



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 21, 2021

**SEDUCTIVE AND SINGULAR NEW SOUND OF WESLEY STACE'S *LATE STYLE*,
COMING FROM OMNIVORE RECORDINGS ON SEPTEMBER 10**

Chris von Sneidern, Prairie Prince, Kelly Hogan and Nora O'Connor are special guests

“Talk lower, move slower,
Your options have changed.”
—Wesley Stace, “Do Nothing If You Can.”

PHILADELPHIA, Pa. — **Late style:** You can only get there if you've been around long enough to have had an early and a middle one. Maturity, wisdom, refinement are its hallmarks. And having done things a certain way for a time, you might want to do them differently in order to arrive someplace new, someplace surprising.

With *Late Style*, Wesley Stace, the artist formerly known as John Wesley Harding, but before that as Wesley Stace, has done things differently. Having begun to put some new lyrics to music, in his usual way, singing to an acoustic guitar, he realized he was coming up with old solutions, reinventing a wheel he had already made, with chord progressions and melodies that worked as folk and pop songs but were not satisfying his desire for something fresh, something he'd be excited to listen to in 2021.

The album is due out on Omnivore Recordings on September XX, 2021.

“The idea was the same as always: to find a new way to crack the egg of ‘gentleman-songwriter with lots of lyrics’,” says Stace, “most particularly in a way that suited my voice (which has never quite provided the cut glass that rock requires) but that more accurately reflected what I actually listen to for pleasure on the kitchen stereo when I'm cooking, where you're very unlikely (with no offense to those great songwriters) to hear Bob Dylan, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell etc.”

And so he turned to David Nagler, the musical director of his portable variety show, the *Cabinet of Wonders*, to be the Rodgers to his Hart, the Elton to his Bernie, the Bachrach to his David. “I changed tack from trying to write it all myself, to collaborating with David, knowing that he could get me what I want, rather than what I was musically fumbling for. After 15 years of Cabinets and English UK shows, he knows what my voice can do. And I was very confident in this set of lyrics, so I felt good sending them off to him. He's incredibly versatile. And though it might seem left field for me to want to make a record like, say, “Like a Lover” by Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66, it really isn't, since that's immortal music, and ... here it is!”

On *Late Style*, Wes is wearing a closetful of new clothes, gathered from the place where jazz and pop and soul and country blend into something colorful, seductive and smooth — a little Gary McFarland (no stranger to flavoring his arrangements with social commentary), Mose Allison, Carla Bley, Nina Simone's beautiful interpretations of great protest songs, the romantic wit of Bob Dorough, Dorothy Ashby, the arrangements of Jean-Claude Vannier and the beautiful Cadet productions of Richard Evans, Steely Dan, some Gabor Szabo, Harry Nilsson, the soulful protest of Gil Scott-Heron, the Bee Gees, Tom Lehrer, the Carpenters, whose “Close to You” has been in his set list for years, and even the Partridge Family (“Come Back Yesterday”).

Late Style is influenced by these artists without imitating them, so the songs feel modern and “modern” all at once, with Latin and jazz touches, and keyboards rather than guitar central to the sounds. And, for all the polish and lightness of touch, there is something vaguely unsettling about some of these tunes: the lockdown jam “Do Nothing If You Can,” the older-and-wiser-but-still-cocky vibe of “Where the Bands Are,” or the cinematic and apocalyptic “Your Bright Future.” You can call them uneasy easy listening — smooth, but oddly shaped, with surprising harmonic changes and rhythmic angles. They have the paradoxical flavor of having been written to be hits without any thought of having hits at all.

Unexpectedly, says Wes, it was the experience of writing the libretto for Errollyn Wallen’s opera *Dido’s Ghost*, which had its world premiere at London’s Barbican in July, that “taught me how liberating, and therefore amazing, it is to hand your own words over to a composer. And that got me enthused to do it with my actual lyrics for the first time.”

“When we first discussed writing songs together,” says David Nagler, “Wes sent over some musical touchstones, but since the two of us are constantly playing music for each other, after a show or when we’re on the road, I knew what additional styles and sounds I wanted to incorporate that he would also like.”

Wes began emailing David lyrics, accompanied by audio recitations to note phrasing, emphasis, and pronunciation. “The subject matter and tone of each lyric determined the musical feel and style for me,” says David, whose 2016 album *Carl Sandburg’s Chicago Poems* set Sandburg’s words to music. “I recorded demos at my apartment in Brooklyn, sent MP3s to Wes, who recorded his lead vocals over the demos and we had a new record written by the summer. We had a celebratory lunch that August in Italy, where we both happened to be vacationing with our families!”

Though Stace had originally imagined a record that “a phenomenally well-rehearsed combo might record in a club, perhaps even in front of an audience,” COVID had other plans. But through the mysterious magic of modern technology, the recording came together out of Philadelphia, where Wes lives; New York, where David built tracks from keyboards, acoustic guitars and virtual instruments; San Francisco, where Wes’s longtime friend and collaborator Chris von Sneider (producer of *John Wesley Harding’s New Deal* and *Awake*, not to mention a solo artist in his own right and sometime member of the Flamin’ Groovies) added electric guitar, vocals, horns and the drums of Prairie Prince (The Tubes, Todd Rundgren, Jefferson Starship); Chicago, where Kelly Hogan and Nora O’Connor of the Flat Five — and half of Stace’s acapella quartet Love Hall Tryst — added harmonies; and ... wherever Mauro Refosco contributed his evocative percussion.

As to the title, *Late Style*, Wes says, “It’s true of course that I’m older, and that I have more behind me than in front of me, and that in these lyrics I am considering the world during the rather bleak time we’ve all shared, and thinking of ways to brighten it up, but it also just seemed the perfect mood for a jazzier album. And I do fully feel that the world requires a little beauty and finesse from artists at this moment, particularly as we emerge from a time of scruffy zoom concerts. We all need a little elegance.”

As Barry Gifford says in his liner notes: perfect for listening to on late night radio.

“It’s late, but we’ll get it done
Well done, everyone!”
Wesley Stace, “Well Done Everyone”

About Wesley Stace:

Wesley Stace was born in Hastings in 1965. Since 1988, he has released many albums under the name John Wesley Harding and recorded duets with, among others, Bruce Springsteen, Lou Reed and Rosanne Cash. Stace has published four novels, including the international bestseller *Misfortune*, and recently co-wrote Mark Morris’ memoir *Out Loud*. He also created *Cabinet of Wonders*, a monthly show that plays at New York City’s City Winery, and which *The New Yorker* called “one of the finest nights of entertainment this city has to offer.” His opera *Dido’s Ghost*, composed by Errollyn Wallen, premiered at the Barbican Theatre in London in June ’21. Stace has taught at Princeton, Swarthmore and

Fairleigh-Dickinson, and writes regularly for the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Wall Street Journal*. He lives in Philadelphia.

Track Listing:

1. Where The Boys Are
2. Everthing All The Time
3. Your Bright Future
4. Hey! Director
5. Come Back Yesterday
6. All The Yous
7. The California Fix
8. Well Done Everyone
9. The Impossible She
10. Do Nothing If You Can
11. Just Sayin'
12. How You All Work Me

Pre-order link: www.omnivorerecordings.com/shop/late-style

###

For more information regarding Wesley Stace and Omnivore Recordings, please contact

Conqueroo:

Cary Baker • (323) 656-1600