

In 2002 Michael Farkas walked into a bar in the old Five-Points district of lower Manhattan. Sitting in the corner was Parrish Ellis with a guitar. Michael pulled out a harmonica and 24 hours later at the old CGGB's (RIP), a band was born. They soon enlisted Joseph "Joebass" Dejarnette on dog house bass and later Teddy Weber on everything else. They took their name from an old Irish street gang that roamed the Five Points (The Why'os, circa 1890).

In the beginning, The Wiyos built an audience the old fashioned way, by touring from town to town. If they couldn't get a gig they played on the street, often rallying large crowds and even the law. On their first outing the band drove south in a dilapidated school bus. After

numerous breakdowns and two fires, one of which nearly ended the inaugural tour for the entire band, they finally arrived in New Orleans where they cut their teeth busking on the streets.

While the early Wiyos' masterfully embodied the performance styles of the 1920's and 1930's, they approached touring life with the attitude of the rock and punk music they grew up with. They threw down through polished sets at bar gigs, parties, street fairs, coffee houses, side show tents and even strip clubs. They were known for crashing booking conferences instead of applying for official showcases, playing in the halls and in hotel lobbies. From 2003 to 2008 their shows (over 200/year) were entirely acoustic, typically gathered around one mic. Their reputation for "taking the room" made them darlings of the folk circuit, a must see act, and landed the band tours in England, the South of France, Holland, and Sweden .

The buzz of these high paced Vaudeville-esque performances reached its zenith in 2009 when they were featured in the BBC television documentary, "Folk America – Hollerers, Stompers and Old-Time Ramblers". Later that same year, Bob Dylan hand picked the band to be the openers for his 28 date minor league baseball stadium summer tour with Willie Nelson and John Mellencamp.

While it was their mastery of vintage acoustic performances that drew the attention of many in the folk music scene, by late 2008 The Wiyos had begun work on Broken Land Bell, a contemporary studio production with half the band plugged in and guest beat boxer Adam Matta laying rock and trip-hop beats under syncopated swing and New Orleans based rhythms. The record was recorded entirely in 808a, the bands Brooklyn studio, crash pad and apartment of Joebass and composer Sxip Shirey. By July of 2009, with Broken Land Bell buzzing on the Americana charts, The Wiyos hit the road with The Bob Dylan show, laying down opening set after set of grungy harp, crazed steel guitar, rockabilly bass, human beat box and three-part harmonies. The band perched in front of Willie Nelsons' backline while tens of thousands of people watched in bewilderment. Michael often began each set as a mime in the crowd, once even breaking into the off-limits baseball diamond to hurl a pitch. Stadium security and local police, oblivious to the fact that he was one of the performers, chased him Keystone Cop style through the stands.

In 2010, Parrish and Joebass left the band. Michael and Teddy regrouped with bassist Sauerkraut Seth Travins. The trio holed up in the Hudson Valley, NY for numerous months, only emerging for the occasional short tour. They released one EP, Foxtrots, Polkas And A Waltz. Teddy and Michael, inspired by a recent run as the pit band to a modern dance production of "The Wiyos of Oz" at Wichita State in Kansas, began fleshing out the concept of a new album. The band commenced work at Old



Soul Studios in Catskill, NY in the fall of 2010. Adam Matta joined in for the early sessions. Later Kenny Siegal and Brian Geltner of Johnny Society joined the recording and are now members of the touring band. The new album 'Twist', loosely based on Frank Baums, The Wizard of Oz, is slated to be released in the fall/winter of 2011/2012.

“...like Dylan they [The Wiyos] display a knack from hammering archaic musical traditions into new directions... the result sounds like a synthesis with a genuine future, something of a rare accomplishment.” -Americana UK

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“fabulous” - Bob Harris, BBC radio

“The Wiyos are a gem.... talented enough to deserve their iconic fedoras, and rough-and-tumble enough to deserve the name they share with one of NYC’s most notorious street gangs.” -Metroland, NY

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The Current Line Up

The Wiyos have numerous past and present collaborators. Currently the groups core is comprised of...

Michael Farkas

Founding member, Michael Farkas (harmonica, wash-board, kazoo, banjo, vocals) is a self-taught musician who has achieved expertise on a wide array of instruments. Originally from New York, his musical career has carried him to the shores of San Francisco, France and the streets of Spain where he built his reputation playing with such bands as Dog Talk, Ruckus, L'Producto, the Begat Companie, as well as performing with the internationally acclaimed clown Moshe Cohen.

Multi-instrumentalist, songwriter and vocalist Teddy Weber joined The Wiyos in 2007. He previously spent five years touring and recording the US and Europe with The Hunger Mountain Boys. His reputation as a skilled steel guitarist has landed his playing on various recordings from freak folk symbol Devendra Banhart to roots-based artists like The Bowmans and Todd Mack.

Sauerkraut Seth Travins is a songwriter, bassist and guitarist from Hudson Valley, NY. Seth is a fixture of the legendary Club Helsinki music scene in Great Barrington, MA (now Hudson, NY), where he has led and participated in numerous bands of regional notoriety (The Blue Ribbon Boys, The Big Iron Skillet Band, The Minivans). When not playing music Seth works for Hawthorne Valley Farm in Ghent, NY where he has created a line of raw organic sauerkrauts marketed throughout the region (hence the name Sauerkraut Seth).

Teddy Weber

Seth Travins

Formed in New York City during the summer of 2002, The Wiyos took their name from the toughest gang to prowl the streets of old New York (The Why'os, circa 1890). They have spent eight years touring extensively in the USA, Canada, France, The Netherlands and The United Kingdom. They were featured in the BBC television documentary, "Folk America – Hollerers, Stompers and Old-Time Ramblers". In 2009 The Wiyos were hand picked by Bob Dylan to tour for seven weeks as the opener of the Bob Dylan Show, with Willie Nelson and John Mellencamp. Their 2009 release, Broken Land Bell, sat in the top 20 of the AMA charts for 14 weeks. The Wiyos unique charisma transcends typical social boundaries. They appeal to everyone from young hipsters to seasoned music connoisseurs. They have emerged as a hallmark band in the resurgence of traditional American music over the past decade.



The Wiyos original compositions feel timeless. Much of their music is inspired by the early American musical idioms of the 1920s and '30s, but the band has a reputation for gleefully subverting genre distinctions. They seamlessly fuse vintage sounds with the contemporary without sounding forced or affected. Their more recent explorations blend human beat-box with classic swing and New Orleans style rhythms. The Wiyos' live performances are riveting affairs that take audiences back to an era before TV and mass-media were the main sources of entertainment. With infectious exuberance and theatrical skill, they create a visual spectacle in the tradition of vaudeville-esque performers. Their on-stage physical comedy recalls the silent films of Laurel & Hardy, Keaton and Chaplin. Their instrumental prowess blends numerous instruments into what is truly their own sound.

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