

BIOGRAPHY

WILLIAM ACKERMAN

Windham Hill Records Recording Artist

Latest album: Past Light, WH-1028 and WT-1028 (cassette)

Co-produced by William Ackerman and Steven Miller

"Will Ackerman is surely one of the best and most distinctive fingerpickers to come around in a long time."
— Tom Wheeler, Guitar Player

"Ackerman is one of the most original, technically advanced, and musically captivating steel-string pickers to emerge since John Fahey and Robbie Basho."
— Lee Underwood, Downbeat

"A master of the concert steel-string guitar, his haunting acoustic albums have received quiet but insistent acclaim."
— Andy Meisler, New West

"Ackerman is perhaps the most important figure to emerge in the world of solo acoustic guitar music since Leo Kottke."
— Blair Jackson, BAM Magazine

"His style is somewhere between Leo Kottke and Ralph Towner, but not derivative of either one. What impresses me about him is his originality."
— Pat Metheny

William Ackerman was born in Germany in 1949 and was raised in California. He took up guitar at thirteen, inspired by folk music ala the Kingston Trio. Around 1968 he began experimenting with fingerpicking in open tunings and discovered the music of John Fahey and Robbie Basho. While attending Stanford University, Ackerman composed acoustic guitar pieces for a local theatre group. Several of these compositions turned up on Will's first album, Search For The Turtle's Navel (WH-1001). The LP, released in 1976, was recorded after numerous friends prodded Will into giving them a tape of his music. When one of those friends took ten copies of the album to West Coast radio stations — and eight of those ten stations added it to their playlists — Ackerman found that his part-time hobby had blossomed into a full-fledged label, Windham Hill Records, named after Windham Hill Builders, a company Will founded after leaving Stanford in his senior year to become a building contractor.

Will's second album, It Takes A Year (WH-1003), helped establish the graphics and audiophile quality that have become Windham Hill trademarks. It also confirmed Ackerman as one of the leading figures in a fresh new school of acoustic guitarists. Following the recording of his third album, Childhood and Memory (WH-1006), Ackerman's acoustic guitar pieces were used as the sound track for the Ralph Liddle film, Spirit Of The Wind (Cannes Film Festival, 1979).

In addition to his own recordings, Ackerman has produced Windham Hill albums by guitarists Alex de Grassi (Turning: Turning Back and Slow Circle), Daniel Hecht (Willow), Michael Hedges (Breakfast in the Field), Robbie Basho (Visions of the Country and Art of the Steel String Guitar, 6 & 12), and pianists George Winston (Autumn, Winter Into Spring and December), Bill Quist (in a program of solo piano pieces by Erik Satie, one of Will's biggest influences) and Liz Story (Solid Colors). Will has also produced two duet albums with pianist Ira Stein and oboist Russel Walder (Elements), and pianist Barbara Higbie and violinist Darol Anger (Tideline).

In 1981, Will released his fourth Windham Hill LP, Passage (WH-1014). It was the first Windham Hill album to utilize the Sony PCM 1600 digital recording system. Passage served to broaden Ackerman's appeal considerably and included four pieces for solo guitar along with four duets, featuring cello, English horn, piano by George Winston, and violin by Darol Anger.

Ackerman's latest production, Past Light (WH-1028) is a breakthrough album for Will in many respects. With the exception of one solo guitar piece, this digitally mixed LP creatively explores a variety of musical ideas in larger ensemble settings. The use of a classical string quartet as well as multi-layered guitars with synthesizer, lyricon, violins, oboe, and piano, add a new dimension to Will's powerful folk/classical/jazz roots.

An impressive group of musicians gathered to work with Will's new pieces including the Kronos String Quartet, Churk Greenberg (lyricon), Mark Isham (synthesizer), Darol Anger (violin), Michael Hedges (guitar), Jamii Szmazinski (violin), Ira Stein (piano), Russel Walder (oboe), and Mike Manring (bass). Past Light is a tremendously exciting and accessible album for Windham Hill as well as Will Ackerman's most compelling work thus far.