



Authentic American music with a bona fide, genuine, one-of-a-kind, one-man-band!

Willie's roots are in the hills of northern lower Michigan, home to Amish communities and farmers who migrated to the city for jobs at the new horseless-carriage factories early in the 20th century. Willie's grandparents settled in that icon of today's great depression: Flint, the newest home of the blues.

He began playing guitar as a teenager and in the 1980's released one record with the punk rock band "Toll". In the

90's he had a commercial success as front man for his blues/rock show band. Their "Something for Everyone" release, included the single "Talk Louder", the classical crossover instrumental "25 Strings", and the popular "Buick City Blues". All three received airplay. "Talk Louder" eventually charted at #15 on the AAA radio charts. After that success, the band went on hiatus for several years and Willie found other work as an artist and actor. The band eventually released a new single titled "Waitin' On You".

Then an accident left Willie's left hand paralyzed.

Though he never missed a performance date, Willie depended on a brace to hold his fingers in place on the guitar as he learned to play the piano and harmonica. After a long year as a one-handed musician his arm slowly began to mend and Willie was able to "relearn" how to handle the guitar. That sobering year of uncertainty inspired Willie to "never take a moment of life or music for granted".



He decided to focus exclusively on recording and playing the blues.

In 2009, a chance meeting in the Key West airport with a musician/luthier who had two "cigar box" guitars led to Willie's discovery of a musical genre he'd never explored. It opened up the gates to the simple, hypnotic melodies of early American music and it's primitive instruments.

He had found his musical muse.

To recreate the tradition of the original minstrels of early America, Willie began performing as a "one-man-band" using vintage instruments and accompanying himself on percussion. That format allowed him the freedom to experiment in ways that were not possible in the more traditional blues/rock ensemble format.

Nov. 2010 - Willie wins the Canada South Blues Society Solo/Duo Challenge and is off to represent Canada at the International Finals in Memphis in 2011!



To inquire about booking Sweet Willie Tea, please call: Rose Hiton-Cowley at 913-449-4458 or visit www.SweetWillieTea.com

The unexpected popularity of the home-made demo of his unique one-man-band style has Willie back in the studio completing his album of original and traditional "Americana" music for the WB Record label.

While he still performs with his show band, Sweet Willie can also be found performing traditional blues and original songs as a "one-man-band". Willie's shows feature historical facts about his instruments including turn-of-the-century cigar box guitars, dobros, diddley bows, a variety of other acoustic guitars, plus harmonica and of course, his unique self-accompanying percussion.

Willie can also perform an "educational" blues review show featuring selections performed in chronological order and accompanied with facts and trivia about the artists and their material. It begins with pieces performed on vintage instruments starting with the earliest recordings of Robert Johnson and Jimmie Rodgers, classics by Sonny Boy Williamson, Rufus Thomas, and Tin Pan singers like Fats Waller. The show moves on to the transitional Chicago Blues of Muddy Waters and Albert King, country blues from the likes of Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson, continuing through the Memphis sounds of B.B. King, Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, and ending with the blues derivative sounds of artists like Stevie Ray Vaughan and contemporary Detroit style blues artists such as Larry McCray, with Willie's own style and material poured into the mix.

With an extensive background in Second City style improv theatre as both a director and performer, Willie brings lots of audience participation, good humor, and energy to engagements as he plays homage in his own way to the roots of American music.



*"This is the brace
U of M-Ann Arbor
Hospital designed
that I used till God
gave me back my
hand" ~ Willie*

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Song samples, references, availability, etc.:

www.SweetWillieTea.com

"The new album is a terrific recording with an eclectic mix of songs performed on vintage cigar box guitars, dobros, acoustics... as a one-man-band. In a Spartan setting, you get an intimate ambiance with the marvel of a single artist controlling the rhythm, chordal, and melodic statement, all with one heartbeat... you've gotta love it, it's real blues".

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