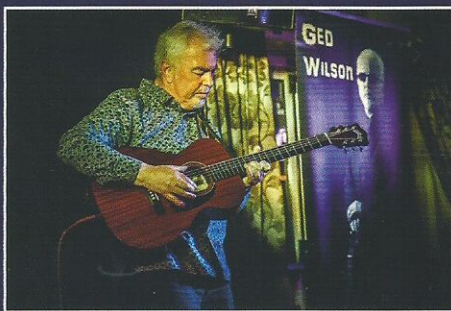


## Ged Wilson: Tonight At Noon

Ged Wilson, is an artist that has been around for a while making some fine acoustic blues albums, and treating the north of England to a succession of great one man shows. You may think you know just what you can expect from him, but listen to his new album *Tonight at Noon*, and you're in for a surprise because there are parts of it that are exactly not what you'd expect. To find out why we got what we weren't expecting *Blues in Britain* had a chat with the man himself.

Ged grew up in Manchester, a city he only recently left, at the perfect time to discover blues. As a young teenager at the height of the British Blues Boom of the 60's he saw the likes of John Mayall and the Groundhogs at the Free Trade Hall. The inspiration he got from the great music he heard on his weekly jaunts inspired him to make music. Eventually he and a few friends from school put together a band and, as he puts it, "take it from there". His early influences were the electric bands he saw at the hall, but these days he's known for his acoustic playing. With just his voice, guitar, harmonica and a stomp board it was a simpler approach. Ged finds inspiration in the songwriting and in finding ways to fill the holes that would have previously been plugged by other musicians. In doing so, Ged has recently experimented with technology in the shape of a looper pedal, but he's conscious of the popularity of the tool, and he's afraid that the approach may become ubiquitous. He's determined only to use it if he can find a way of doing it that is entirely his own. So for the time being he's finding ways to play bass-lines, rhythm and melody at once, in a manner reminiscent of the old delta guys, but with a modern twist. He talks of 'thinking' in bass parts as he's playing and of not really missing the band. Not missing a band hasn't stopped him from craving a touch of experimentation in his music, beyond what can achieve with the looper and an individual approach to playing. It's on his records that he can undertake that experimentation, and on *Tonight At Noon* he's begun exploring the furthest reaches of what could be called blues. The extremity of the experimentation here is down to two things, the poets that inspired the album's title and the contribution of the man that produced the record.

The title of the album comes from a poem by Adrian Henri, part of the Liverpool scene that also produced the better known Roger McGough, Ged found a book containing the poem in 1971 and was inspired, not only by the title but by the subject matter. At the time they were considered edgy and modern, even if they



aren't now, but the power of the imagery they created had a massive influence on his songwriting. On this album he went as far as to borrow the title of the piece that had the greatest effect on him, and even borrow some of the lyrics from the poem on the title track. It's on that track that the greatest experimentation occurs, with a mix of Ged's and Henri's words along with a hip hop influenced beat and some funky guitar. It's all very modern, even down to the scratching on the record, and a long way from the sounds Ged's audience might expect. Some of those sounds might well be down to the influence of the producer Diten Vagher, a man who's well known for his work on the modern dance music scene. It is his influence you hear on the track 'Evil' with its stylised 'Hammer Horror' vibe. Ged tells of Diten asking him 'to laugh like a character in some computer game'."

Most of the songs on the album will be familiar with his live audiences. He collects

lyrical ideas, along with melodies and riffs, combining them into songs that get worked into a whole by the processes of live performance. It's on stage that arrangements are created, lyrics moulded and while sometimes a song may be proven not to work they're often retired for a bit, then brought back later in a slightly altered form. It's for that reason that many of the songs are going to be familiar to the audiences that buy the album, but the versions here have more going on in terms of the sound, than he can produce on his own. Here they're augmented by drums, keys, bass, percussion and electric guitars.

Having moved to Cheltenham Ged's establishing himself on a new live scene. It also ignited a bit of ambition to tread the boards further afield now he's closer to London and there's even a chance of him playing in mainland Europe.

Despite the fact that he's just finished and about to release an album he's not sitting idle. He never stops writing songs, even if there isn't a focus other than the inability to turn off the switch that makes him a songwriter. Of course there's also a launch gig for the album and the constant stream of live work to come, he's a busy man, and it looks likely to stay that way for a long time yet.

Ian McHugh  
Image: John Bull

[gedwilson.com](http://gedwilson.com)

### Ged Wilson: *Tonight At Noon*

On the sleeve of this CD, singer/ guitarist/ harmonica player Ged references the late Merseyside poet Adrian Henri (that's pretty unusual for a Mancunian like Ged), jazzers Gil Scott-Heron and Miles Davis, Lightnin' Hopkins and Led Zeppelin, indicating that he is surely a child of the 60s blues boom.

Nice to see a northern focus too, with compositions like 'Irwell Delta Blues' and 'Northern Town' – but for those of you unfortunate enough to have been born south of that ill-defined place just beyond Crewe, don't worry, Ged draws on those cosmopolitan influences to create a fine, funky, sometimes jazzy, blues sound, aided and abetted by Jack Baldus on keyboards, Josef Kaspar on bass, and Oli Tabor on drums and percussion. Ged's sense of humour comes through fairly frequently – often pointed, take a listen to the title track – and the aforementioned 'Irwell Delta Blues' has an excellent solo electric guitar backing pitched somewhere between John Lee Hooker or Lightnin' Hopkins, 'Lady Luck' is bottleneck-driven, and 'Love Is' is a Hooker-ish boogie, whilst 'Evil (Is In Your Soul)' seems to draw some of its arrangement from Little Willie John's 'Fever'.

Despite all these inspirations though, Ged's music is individual and distinctive, and he never sounds as though he is copying anyone else. This is unmistakably and unashamedly British blues.

Norman Darwen