting out once again to use its award-winning live show and blue-collar work ethic to prove some old wisdom true: a determined underdog will have his day.

Before its release, lead-off single “The Other Side of Loneliness” debuted at #5 on the Billboard AAA indicator most-added chart (1/17/15), started at #3 in AAA downloads and streams on radio-servicer PlayMPE.com (1/2/15), and jumped straight onto the FMQB AAA top-200 singles chart (1/20/15) – all without professional promotion or a publicist. The EP itself climbed directly to #1 on Amazon.com’s “Hot New Releases” Adult Alternative list (1/17/15). As RadiInfo.com observed, “... it’s definitely a marketable sound that makes for some hit triple-A playlists... and hot AC/AC stations that wait patiently for their turn We are keeping our ears on them. So should you.” (RadiInfo.com Rock “pick of the week” 1/14/15).

“The Light Ahead” is no flash in the pan. Willamena has been impressing programmers, critics and fans for years. The band’s 2013 CD “Lost in the Shadows” and its tracks charted nationally in six radio formats: Top 40, Hot AC, Triple A, Active Rock, Americana, and College. At least 180 terrestrial stations in six countries aired something from “Lost...” not counting syndicated-show affiliates that pushed the total well over 300. Several critics predicted the success of “Lost in the Shadows” from the get-go:

“... [U]ndeniably infectious rock...” “... [T]he standout tracks... could do some serious damage on U.S. radio in 2013. And that means there are songs on this album you’ll likely be humming in your sleep.” John Sinkevics, Revue Magazine and www.LocalSpins.com

“... [Lost... has] a very polished sound that suits their seemingly effortless radio-ready rock anthems perfectly... [It] should help... give them the national attention they... rightfully deserve.” – Justin Kreitzer

“There is plenty to like here and these guys should really make a splash on the music scene... Expect great things from Willamena. They've got the chops to achieve them... 4.5 stars (out of 5).” – G.W. Hill

“... Their music is ready made to fill arenas...” John Verburg, WestMichiganIndie.com

“Lost in the Shadows” followed 2004’s “Far From the Current.” “... Current” aired from Seattle to Staten Island to satellite (XM Unsigned’s “most notable” and “most played” lists) on a near-zero budget and made its own mark in the music world:

“Willamena... turn the Northern superiority complex against itself with devastating results in ‘Rock-n-Roll.” Dave Queen, Village Voice 9/26/05 re: “... Current”

“I keep thinking, how could a band with this talent and sound not be on a big label... will these guys ever run out of hooks?” Bill Ribas, NYRock.com 3/5/2005 re: “... Current”

“...[P]op rock, in the vein of Matchbox 20, Counting Crows, modern U2, etc... a familiar rock sound culled from decades past, [but] the sheer craftsmanship... in the music keeps [it] from coming across as a stale rehash... Comparisons aside, Lucas Ross is a great rock vocalist...” Alan Moore, LoveLaborMusic.com 6/14/2005 re: “... Current”

But by the time “... Current” was released, what became the music industry’s (and Michigan’s) unprecedented decline was already underway. For one snapshot of the milieu, a story in the Grand Rapids Press about “... Current” was titled “Willamena revives music scene in Grand Rapids.” (Tricia Woolfenden, Grand Rapids Press 2/5/04). Part of another writer’s review offers a clue, too:

“Perhaps the real risk for Willamena is writing a great album that no one will hear.” Nick Stephenson, Recoil, 2/04.

Simply put, after “... Current” came out, tough times got tougher. Willamena’s home base between the coasts and lack of industry connections (or cash) had always hampered the band; what turned out to be “the big crash” didn’t help. Neither did Napster, or NAFTA, or club closings, or slashed label rosters, or the cratered economy which scattered so many Michiganders, and the band, around the country seeking work. In mid-2009 the band went on a reluctant hiatus.

So despite winning the 142-band WBFX/Aris Hampers Rock Search in 2001... and despite making head-turning original rock like the 2002 CD “Ghost of July” which produced rave reviews like these:

“Willamena are the Derek Jeters of local music... Along with their kick-butt live shows... “Ghost of July” is putting these cats on the bus that says “Major League...” Buddah Worthmore, Music Revue, 5/2002

“‘Ghost of July’ could be the most solid release from a local band this year – a sonically-superior recording showcasing emotional performances and... gifted songwriting... highly recommended...” Recoil Magazine, 6/2002

... and despite headlining at premier clubs from Milwaukee to Manhattan and outdoor festivals, and opening for national acts like Fishbone, The Why Story, and SR-71... and despite earning "... the reputation of being the hardest-working act in Michigan..." (The Buzz, TheIndustryResource.com 12/22/04)... and despite maintaining the title of "... the hardest-working band in Michigan..." (Carly Plank, Revue Magazine 6/20/13) years later... Willamena remained unsigned and, largely, undiscovered.

Undiscovered, that is, until the rise of internet radio, and LPFM, and the Triple A radio format, and accessible technology that brought Willamena's music out of obscurity. Beginning in 2011, world-class recording pros including Gravity Studios' Doug McBride (Fall Out Boy, Rachael Yamagata, Veruca Salt), 100-million-selling Grammy winner Kevin Beamish (REO Speedwagon, Elton John, Kenny Chesney), Grammy winner John Seymour (U2, Santana, Dave Matthews Band) and Grammy winner Cameron Webb (Kelly Clarkson, Social Distortion, Motorhead) began to take an interest in the band, contributing their talents on various tracks (and on decidedly non-major-label budgets). Throughout 2012, '13, and '14 radio stations all over the U.S. and internationally-syndicated programs latched on to Willamena's original Midwestern rock n' roll, and the stage was set for 2015's "The Light Ahead."