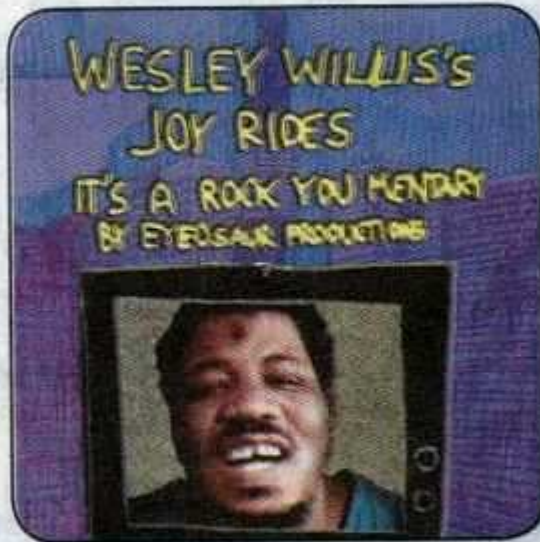




Wesley Willis's Joy Rides – DVD
(Eyeosaur Productions/
MVD Visual)

★★★★



Chicago-born artist and musician Wesley Willis passed away a few years back, but not before he found a receptive and enthusiastic international audience through his music and drawings. The unlikely (and self-proclaimed) rock star, who was tormented by chronic schizophrenia (and some tumultuous inner

"demons"), brought a larger-than-life spirit and over-the-top personality to whoever would lend an ear. This touching documentary succeeds in capturing the essence of what made his life so unusual and so inspiring. It's a non-stop joyride, to use one of Wesley's favorite expressions. Seeing him hawking his CDs on the streets, or reveling in the audience's applause (or chatting with the barbers during a simple haircut) proves to be a funny, entertaining, and charming experience. His simplistic, sometimes-childlike songs were based around his day-to-day experiences, and he wrote songs for nearly everyone he befriended. Directors Bagley and Shively have compiled footage of Wesley in his later years, and it's a fitting tribute to the man and his legend, and includes interviews with Wesley's family, as well as his closest friends. It's evident the filmmakers were close to Wesley, as this loving portrait of an artist who, in his own way, changed the world for the better. He had a larger-than-life joviality and sense of wonder about the world that made him an icon and a character like no other. This DVD is a harmony joy bus ride.

--*Todd Zachritz*