

A Conversation with Will Kimbrough
by Frank Goodman (Puremusic.com, 2/2008)

Although Will calls himself a songwriter who plays lead guitar, he is by most considered a guitar slinger of high repute, having been the go to guy for Todd Snider, Kim Richey, and in recent years, Rodney Crowell.

And that only names a chosen few. His exploits with Will and the Bushmen, The Bisquits and bands with Tommy Womack and under his own name are the thing of Southern legend.

But the artist has made a number of distinguished and well-received discs of his own, and touring the last couple of years has been more in the solo vein, and doing his own thing. It's very rare indeed that a singer songwriter has the chops of a Will Kimbrough, so that makes for a more muscular show with a little more spit on the ball than one frequently sees from the sensitive set.

2006's *Americanitis* had a more political ring that received a lot of attention, but Kimbrough decided not to repeat himself here and cut his warmest acoustic recording to date, the eponymous *EP*. The presence of cellist/producer David Henry is felt in some of the recording process, the mix and a handful of cello tracks that go far, and an upright bass track.

There are some excellent songs here. A new version of "Godsend," one about the AL electric chair called "Yellow Mama" that Cody Canada of Cross Canadian Ragweed is entertaining singalong audiences on youtube with, and a Townes kinda song that we like a lot called "Hill Country Girl."

Certainly on anybody's short list of important Nashville guitar players, Kimbrough here continues to push that envelope into the realm of Nashville's important indie artists. If you don't have any Will Kimbrough solo records, this *EP* is a great place to start, but then you'll have to keep going.

Puremusic: Hey, Will, it's Frank Goodman. How you doing, man?

Will Kimbrough: Hey, Frank.

PM: Just first I want to know how you're doing, and how's the family, before we get launched into things.

WK: Yeah, I'm good. Just leaving tomorrow for a tour, and I'm just fine. The family is great.

PM: That's great.

WK: I'll miss them.

PM: Yeah, right. How long is this particular leg you're about to embark on?

WK: I'm playing 12 shows on the East Coast in about--I'll be gone about like 20 days.

PM: So are those your shows, or Rodney shows?

WK: They're my shows.

PM: Your shows, great. Good for you. Since it just left, give me a quick look back at 2007. What kind of year was that for you?

WK: Well, I had a great year. I played about 100 shows. I put out a record. I put out an EP. That's been a great thing for me, and I've really been happy with it. And I mean, personally it was great. My two kids are thriving and smart and funny and beautiful.

PM: Fantastic. I caught on to *Americanitis* late and realized later what a good record that was. How do you see the segue from that record to the current EP?

WK: Well, I mean, that was 17 songs, which may have been too many, but it doesn't matter now. But having found all these songs--having found myself making some sort of a statement, for lack of a better word, I didn't intend to back away from it. On the other hand I didn't want to just repeat myself.

PM: Right.

WK: The last song on the EP is called "Love is the Solution." And that really was sort of my answer, if anything was. On *Americanitis*, I got actual hate mail once.

PM: Really?

WK: Yeah. No big deal, not like, "I'm going to kill you." It's just more like, "American love it, or leave it" kind of thing, typical stuff.

PM: Right, sure.

WK: And another was from an old friend who said, "Well, you liberals always bitch about what's wrong and what do you think we should do about it?" And I had no answer. But for me the overall answer is that humans need to evolve, and so if we could all practice kindness and tolerance and compassion like the Buddha...

PM: Yeah.

WK: And I don't know if Christianity totally says it anymore, but I think whenever Jesus spoke, they usually say that he said that, too.

PM: Yeah, I think Christ said it. [laughs] I don't know if Christianity says it, but I think he did.

WK: Yeah. So those are words to live by. They're difficult to live by. I mean, Christianity and Buddhism both said it, "Look at your enemy as an opportunity to practice tolerance and compassion." So anyway, I wrote a song called "Love is the Solution," because it's the only solution that I can come up with, other than "don't go to war unless you have to," things like that.

PM: Right.

WK: "Don't profit off of war." Things that are common sense. So I tried it. I thought, I'm making a record, I have an opportunity to answer that question. [What do you think we should do about it?] Because one came from a close old friend of mine who I think is sort of apolitical, but would probably find himself voting for a Republican just because of tax issues and things like that. I could say, "I respect that." But I have to say, I don't really. Although I do respect my friend, it was kind of an answer to an old friend of mine.

PM: Yeah. I do understand fiscally why people vote Republican, but anymore it's more a question of "What are you going to have with it?" I mean, come on.

WK: Right, right.

PM: I really enjoyed this new EP. I thought that *Americanitis* was great. But like I say, I got on to it late. So I was really happy to hop on this one fairly well on top of it. What length of time did the songwriting span for the seven tunes on this record?

WK: Well, there's a song on there called "Godsend," that I actually released another version of on a record by the same name.

PM: That's right.

WK: So I actually started writing that song in the early '90s. And it's a real simple song, so it's not like I had to spend 10 years writing it, or 15, or however long it's been. But I have to say that I rewrote it a few times, and then I sort of discovered what kind of song it really was.

PM: Wow.

WK: And I love those deceptively simple little songs. And I started playing that song the way that it's recorded on the EP. And it really seemed to reach people. And then honestly, one thing was at the end of the night people were like, "Where can I get that song in that version?" And I recorded it, and I put it up on my Myspace page, and people could

download it. But when you're at the gig, you want that immediate thing, so I recorded it because I think there was a little demand for it from the live gigs. And so I recorded it--I actually took the version I had put up on Myspace and finished it off with an upright bass on it and stuff like that. But some of the other--"Horseshoe Lake" is a song I wrote with Todd Snider back in the '90s. He released it on a record and I never had released my version, which is somewhat different in a sense. I mean, they both have an obvious kind of Springsteen influence. Todd's version was the E Street Band version, and mine was sort of the *Ghost of Tom Joad* version.

PM: Right. [laughs]

WK: So I don't mind paying homage to Bruce.

PM: Absolutely not.

WK: Some other stuff was brand new. "Hill Country Girl" is a brand new song.

PM: That's really my favorite on the record. I think that's a great song.

WK: Yeah, it links my work to my love of things like--well, artists like Townes Van Zandt in particular.

PM: Yeah.

WK: I mean, Rodney Crowell, who I work with often, he said, "Oh, you've got your Townes Van Zandt song now." And I thought, wow, he ought to know.

PM: That's an amazing thing to say, coming from Rodney.

WK: And then I wrote "Yellow Mama," too. That's a song I've had swimming in my head for years, and never finished it. The electric chair in Alabama, the nickname is "Yellow Mama."

PM: Oh, thank you for clarifying that.

WK: Yeah. It's a song about somebody on death row. It's an interesting, weird thing. At the same time I didn't want to explain it. And actually, Cody Canada from Cross Canadian Ragweed says they've been playing that song at their shows, and there's actually a Youtube video up of it of all these--this huge crowd of college kids in Texas or Oklahoma or somewhere, kind of singing along by the end of the song, which is kind of cool.

PM: That's amazing.

WK: So some of the songs are new. "Horseshoe Lake" and "Godsend" were songs I had kicking around and wanted to either record my own version or make a new version. And

then the rest was new stuff. I mean, at one point it got up to like 13 or 14 songs, and I was just going to make it a record. I kind of wish I had. But we run our own label, and one of the things that gets in the way sometimes is are we going to be able to promote this record and hire a publicist full-time for actually launching the disc properly.

PM: Right.

WK: And at the time we just thought I needed a record to sell at shows in between records. And it sort of took on a life of its own. We had some false starts with our distributor, whether they were going to pick it up or not. And mostly they were just busy, and meetings that we had with them got postponed, and postponed. And finally we just put the record out. And then they said, "Hey, what's this record you've got out?" "It's this one, and check it out." And they said, "We want it." And it's been on the Americana Charts for months now, it's still on there.

PM: Wow.

WK: So that's been cool. I don't know about big records, but there are some heavy hitters in that radio chart right now, and that have been there for a while.

PM: Yeah, there are always some big ones in the top 20 of the Americana Chart.

WK: You find yourself sandwiched in between the Eagles and Merle Haggard and then Robert Plant and Alison Krauss are up at the top. And then I can't believe I've been above Chuck Prophet's record.

PM: That's a monster record. Another Brad Jones record.

WK: Yeah, yeah. A great record.

PM: Just talked with Chuck recently about that record. He's the real deal.

WK: I agree. He's just great. And the EP was just a different process than *Americanitis*. I had all these songs and I decided I wanted to put them all in one place, make some sort of a statement of the time, which is an awkward thing. I recently read an interview with Joe Henry and he said, "Oh, I will never write a political song. It is the most dated thing. The minute you write it it's dated." And I thought, well, but what if you just had one in your heart? And I'm not having some argument with Joe Henry. That's just one of his boundaries that he needs.

PM: That's interesting.

WK: I mean, at least he was saying so that day.

PM: Yeah. It's all so subjective. I mean, you could certainly point to a few songs of Joe's and say, "What, are you telling me that's not political?"

[laughs]

WK: Well, yeah, he's got the Willie Mays song, which is--and maybe he's just talking about if you write "I Ain't Marching Anymore." But I listened to that song, and it's still a great song.

PM: Absolutely. The songs of Phil Ochs hold up remarkably well 30, 40 years later.

WK: Yes.

PM: It's incredible.

WK: Well, the themes are always the same. It's not like fear mongering and misuse of young lives and profiteering ever goes away, until it someday hopefully does go away. That's why I wrote earlier, I said human beings need to evolve. I mean, we all do. I mean, good Lord.

PM: It's funny how you could take something like "human beings needing to evolve" and somebody could call it cliché, when the truth of the matter is, it's never been addressed.

WK: Right. Well. I do think it has been addressed, but--

PM: Mostly, it just gets lip service.

WK: Yes. I don't know what you can do about it. I mean, that may be ultimately the thing. You kind of look at Dylan's work now, he just kind of comments on the human condition in general because he's an astute observer of it, and he may no longer feel the need to specifically talk about things--although he still does. That's the thing. I mean, I guess I just contradicted myself. I don't wrap my head around what's going on in the world. You can do it easier now than ever before, but then you've wrapped your head so tightly.

PM: Yeah, right, you can hurt yourself.

WK: You can spend weeks on the internet finding out all the bad news--and the good news, too. The good news is that there's never been more music that in the past might have been subject to a label system that didn't let everything in. And at the same time I'm an addict of the music blog sites, where you listen to stuff like the massive amounts of Jamaican and African music that I'm just going crazy over.

PM: Yeah.

WK: And then once you go there you may never get your head back up above water.

PM: [laughs]

This EP here is a particularly warm record, I think. And David Henry had quite a lot to do with this disc, did he not?

WK: He did, yeah. I mean, only one song was started at True Tone, which David played on. But I just had a hunch that it would be a good thing to bring him. And I'm working on a new record right now. I won't be around for some days, I'll be touring. But we've started. We've got a CD with six songs on it that's in process. We're going to make a new record.

PM: What a civilized and talented guy David Henry is.

WK: He is. And I really love that he is just so relentlessly musical. He likes to try things using music first rather than effects and technical productions, things I find are predominant particularly in indie rock right now. And that's fine, there's great stuff. But there are a lot of the same sounds you hear that are due to the type of microphone or the type of compressor you used, or the type of gear that someone is using, equipment on the music--and of course, the way people play, too. But you hear sort of the fashion of current sound.

PM: Yeah, it's kind of software heavy, yeah, it's sound heavy.

WK: Yeah. Quite honestly, most of the stuff I started--I did the vocals and guitar and banjos or whatever on my laptop at home. So it's ironic that it's the most sort of old analog sounding thing I may have ever done, but it's actually done on a powerbook with Protools.

PM: [laughs] Well, it takes a talented guy to record into his laptop and sound like a Nagra. [A superior old school tape recorder for field recordings and the like.]

WK: Yeah, well, and you can use it just like a tape machine as well. That's primarily what I do. I know how to edit and things like that, and I know how to use effects. But for the most part I wanted to just record the guitar and vocal at the same time live, and then keep the overdubs at a minimum.

PM: Right. So when you record guitar and vocal at the same time, how do you mic that? What mics do you run to your--

WK: I have like four mics in my house, and two of them are Russian condenser mics that I bought at Guitar Center when I was thinking about buying a laptop for recording, and saving up my money. And I saw them on sale for \$100 apiece. And I have two Shures, a [SM] 57 and a 58. So I really just have standard cheap stuff. Then I have a pop filter that I put in front of the vocal mic and a boom stand. And I get pretty close to it. And usually I'm sitting in a squeaky chair. You can probably hear it on the record.

PM: [laughs] I think that's fantastic that everybody--"Hey, you like that record? That's two 57s and two Ruskie mics. There you go."

WK: Yeah. Then I have--the other Russian is a small condenser, and I put it on the typical somewhere like six inches off the guitar at about the 12th fret, see how it goes. Sometimes I do two mics, I do the 57 on the body and the condenser on the neck, and then just record. I think the song "Godsend" was actually recorded on Tommy Womack's 4-track cassette recorder, which I borrowed.

PM: [laughs] Fantastic.

WK: And then I transferred it--and of course with that I used dynamic mics, I used the Shure mics on that because it doesn't have phantom power. And I have a cheap ART mic preamp I think I got from Kim Richey at some point. She had bought it to try to warm up the sound of her acoustic guitar; it's like a tube thing you run through.

PM: Right.

WK: I use that sometimes. I use that and a little Alesis compressor. I mean, it's stuff you get for 40 bucks on Ebay.

PM: Really? I mean, that's definitely all 40 dollar Ebay stuff, and I think that's amazing.

WK: Well, cool. And I learned a lot. One of the things about David Henry that's always so inspiring to me, number one, of course, it's just the work that he does, the quality of work. But I think you said it well, he's a civilized person. He's a good person, and he's very talented.

PM: He's a very evolved person.

WK: Yes, he really is. And I just love to be around him and work with him, because work gets done, and it's good.

PM: So did he cut all his tracks over at True Tone, or did he bring his cello over to your pad sometimes?

WK: I went over there. I wanted to hear--I was paranoid that my tracks would sound terrible once I sort of put it up into the light of professional scrutiny. I liked the performances, but I didn't know that I would like the sound. I couldn't tell anymore. At the time I had some Radio Shack speakers that I bought on Ebay, because I heard that--what's his name--John Leventhal had used them to mix a record.

PM: What, those little black Realistics?

WK: Yeah, the little Minimus models--

PM: Yeah. Those are great little speaks, if you can find some that don't have speaker rot by this time.

WK: They're sort of his Auratones, they're sort of his crappy speakers to hear more like what the real world is going to hear. So I bought some of those and a power amp. So I had my collection of \$40 things.

PM: [laughs]

WK: And then I went over to David's, and we listened. And I said, "These are the songs I'm thinking about doing." And as each song would roll by he'd go, "I don't think we need to re-record this." And really the three parts of what I do are, first, the creative part, that trusts the gut instinct in the first take. And then there's the paranoid "It can't be any good, I did it at home on my own." And thirdly, there's the guy who owns his own label and has to come up with all the money to do this stuff. So a part of it is like, "Are you sure this sounds good, because if it does, I like that it was the first take of it. I don't want to redo things unless they're messed up." But that also saved me like half a day in the studio. Yeah, mixing, I mean, that's probably boring facts. There could be more interesting things to say. But the truth is I put out my own records, so the bottom line is always there. And that's not why I recorded it at home. I recorded it at home because I was inspired at that time, and I had the gear to do it. And one of the things I love about David is he's a connoisseur of having no gear.

PM: Really?

WK: You go into his place, he doesn't have a big rack of vintage tube stuff with blinking purple lights on it--which I love that stuff. Believe me, when I go to places that have it, I love the vintage gear. I love it! I covet it and I want it. But he doesn't have it, and--

PM: What's he got?

WK: He has a--I think it's a Studer board, which would have gone with the Studer tape machine back in the eight-track days, like in the early '70s. And so that's his analog sort of link to the digital world.

PM: Is he a Protools guy or a Nuendo guy?

WK: He's a Protools guy. But he has an Apogee analog to digital converters, and that really makes a big difference in his sound.

PM: They're amazing, I hear.

WK: A good sounding clean board, analog kind of vintage board that goes into really good converters, and then also back out converting it digital to analog so that when you hear it back you're hearing it more true to form, and then you can manipulate the sound, EQ and compress it more correctly. You're not going to mix it and then take it to the mastering lab and have the guy go "Wow, listen to all that extra booming bass."

PM: Right.

WK: But really, you go in there, and there's a computer and this small board that's about the size of your stovetop. And then there are just a couple of pieces of gear in a rack like basic compressors, not expensive stuff, and basic microphones, very minimal. But it sounds great. So I like that, because there's not stuff to get in the way.

PM: That's interesting.

WK: I have found myself at places that had lots of gear where you'd end up spending half a day trying out different mics on the guitar amp. And it's kind of like, well, you know what? It's pretty much going to sound like it sounds.

PM: Yeah, right. Just put a 57 in front of it, please. [laughs]

WK: Yeah. So I love to experiment, but I really think sometimes that's for people with a budget or people with a lot of gear at home. And I experiment at home. Malcolm Burn, who makes records Emmylou Harris and Daniel Lanois has been known to say, "Give me a 57 and a 4-track, and I can make a good sounding record." I'm not decrying owning good gear, because Nashville is a town of people with fantastic home studios. It's also a town of mind boggling great studios, at least the ones that are not closed down, you know, the big great old rooms. But here we are in the day where you can do your laptop recording and you can get a comment from Rodney like, "Oh, you've got your Townes Van Zandt song." Or--referred to "Yellow Mama" as your Carter Family song. So I'm pleased.

PM: Yeah. And Townes would probably have approved of a collection of \$40 things to make the recording.

[laughter]

PM: How long and how much have you been touring with Rodney?

WK: This last year was a very minimal amount of touring. But I've been playing with Rodney since *The Houston Kid* came out and Stuart Smith got hired away by the Eagles. At that time I think it was 2000 or 2001.

PM: Oh, really? That many years already?

WK: Yeah, yeah. So I've been doing it for a while. And last year I think I played less than 10 shows with Rodney, or maybe 10, something like that. The rest were my own.

PM: How has that gig and that relationship with Rodney changed you and changed things for you?

WK: I've learned from everyone I've worked with, and there have been some brilliant people along my path. I learned a lot from Kim Richey and a lot from Todd Snider in particular, as far as people that I've worked for hire with. But Rodney is at a different level--he's sort of found a place of his own. He's a little bit like a Kristofferson figure, in that he's a writer's writer and then he's a star, at some point was like sort of a popular star, but chose this artistic path. And also somebody that just has a lot of good humanity in them, and you can just take that in spades all day long.

PM: And it seems that he's been very supportive of you as a person and a songwriter and a solo--isn't that right?

WK: Oh, yeah, very giving and open, and not living based on his fear--or at least as little as possible.

PM: Playing as well as you do, it's interesting how you seem to incline away from your own records being any obvious platform or demonstration of that, but rather all about the songs.

WK: Well, I think I'm a songwriter who happens to be able to play lead guitar. And I've done a lot of rocking and rolling in my life. I've played in bands from age 12, and never ceased to be in some sort of situation in a rock 'n' roll band.

PM: And you were always playing lead guitar in all those bands, right?

WK: Yeah. So I've done a lot. And I kind of like it. I mean, the other night I played a gig, Saturday night, playing this club, and it was like 50 million guitar solos. People seemed to like it. But I don't really listen to records like that. I more listen to music, not just songs, you know--I listen to a lot of African stuff where I don't know what the words say. So I'm listening to--studying stuff with African roots, soul music and gospel. I've kind of studied up on the blues a lot--not that you can ever finish learning that. But I've sort of moved--I don't know if it will make any difference in the way I play, but it's sort of like learning a new language or attempting to learn some phrases without phrase books. But I play with African music, which is full of guitars.

PM: Full of amazing guitars.

WK: But to answer your question, I think I like music, but I don't like guitar solos. I love guitars and I love to play guitar, but I sort of don't listen to other guitars as much as I did a long time ago and I learned a certain amount of the vocabulary. And then you need to hear some other instruments and hear some other... Well actually I'm listening to African guitars. They have a whole different tone. It seems like their hands are different, the whole way they hit the thing.

PM: Yeah. And of course you make records like a producer, not like a guitar player.

WK: Right. As a guitar player, I'm always trying to push that envelope in a solo. But listening as a producer is different. I was working with Jimmy Buffet and Jimmy ran into Roger Waters from Pink Floyd and wound up having lunch one day with him, and then dinner with him another night. And I think because I was with Buffet, you know, Roger Waters deemed it okay to talk to me. I mean, it was just interesting when you meet someone in that circumstance, they kind of like lean in and go, "So what do you do?" And we had a conversation. And he wanted to talk about Neil Young a lot. And then he was talking about editing all those David Gilmour guitar solos. And of course those are some of the epic rock guitar solos of all time.

PM: Sure.

WK: With Hendrix and Jimmy Page and all the other people. But those really long, drawn out Dave Gilmour things had a huge influence on me. And I never really even bought those records--but I didn't have to. I grew up in the '70s.

PM: True. It was everywhere.

WK: Every party, by the end of the party they had *Dark Side of the Moon* playing and you're trying to get a girl to make out with you.

PM: [laughs]

Producing is something you do more and more of. Is that something you see as more of a primary activity in years to come?

WK: I don't know. I'm kind of afraid of it because it's such hard work. I really try to get inside people's heads and try to give them what they want, and it's difficult work. And it does require a lot of tolerance and compassion. [laughs] So I'm trying to be choosy. I'm working with a woman named Bonnie Bishop who's from Austin. She's unbelievably talented singer, a real singer's singer.

PM: Yeah, I've heard about her. They say she's great.

WK: And she's a good songwriter, too. She's really kind of coming into her own as a songwriter, and figuring out her place. I can hear the places she comes from so distinctly and I also hear her own thing. I mean, she definitely knows that she can sing, and she goes for it. But she really has these vocal licks and muscles that I don't have, in her face and stuff. But it's interesting to do.

And *East Nashville Skyline* with Todd Snyder was the easy one, in a sense, musically, because he knew what with he wanted and he knew that I could help him get that. And we didn't really have to talk very much. He would just say, "Jerry Jeff meets Captain Beefheart," or whatever. "Oh, okay, yeah, I see what you mean." And for years I think he had had producers who would look at him sideways when he'd refer to his taste in--you know, the Dylan records nobody else likes, the *Self Portrait*, or Prine's later kind of lost

years records, like 1980 records, and Jerry Jeff Walker's 1980 words, but those are records that he heard first on those guys in his life. And then he discovered their great stuff, but still the weird stuff sort of sticks with you.

PM: So who do you like for president?

WK: I voted early, because I'm going to go on the road. I should be back by the 5th. But I have to drive home from New York starting the 3rd in the afternoon, so I probably won't get home until the 4th sometime. So I went and voted early today, because the early voting started today. And I can tell you right now, it's fun to go on election day, but it's also fun to go early because you have the place to yourself.

PM: Wow.

WK: It's a nice calm voting. I voted for Obama. And I will support whoever the democratic nominee is.

PM: Right. Who do you got, yeah.

WK: But I like Obama. I think somebody needs to be a people magnet kind of a personality. That's my personal feeling. And I think he's the person that most has that to me. There are things about other candidates I really love. I mean, I love John Edwards. He's a fighter, and I really love him. And I love Hilary, really, still, despite all the--she's a fascinating person and I think really smart, and I think she would be a great president.

PM: Yeah, despite her unlikeability, I like her, yeah.

WK: Yeah. But she showed some--she had this sort of little popular streak in Iowa. I don't know, I mean, who cares whether it's--it's all calculated, a lot was calculated. But I voted for Obama.

PM: Are you much of a book reader?

WK: Yeah.

PM: Anything lately turned you on?

WK: Yeah. I read Dennis Johnson's *Tree of Smoke*. I think it won some big award, so I got on the waiting list at the library and got it. It's a Vietnam novel. But it has a lot about Buddhism as a source of strength that the Vietnamese people had.

PM: Wow.

WK: And that showed that the--and I'm sort of obviously from our conversation interested in Buddhism right now. And I finally read Geoff Emerick's *Here There and*

Everywhere. [The Beatles engineer talking about his experiences with the group in the studio.]

PM: Boy, that was good.

WK: It's a great book.

PM: So lastly I'll ask you how you think 2008 looks, and how you might like it to differ from the year gone by?

WK: This may be too much reality, but I just had planned to go to Europe in March and tour, and we just decided not to do it because there's not enough dates.

PM: That's a bitch.

WK: But I'm looking at it like, well, I'm going to be home more. I have the opportunity to work on my record and work in town some more and write with people I've been to wanting to write with. So I'm going to muster up some of that. We're always trying to strike the balance, and this is yet another year of trying to strike the balance between work and family. And I think that's pretty universal, the balance that people are trying to strike... I went to a doctor today because I have a sinus infection. And I asked him how he was doing, and he goes, "Okay." You know, he kind of had this look in his eyes. And I said, "Well, what?" And he goes, "Well, I work too much. I don't spend enough time with my family." Of course, it's *Americanitis*.

PM: Right.

WK: So just continuously trying to strike that balance. I hope that I can actually be kind and tolerant and compassionate and maybe some of it will come back to me. And I want to make a record that I feel like is worth putting out. And I hope these shows coming up go great and I get some more shows, but not too many. I'm just a practical boring old Taurus, really.

[laughter]

WK: I just don't want to get in trouble. But I quit drinking about 10 months ago.

PM: Really?

WK: That's been a good thing for me.

PM: That's a big deal. What's that been like?

WK: It's been good. I mean, I just stopped one day, and I just kept stopping. It has been rather effortless. I haven't gone to any meetings or things like that. But I do have a good support group of people around me. When you've lived in Nashville for 20 years and

done music then you certainly know people that have been through every way, shape, and form of substances and treatment and not treatment and getting religion and losing religion.

PM: Right, every permutation of drinking and not drinking.

WK: Right. So I'm doing that. And it's been good for me. Last winter I had a lot of time at home. I was writing and I recorded the EP and was working on a lot of the stuff that's going to be on my next record. And then I dove right back into it in the summer and the fall. And right before Thanksgiving I worked--I do this a lot. For some reason it just works out for me. I'll get these 25 days in a row of session work, and then touring, all just one after the other for 20 or 25 days. And then I had it again between Thanksgiving and Christmas. And it's just intense, hard to do. And I need to do it because then there are times when your European tour gets cancelled, and all of a sudden your February and March are just wide open. So that's the nature of the flexible schedule and the flexible paycheck, as you know.

PM: Indeed.

WK: Anyway, so I'm just enjoying it. It's not been a big deal. It hasn't been hard to be in the bars constantly, or being out on the road, people drinking or doing whatever. It's just their thing.

PM: Well, you sound pretty sane to me, bro.

WK: [laughs, then sighs] Don't judge a book by looking at the cover.

PM: [laughs] It's been a pleasure talking to, as it always is.

WK: You too, Frank.

PM: So hi to Jessica, and you take care of yourself.

WK: Okay, you too.