

# FURTHER ON UP THE ROAD



## Wille Edwards Solo - On The Streets Tour



“There are far fewer artists singing about what really matters”

### UK Gigs:

- 25 Nov: Hawthorns Hotel, Glastonbury
- 26 Nov: The Railway Inn, Winchester
- 27 Nov: Norden Farm, Maidenhead
- 28 Nov: Blues Bar @ Tring Cricket Club, Tring
- 29 Nov: The Barrel House, Totnes
- 30 Nov: Hunton Village Hall, Maidstone
- 01 Dec: Green Note, Camden, London NW1

It seems that Wille Edwards, frontman of the outfit Wille and Bandits is always up to something. An artist who never shies away from current and poignant topics in his lyrics, his solo tour in November will raise funds for the homeless charity DENS, based in Hemel Hempstead. Whilst poverty and musicianship sometimes go hand in hand (homeless buskers and artists like Blind Willie Johnson spring to mind), Wille is hoping to use his own music to bring attention to the plights suffered by thousands of people up and down the UK.

The idea, Wille says, came from him “feeling a sense of guilt about having so much that others don’t over the last few Christmases. It is a time where we should all be able to celebrate the season with family and friends in comfort and warmth. Because I felt I should be doing something about this, I initially thought about volunteering in a soup kitchen or something, but my wife reminded me my skill set isn’t particularly good at making or serving soup! I decided I could use my music to make a bit of a difference.” Initially, the idea was that Wille would sleep rough throughout the duration of the tour, but after consulting charities, he found that very few were up for him following through with this. This wasn’t only due to safety concerns, but also because, as Willie puts it, “the reality is that me challenging myself isn’t going to do much except publicise my fundraising. I also want to really understand the plight and stories of those who find themselves homeless and it’s unlikely I’ll get anyone to open up to me by sleeping rough. What I will do is visit charities as the tour progresses. These include Winchester Churches Night shelter, DENS, ARC in Taunton and hopefully something with the Big Issue.”

Even though the main focus of the tour is to bring awareness to a very real and tangible social issue, Wille feels that this situation will lead to inspiration for potential new material “for sure, I get so much inspiration for my songs from the lives of others and I often write about other peoples’ struggles. Always writing about yourself can be a bit limiting and one dimensional. I’d say I’m quite an empathetic person so can tap into other peoples’ lives and their experiences; an example from *Paths* is ‘Four Million Days’, which was inspired by a story I read about somebody looking for their real father. Spending a lot of time on the road touring, you drift through different towns, counties and countries. You meet people who are always willing to share their stories, opinions and ideas with a humble musician. Learning about the world from the experiences of individuals gives a sense of clarity that differs from what you learn through the news and social media. I think that the success of this tour

will be based on three things: developing my understanding of the UK’s homeless situation, understanding it on an individual and personal level, and on a practical level how much I will hopefully have raised for the charities.”

The November tour idea is somewhat fitting for someone like Wille with his track record of topical songs from recent albums (‘Make Love’ and ‘One Way’ from *Paths*). Music, Wille thinks is the main reason for him doing all of this “I think music has many powers, it can bring people together, inspire people to open up and express their emotions and, as with all art, it can bring social issues to the forefront of peoples’ awareness. I have always used music to express my displeasure with world issues and though I’m focusing on homelessness in the area of my tour, it is a global problem. I definitely think there are far fewer artists singing about what really matters at the moment, or is it that those who do, aren’t getting heard by the mainstream media? You wouldn’t have had marginalisation like this in the 60s and 70s. The bands who are more political are being side-lined by those that are writing about the mundane,” something Wille is working tirelessly to remedy.

On other music-related matters, after the release of *Paths*, plans for the future include a single “I have been writing a song that will be released as a solo track after the tour in the lead up to Christmas, the proceeds of which will go to the charities I visited on the tour. I imagine that a live album will be next on the cards for the band – we have had such a busy year with a new Bandit baby arriving (drummer Andrew Naumann’s first), and our first ever US tour, so we need to take a breather.”

2020 holds a lot of new adventures for Wille – see our news section.

Ben White  
willeandthebandits.com

