

Classic Posters - Interview with Eddie Wilson of Armadillo World Headquarters

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by Michael Erlewine

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Finding the Armadillo

Eddie Wilson: I've got a lot of practice telling the story about taking a leek, the story about finding the Armadillo.

Michael Erlewine: Oh no, tell that story again, that's just so great.

Eddie Wilson: Yeah. The purpose of the Armadillo was to have a place to play, because I had been hired to manage Shiva's Head Band. And there wasn't a place in town that was hiring hippy bands playing their own material.

Michael Erlewine: Yep.

Eddie Wilson: And we went to Houston a lot and Dallas occasionally, but we were basically without a place to play at, because the Vulcan Gas Company had closed just before they had hired me. An old guy had a country joint, beer-joint, next to the Vulcan for years, called George's and George had another place called the Cactus Club sitting between two other little beer-joints on the south side of the river, and he started letting hippy bands, because of his experience at the Vulcan, he knew that hippy's would drink beer. So he invited... somehow or another a relationship came together where the Hub City Mover's were playing there every Thursday night. Spencer went one night to play fiddle with them and sit down. I went to Joe, the new manager of Shiva's Head Band. We had a contract and a record coming out on Capitol Records.

Michael Erlewine: Wow.

Eddie Wilson: All of the hippies of course were very suspicious of me.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah [laughs].

Eddie Wilson: I didn't have long hair yet, and for their money, I was from the straight world.

Michael Erlewine: Yep.

Eddie Wilson: So, went to the Cactus Club and during the intermission, I went to pee and the bathroom was backed out and floating out into the little room. Didn't know it for 20-something years later, but Jimmy Dale Gilmore and John Reed told me that they were standing on either side of me, while we were out in the parking lot taking a leek. I looked up into the dark over some trees and saw some broken windows real high up over a cinder block wall and realized (somehow or another) just snapped that there had to be a giant empty room on the other side of a wall that high with windows broken, way up at the top.

Michael Erlewine: Wow.

Eddie Wilson: They went back in to play and I went around this old dark building and found a garage door and a residential door and picked the residential door lock and went in and it was just pitch black, like walking into Carlsbad Cavern, except for the windows, the same broken windows I could see across the room way up high. So I raised the garage door and pulled my 1968 Dodge Charger into the garage door and shut it behind, and then got into the car and turned on the lights. One of the most shocking visual experiences of my life was to find myself sitting in a room that big.

Michael Erlewine: Wow.

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Eddie Wilson: I got pretty excited, pretty quick. I've always been kind of excitable. I searched out the landlord, who turned out to be a school board member, terribly worried about his reputation. Made a deal to move into the place, rent the place and part of a compromise was that I wouldn't sell beer and maybe that would protect him. Of course the Vulcan hadn't sold beer and it had the worst reputation in town.

Michael Erlewine: [laughs].

Eddie Wilson: I'd been working for the brewer's association, so getting away from beer for awhile wasn't that scary for me, and I was taking LSD almost every day by then.

Michael Erlewine: [laughs].

Eddie Wilson: We pursued a lot of visual fantasies and a lot of cultural fantasies. We had a record deal with Capitol Records, which meant to everybody in town that we were rich.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: Well you know we had been given 15 grand... maybe ... for the record and 10 grand in order to call ourselves Armadillo Productions and find other groups to produce and what now. You know, with no place to play on a very regular basis, it turned into minimum wage pretty quick.

Michael Erlewine: Yep.

Eddie Wilson: Dividing it all among a band, you know, like every band buying a bunch of Peavey speakers [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: Yep.

Eddie Wilson: I didn't know what we were doing and now I'm working on a book and still trying to figure it out.

Michael Erlewine: [laughs]

Eddie Wilson: Pretty obviously, we wanted to be an alternative to what we thought the world offered. We wanted... community was the big word. We were going to be of the community. We were going to be very community-minded. During my research, digging up the bibliography, it's pretty interesting to look back now and see even The Rag, the alternative newspaper of the time, very political, very shrill... was running editorials admonishing the community to support the Armadillo. The Armadillo was more community minded than the community itself seems to be.

Michael Erlewine: Whoa.

The Armadillo Image

Eddie Wilson: There was a lot of vain glory. There was a lot of humorous... you know [laughs]... We were trying to figure out how to do something different and we had a couple of really good things going for us. Of course the band was a Whole Earth Catalog kind of perfect hippy band in some ways. The fact that Jim Franklin, the artist, had already been doing Armadillos in covers of The Rag... For a couple of years Jim had been the major visual influence in the friggin' city. He was an incredible artist and here's this ugly little newspaper with these gorgeous covers.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: Jim had the alternative community eating out of his hand and, as I see it now, we have a genius artist who made a genius decision about adopting a symbol. And the quality of that symbol was so perfect that it made all that weirdness possible. And the fact that the Armadillo was so much like the hippies, maligned though it was... though it was a benign creature. I think

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it's because people can't cuddle an armadillo.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: They have a hard time accepting the symbol. It still puts people off, and I think it's because you have to make an intellectual decision to associate with the symbol.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: And most people in the world of animals are thinking cuddly.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: Something that can appreciate our attention.

Michael Erlewine: And you don't want to hit them on the road.

Eddie Wilson: Well [laughs]. There's all kind of aversions to them.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: They're hard to peel . You wouldn't want to have to try to eat one.

Michael Erlewine: No.

Eddie Wilson: The Armadillo has the perfect symbol, coupled with Jim's interest in art of all sorts. He's a multi-talented artist of performing arts as well as visual arts, coupled with the fact that we were adopted by a lawyer about my age, out of SMU, and he had done all of the blues people, you know Jimmy Vaughn and Tinsley Ellis, people in Dallas. And he was already a big fan of their scene and he had been... He had spent a year at Oxford working on an economics book for a rich Mexican and had come back with visions of and stories of something that I've still never seen called an "art laboratory". Sounded great.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: You know, let's, by golly, have one of those [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Art Laboratory

Eddie Wilson: The Armadillo has the perfect symbol, coupled with Jim's interest in art of all sorts. He's a multi-talented artist of performing arts as well as visual arts, coupled with the fact that we were adopted by a lawyer about my age, out of SMU, and he had done all of the blues people, you know Jimmy Vaughn and Tinsley Ellis, people in Dallas. And he was already a big fan of their scene and he had been... He had spent a year at Oxford working on an economics book for a rich Mexican and had come back with visions of and stories of something that I've still never seen called an "art laboratory". Sounded great.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: You know, let's, by golly, have one of those [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: We didn't have any money, but we had this huge space and we had this wide-ranging vision of inclusiveness... What is an art's laboratory, but it means that if you call your thing art, I ain't going to make fun of you.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: I'm willing to take seriously anything that you put your energy into. So right off the bat, we had a little store selling crafts. We had a bakery. At the time, it was really another age. You couldn't find wheat bread, fresh made wheat bread in bakeries all over town.

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Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: There was very little demand for it. So here we were in this big huge ugly cavern of a place with a bakery, and we called it a field kitchen at first, then it became the Daily Bread Bakery.

Michael Erlewine: And the actually cooked it right there?

Eddie Wilson: In the poster collection, do you have that label?

Michael Erlewine: I think I do somewhere. I have an image of it. I don't know if I actually have it, but I've seen the image of it.

Eddie Wilson: The Daily Bread Bakery label that Jim made. It's a little cartoon.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: Of people making bread and turning into armadillos.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, I do have that.

Eddie Wilson: It's a great illustration.

Michael Erlewine: So it was baked right there?

Eddie Wilson: Yeah, we had some rooms around the place.

Michael Erlewine: And you had some ovens.

Eddie Wilson: And so we scuffled around pizza ovens. Pizza ovens are probably the cheapest thing in the world per pound.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, [laughs] I've got two of them in storage.

Eddie Wilson: [laughs]. We set up the little bakery and used organic products before anybody knew what that meant, and made whole-wheat bread. And all of a sudden, in the mornings, we started

having Cadillac's and rich elderly women tiptoe in the rubble just to get fresh whole wheat bread from the bakery.

Michael Erlewine: Wow.

Eddie Wilson: It was quite. It opened my eyes, I didn't know that there was such a market out there. Well being all inclusive about matters of art and community and what not it certainly led us down a different booking path than a lot of places. Rather than just being a little smokey venue that was closed all day until it was time to open up at night we were open all day every day with some sort of activity going on. We spent an awful lot of energy during the first six years improving the space for our concerts.

Michael Erlewine: Wow, that's interesting.

Eddie Wilson: We started off and within the first year we tore out all of the rooms that we had all the way around the hall, in order to double the size of the hall. Then we built a big huge wonderful stage that may have been the secret to a lot of the magic that happened.

Michael Erlewine: How many people could come in?

Eddie Wilson: Well we expanded the hall from about a 750 to a 1500 capacity.

Michael Erlewine: Big.

Eddie Wilson: Didn't even know at the time that we were moving from this one stage that was built on end of the big old armory (just kind of a raised concrete section of the building, oh probably three or so feet high)... We didn't even know until years later the place had been called in the mid-50's, "The Sport's

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Center." Elvis had played there in 1955, the summer of 1955, August 25th.

Michael Erlewine: That's neat.

Eddie Wilson: I have in my collection a copy of a little four-page brochure that was put out and sold there that night about Elvis playing there. It was Elvis's own piece. He was starring in a loose-end hayride promotion. A little piece I'm going to guess 800 words or more about Elvis referred to him as, "The Big Blond Guy."

Michael Erlewine: Your kidding.

Eddie Wilson: No.

Michael Erlewine: That's interesting.

Eddie Wilson: That was the summer he started dying his hair. Sammy Alran??? in Austin was there at that show and got his autograph that night and asked him, "Elvis what color is your hair?" And Elvis said, "purple."

Michael Erlewine: [laughs].

Eddie Wilson: So Prince didn't even make that up. The variety in the music was just... It was kind of a godsend. There were two big questions about audiences and venues both, always is: Number one how big are they? What size audience was there in Austin when we started and how did we have a hand in increasing the size of that audience, that's one of the big parts of this study. And of course in the history of the city they had been always nagging me for a bigger and better venue.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: So we had a place that was a whole lot bigger, that we could hope to fill seven nights a week.

Michael Erlewine: Yep.

Eddie Wilson: And so we had to try to do as many different things as possible. Pretty early on we got the ballet to perform once a month.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, I see all those posters for Austin City Ballet or whatever it is.

Eddie Wilson: Yeah, Austin Ballet Theater Company. Stanley Hall got fired by the city for being a bit of a rebel, so he came and brought his whole ballet troupe to Armadillo. He asked if they could perform one Sunday a month and it just thrilled me to death.

Michael Erlewine: That's great.

Eddie Wilson: At first, we were born in a rock and roll era, but our first sell-out was Ravi Shankar.

Michael Erlewine: Oh wow, he was great.

Eddie Wilson: And so we had, I think Marcia Ball might have led the pack in a local discovery, and that was that she could get a better reaction performing country music than she could any other kind.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: And so Marsha became, "Freda and the Firedogs." And about the same time that, "Greezy Wheels" started up and it. Too much credit is given to folks that came in and played country music. The fact of the matter is that it was bubbling right there the whole time.

Michael Erlewine: Well, you're in Texas, for god sake.

Eddie Wilson: Yeah, right [laughs]. It was pretty southern.

Michael Erlewine: [laughs].

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Eddie Wilson: I've read some stuff that are just absolutely wrong with regard to... even the quote I found recently when Mike Tread says, "Until Willie came along. You never saw cowboy hats and long hairs and..." That was horse-shit. It was that way all along.

Greezy Wheels and Shiva's Head Band

Michael Erlewine: I see it. Greezy Wheels appear a lot; they were like the house band?

Eddie Wilson: Well, they appeared an awful lot, yeah. They had a lot of south Austin kids in the band. There was a huge family following of Greezy Wheels, very south Austin sort of thing.

Michael Erlewine: So how do we compare Greezy Wheels and Shiva's Head Band? They both seemed to be there a lot.

Eddie Wilson: Well, Shiva's Head Band was the house ban. It was the reason that we started the place.

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Eddie Wilson: Shiva's was so anti-commercial, Spencer was... I'm not going to talk real bad about very many folks.

Michael Erlewine: No, no and I'm not asking for that...

Eddie Wilson: There was a venture. There was a work ethic situation. Spencer couldn't get along with his band members and so by the time, before the record was recorded for Capitol, the band was already a mere shadow of it's former self.

Michael Erlewine: Really?

Eddie Wilson: The record was shitty compared to what the band had been.

The record on Capitol was such a disappointment. Shiva's started turning people off and becoming a real problem at the same time that other folks were coming along and working hard and becoming a draw. It changed over a 10-year period, but there's a work on the book, there's a list of local folks I'm trying to deal with. We busted our ass trying to help a bunch of local acts. In some cases it helped a little bit, some cases it didn't.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: There's always a 1000 tombstones for every monument.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: There's a lot of tombstones in our past at this point.

Michael Erlewine: Right. So Greezy Wheels were just kind of more a people's thing or something? They were more friendly?

Eddie Wilson: Yeah, it was not a... There were some bands that affiliated more or less with the Dillo, but honestly our job was to try to put people in the joint.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: So we worked with Storm and Jimmy Vaughn and all the blues guys, until we were blue in the face, but the fact of the matter is we had to put in stuff that drew, when we could figure out how and tentatively that meant mixing it up. On my wall here is the Armadillo World Headquarters October 1972 Calendar that Micael Priest did. It's one of my very, very favorite graphics from the place, because it shows how early on we were really up and running with the remarkable diversity of talent. That October 1972 calendar begins on

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Sunday the 1st with the Austin Ballet and it ends on Halloween with a Pumpkin Stomp.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: Joey Ramone with the Four Daddio's. Jim Franklin's invention turned Halloween from just a ho-hum deal into such a celebration in Austin that the friggin' cops have to make people walk in a counter-clockwise direction on Sixth Street to control it. It all started with Jim.

Michael Erlewine: Wow.

Eddie Wilson: That month we had Shawn Phillips and Lowell Fulson and Etta James, Peter Frampton, Freda and the Firedogs, Jerry Lee Lewis, Michael Murphy...From Dallas, Goose Creek Symphony, High Country, all of those early progressive country acts.

Michael Erlewine: Who did the booking?

Eddie Wilson: Well, I was doing it then with Bobby Hederman's help and then Bobby did, and several different people. Bobby and I both kept out hands in it. It was less drudgery that way, and we did some things that were unusual and that we were proud of. We opened a one-dollar show for Bruce Springsteen with Alvin Crow. We opened, oh lord, we had the Moose of Country Music open for Boz Scaggs when Boz was really odd.

Michael Erlewine: Because it's very eclectic and I think we talked about this before, that you had a mix of jazz and blues and country and rock.

Eddie Wilson: Yeah, we could mix stuff, even on the same night pretty well. You know we opened the Frank Zappa show with Blind George McClain and blew Zappa's mind.

Those Wild Texas Posters

Michael Erlewine: You also have some pretty wild posters. I don't know whether you can remember, one of the wildest ones that I have was in August of 1972 for, "Danny Hicks and his Hot Licks with Uncle Vinty," and it's a big...



A Wild Texas Poster

cp005031.jpg (39.81 KiB) Viewed 18 times

Eddie Wilson: That's a Micael Priest poster.

Michael Erlewine: Let's see. I'm not sure who did it. It has a heart with a tongue.

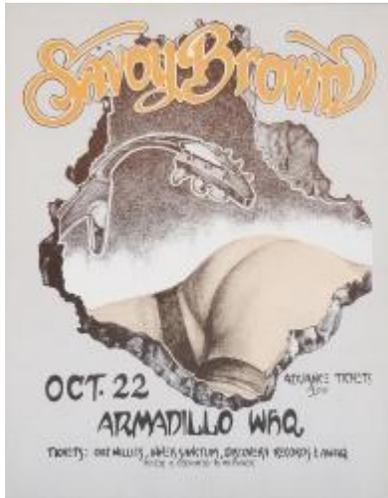
Eddie Wilson: Oh no, no, no, that's not it. That's a different poster.

Michael Erlewine: Do you know the one I'm talking about?

Eddie Wilson: Yeah, but I can't remember...

Michael Erlewine: It's pretty suggestive, right?

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A Wild Texas Poster

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Eddie Wilson: Yeah, well there was this Armadillo World, this October calendar that I'm describing to you. Talk about suggestive. I got busted at Love Field in September, and I had this poster in my briefcase, and when they busted us at Love Field, I had just left Willie and I was going to come home. I didn't know they had started checking carry-on bags and sure enough I had a couple or really nasty lids in my carry on. But it was so bad, we couldn't even smoke it, I don't know why I had it.



The Watermelon Poster

cp004171.jpg (47.75 KiB) Viewed 17 times

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: But in my bag I also had some big old caps of mescaline.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: To keep them from finding the mescaline, I rolled it all around in the little custom's room and then I ended up having to take one. I started to hallucinate like crazy.

Michael Erlewine: [laughs].

Eddie Wilson: They took me into Dallas City Jail and when the guy was checking my briefcase, he found this poster. I had two. I also had the Jerry Lee Lewis killer poster, that Jim Franklin...

Michael Erlewine: So did you say you had this poster, this one I just mentioned.

Eddie Wilson: It was a Jerry Lee Lewis and this Armadillo calendar and so this cop asked me if he could have this poster to put it on the wall. And I said, "Sure." And their putting in on the wall and then for the first time (I'm hallucinating, keep in mind), I realize that the guy, the cartoon character standing and talking to the right of the calendar has his britches down past his ass and he's holding a watermelon in front of himself... obviously fucking the watermelon.

Michael Erlewine: [laughs].

Eddie Wilson: And so I'm looking at it and seeing that for the first time and, since I'm hallucinating, the guy's hips are jerking back and forth.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

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Eddie Wilson: I'm thinking I'm probably going to get in a lot more trouble when they look up and see what I'm seeing.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: Of course they never did.

Michael Erlewine: Right, that's funny.

Eddie Wilson: Yeah the artists pushed the edge. I'm right now trying to work with a wonderful guy at the Country Music Hall of Fame, Jay Orr. They're putting out a country music pop-up book.

Michael Erlewine: Oh cool.

Eddie Wilson: They wanted to use a Micael Priest in the book and they've got an essay from Ray Vincent they're going to have an Asleep at the Wheel pop-up and so this guy is trying to use one of the Armadillo Posters. I understand his predicament. He doesn't want to censor any artists, but he's really looking for a couple of them that would just be perfect, except there's big huge joints in [laughs] everybody's hands.

Michael Erlewine: [laughs] Right.

Eddie Wilson: And with his crowd he doesn't really need anybody smoking pot in his pop-up book.

Michael Erlewine: Right. That's funny.

Eddie Wilson: Artists can always push the edge. For crying out loud it's their job to make folks uneasy.

Michael Erlewine: Well, that's right.

Eddie Wilson: That's the only way you can expand people's consciousness is to make them a little bit uneasy.

Michael Erlewine: I have a question for you too? Why is it that in the Texas posters, because very often, if not quite frequently, there are faces in the sky.

There are things in the sky. Is it because its big sky country?

Eddie Wilson: You know every...

Michael Erlewine: You know what I'm talking about?

Eddie Wilson: I don't know that I've noticed how many posters have some faces and all in the sky, but...

Michael Erlewine: A lot.

Eddie Wilson: We talk a lot about the sky and every time we leave town, Sandra says, "You know these people just don't have Jim Franklin clouds."

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: There's probably a whole lot of sky on the mind of people in Texas that might not be there from big industrial centers, where the sky has been covered up for a little longer.

Michael Erlewine: That's right or it's not flat, right?

Eddie Wilson: Yeah, well we probably lost a lot of our pretty sky since those posters were done.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, that's too bad. Is it flat there or do you have hills and stuff?

Eddie Wilson: Well Austin is unique in that the Balcony's Fault runs right straight through Austin. for about 1500-1800 miles.

Michael Erlewine: Wow.

Eddie Wilson: And everything to the west of that fault line is West Texas.

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Eddie Wilson: Everything to the east of that fault is East Texas.

Michael Erlewine: Wow.

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Eddie Wilson: The slip face, I think the geologists call it.

Michael Erlewine: Yep.

Eddie Wilson: And so everything to the west is rocky and undulating, and everything is lower to the east and is lots more fertile and farmland.

Michael Erlewine: And is flat?

Eddie Wilson: Yeah, well rolling, yeah.

Michael Erlewine: Rolling.

Eddie Wilson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: I'll have to come out there.

Eddie Wilson: Yeah, you need to come visit.

Michael Erlewine: You didn't go to Flatstock?

Eddie Wilson: No, I didn't go home for South-by-Southwest this year.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, so I just was curious about it.

Armadillo Tales

Eddie Wilson: You asked me about the people and the artists. In a nutshell, its the diversity of the music were trying to document and it's pretty easy to document.

Michael Erlewine: Yep.

Eddie Wilson: The diversity in the people that came there. It was staffed by hard-core hippies, but I got lots of good pieces written by straight folks who came there and just fell in love with the atmosphere.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: The way they were treated, the visuals they got to see. The art on the walls. One of my favorite

stories is about a group of journalists from Pravda, the Russian newspaper who came to the Armadillo not long before it closed, and were taken on a tour there by Kay Northcott, who was The Texas Observer's editor at the time. She had taken them to the legislature to watch us make laws and then she brought them to the Armadillo, where everybody just got snookered. And they walked round and round the place, talking among themselves and making notes of what they were seeing on the walls and the one who spoke a little bit of English came up and said just almost with tears in his eyes, "This must be the freest place in the world."

Michael Erlewine: [laughs].

Eddie Wilson: God knows we wanted to be.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: The artist of the posters, kind of like the people run the gamut. Jim Franklin was the lead, the lead guy, the genius artist who tried to get help from other artists, when he couldn't put out enough posters for us, finally went off to Europe emceeing Freddie King shows, came back and opened a competitive place in town, the Ritz.

Michael Erlewine: Really?

Eddie Wilson: Yeah, but not because he felt bad about the Armadillo, because he was that kind of total artist. He really wanted to be in charge.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eddie Wilson: Of course, after he gave it a good try and got beat up real bad, and he lost it, and he came back, he hugged me and said, "Thanks for not being mad, I've been paid." I never thought of Jim as competition, when he started the

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Ritz. I just thought of my artist going off to try to get a few new moves together.

Michael Erlewine: How did the Armadillo ever come to not be? What made it kind of decline?

Eddie Wilson: Well, the Armadillo was always on the brink and in financial trouble. The Armadillo survived eight years longer than it would have because of a man named Hank Corseh.

Michael Erlewine: Oh really?

Eddie Wilson: Yeah. Hank...

Michael Erlewine: How do you spell the last name?

Eddie Wilson: Huh?

Michael Erlewine: How's the last...

Eddie Wilson: C O R S E H???

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Eddie Wilson: Hank gave me \$50,000 in 1971 to keep it going.

Michael Erlewine: Wow.

Eddie Wilson: I was in serious trouble from the day we opened. When I left November 1st of 1976, I left it with Hank in order that he could try to get his money back out of it.

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Eddie Wilson: He ran it for another four years, put it in Chapter 11, and got it out of Chapter 11.

Michael Erlewine: Wow. That's hard...

Eddie Wilson: And then the landlord pulled the plug.

Michael Erlewine: Oh.

Eddie Wilson: And family estate came together and sold the real estate, and they never gave me that call. I was told I was to get the right of first refusal, but I

was already gone and it didn't make me that much difference at the time.

Michael Erlewine: What about all the posters that were produced there? How were they stored or kept? What became of them? Did you try to keep some of each one or did they just all...?

Eddie Wilson: I didn't. I guess probably some of the touchier feelings that existed after the place was gone were because of the posters. Hank, evidently in the last hours of the existence of the place, gave them to Bruce Willenzik, who had run the kitchen.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, so that's how he has them all.

Eddie Wilson: Yeah. And it broke both the heart of both Micael Priest and Henry Gonzalez. But both Micael Priest and Henry Gonzalez should be the ones asked about that.

Michael Erlewine: Okay I will.

Eddie Wilson: Hank was under an awful lot of pressure and six weeks before the place closed, and of course it was scheduled for closing, and it was booked very heavily, and there were a lot of things going on, trying to get a video done and what not. Hank's younger brother died on my birthday, November the 15th six weeks before the place closed.

But Hank had said a number of times, from that moment on to through the end he should have put someone else in charge, but he just plowed right on through. He would have never, ever done anything at all to hurt Henry or Micael Priest, if there had been a discussion about it.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

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Eddie Wilson: But I think Bruce was in an opportune position at just the right moment and I don't... I'm not the one to judge.

Michael Erlewine: What's this Bruce person done with the posters? Do you have any idea?

Eddie Wilson: Well he's been selling them for years and years and running the Armadillo Christmas Bazaar.

Michael Erlewine: Oh okay.

Eddie Wilson: It's at the bazaar that he sells a lot of posters every year.

Michael Erlewine: I see. That makes sense.

Eddie Wilson: He's done right well with it. I heard Guy Juke talking the other day about how much money the artist could have made if they had gotten their posters. I don't know how to feel about any of those relationships, but there are a couple of other people that have really galled my ass, because they were paid to put the posters out and then after the place closed, lo and behold they turned up with these huge stashes of posters, some of which they've sold for incredible amount of money.

Michael Erlewine: So what they did was keep back some?

Eddie Wilson: Well, yeah, evidently most of them. I think John Bennett sold 100 Bruce Springsteen posters for a \$100 a piece. Tipped Michael Priest a hundred dollars [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: Wow.

Eddie Wilson: Anyway, there's been some real touchy feelings about all that and that's probably one of the reasons that the Austin Armadillo artists never ended up coming together into any kind

of cohesive group and then they all ended up out there at that high tech thing. Argen's.

Michael Erlewine: Right. Who holds the copyrights to the posters, the artists themselves, or do you still have them?

Eddie Wilson: The way the law reads, it changed in 1978. Armadillo owned the copyrights of everything up until then.

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Eddie Wilson: In 1978, the law changed so you had to make your deal.

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Eddie Wilson: But up until then, whoever commissioned the work, owned the work. So by buying the stock back from Hank I got the rights to all those videotapes that we produced and the posters. Right now working full speed for getting that poster art book ready with UT press.

Michael Erlewine: How's it coming?

Eddie Wilson: Coming really good.

Michael Erlewine: And how's Bill Narum doing with it?

Eddie Wilson: Narum and Richard Zelade on working on it just doing great.

Michael Erlewine: I'm still ready to help whenever they ask for anything they want.

Eddie Wilson: Well, he's just thrilled to death of your offer for those 400 photos that you've got shot.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, whenever he wants them, or did I send them to him? I don't think I did.

Eddie Wilson: I think there's some problem with the size of them.

Classic Posters - Interview with Eddie Wilson of Armadillo World Headquarters

Michael Erlewine: Or did I send them to him. Maybe I did.

Eddie Wilson: You sent him something I think, but I think that the size is so big...anyway...

Michael Erlewine: I mean he can shrink them to whatever he wants. Either that or ask me I'll do it for him.

Eddie Wilson: He needs to be in touch with you about them, but they're working on everything and Abe, my partner, is going to be back from South America and finish the deal with UT Press here sometime before the end of May.

Michael Erlewine: Because you might want to bring some of those posters, reprint them and work a deal where the artists get something and have like a portfolio of them.

Eddie Wilson: Yeah, I'm hoping that we can do a series of reprints and try to set up a website for all that sort of stuff.

Michael Erlewine: That's great.

Eddie Wilson: And the long and the short of it all, the variety in the music, the variety in the people, and the variety of the art style pretty much are our legacy now for having been an arts laboratory.

Michael Erlewine: That's cool. Did Jim Franklin ever come back to the country?

Eddie Wilson: He's in the country right now.

Michael Erlewine: I wonder how long he's going to be there.

Eddie Wilson: A couple of months.

Michael Erlewine: I'd love to do an interview of him but I don't even know how to reach him.

Eddie Wilson: Well, here's the best way, call Mike Tolleson in Austin and let me see I've got Tolleson's telephone number here. Tolleson was the arts laboratory guy.

Michael Erlewine: Oh really?

Eddie Wilson: He was my lawyer, partner in the Armadillo and he's still in the music business legal end. Well he's helping...he's trying to help Jim with his finances and his publishing. Jim's written a lot of songs.

Give him a call and tell him I'm really happy about how you're helping us with the poster art book...

Michael Erlewine: Do my best.