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Notes from editor (not for publication):

—Line 67: (He just showed up based on a letter from a fan? Without telling anyone? This is bonkers!)
—Line 103: Radar who?



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Will Ackerman reflects on 50 years of music

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 A crowdfunding campaign is raising money to record a
3 new album in honor of the anniversary of Windham Hill Records

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 WINDHAM HILL RECORDS founder and Grammy-winning
6 producer and guitarist Will Ackerman has lived and worked in
7 southern Vermont for many decades. You might find him at
8 Brown & Roberts getting his chain saw oiled, or you might see
9 him at Echo or at the Marina, two of his favorite local haunts.

10 Ackerman says that's the main thing that stays with him:
11 the sense of home — which inspired the title of his new LP.

12 *The Commons* caught up with Ackerman to talk about
13 several huge and simultaneous celebrations this year to honor the
14 50th anniversary of the record label he founded: a one-day
15 anniversary celebration in Berkeley, California; a new
16 documentary, *A Quiet Revolution*; and a brand new LP, *Home*,
17 where he plays lead guitar.

18 Following is an excerpt of the conversation.

19 * * *

20 **Victoria Chertok:** A Kickstarter campaign has raised 77%
21 of your goal of \$55,000 for a new album marking the 40th
22 anniversary of Windham Hill's *A Winter's Solstice* recordings,
23 bringing together some of the original artists. That is pretty
24 exciting!

25 **Will Ackerman:** It's exciting for sure. We thought that
26 doing a Kickstarter would give fans the opportunity to have a
27 hand in the creation of this album, which is very unique. I love
28 that about it. We are opening it up to everyone, so artists will
29 send us submissions.

30 A lot of the original artists are still making music and said
31 they would love to be on it. Alex [De Grassi] will be on it, I will
32 be on it, with Barbara Higbie, Liz Story, [and others]. We hope to
33 have the album out by September.

34 **V.C.:** You are donating your time as executive producer,
35 working alongside Dawn Atkinson (producer of the six volumes
36 of the original series), and Bob Duskis (producer of Windham
37 Hill's first Celtic Christmas compilation). How does that feel?

38 **W.A.:** It's sort of like a reunion. These are people I
39 worked with for a million years in [California]. We've been dear
40 friends for a long time, so it's really fun. I'm looking forward to it
41 tremendously.

42 **V.C.:** A documentary film about the Windham Hill label,
43 *A Quiet Revolution*, will come out later this year. What has
44 working with Tal Skloot, the director, been like?

45 **W.A.:** It's the first real compendium about the label, and
46 Tal really cares. Tal is so present, and his enthusiasm for the
47 project is so obvious. He's a great partner in this process.

48 **V.C.:** Tell me about the concert celebrating 50 years of
49 making music.

50 **W.A.:** The concert in Berkeley, California will be on Nov.
51 1. It's the cherry on top of the cake. Tal has interviewed 30
52 people, and he will film the concert of the 50th anniversary, so
53 he will have a fantastic way of ending the documentary.

54 **V.C.:** Let's talk about your new LP, *Home*, which centers
55 around your life in Vermont.

56 **W.A.:** Well, I've become a really good lead guitar player.
57 Over the years I got involved doing melody on other people's
58 projects. It's really fun at this age to have this whole new world
59 that I'm inhabiting, and I'm having so much fun.

60 **V.C.:** Tell me about your process of making *Home*.

61 **W.A.:** The whole process of music for me is that my mind
62 is not involved in the process. It's a matter of feeling; finding a
63 new tuning and exploring that. It's what I'm feeling in the
64 moment. I don't see it as conceptual. We wanted to do a tribute
65 to the area (southern Vermont) that we love so well.

66 **V.C.:** How did you end up moving to southern Vermont?

67 **W.A.:** I got a letter from a guy named Dan Snow, and
68 there was a hand drawn map of how to get to his house. I drove
69 up Stickney Brook Road and went to his house and the door
70 opened, and there was Dan. I hadn't told him I was coming. He
71 said "Oh, Will, come on in," like he was expecting me. It was
72 some crazy, magic thing.

73 I stayed for three days, and we probably drank more
74 wine than we should have, and he said his dad was willing to sell
75 me some land right next to Dan's. I said "yes, please," and that is
76 how we became the best friends in the world, and I can still see
77 his barn from our house. That friendship with Dan, leaving
78 California and moving to Vermont — it changed my whole life.

79 **V.C.:** On the album, you have tracks called “The West
80 River,” “Little Black Mountain,” and “Wood Thrush,” which is
81 your favorite bird. What does living in Vermont mean to you?

82 **W.A.:** Not a day goes by when we look out our window
83 see Little Black Mountain and I say to [my wife,] Susan, “Look at
84 the light.” The community here and being next door to Dan
85 Snow. We have this wonderful isolation up here. We have these
86 buildings on our property that I’ve built with ash, oak, cherry, and
87 pine that I’ve harvested from our land. We have trees turned into
88 boards, and we’ve used them to build the screened-in porch and
89 the barn.

90 **V.C.:** What else do you love about living in southern
91 Vermont?

92 **W.A.:** I just ran down to get a cup of coffee at West River
93 Cafe [in Brattleboro], and it’s kind of fun because you can sit
94 down and have some wonderful conversations with people you
95 don’t know. There are some regulars, and you get to talk and
96 learn about their lives. It’s a very Vermont-y kind of thing. That’s
97 one of the elements of the place that I love so much.

98 **V.C.:** The Marina is a local favorite of yours. Any other
99 places that stand out?

100 **W.A.:** We know most of the people who work at The
101 Marina by first names. It’s changed ownership [in 2025], but it’s
102 better than ever. The light in that space is so beautiful and the
103 view. Radar **[[Last Name?]]** has been a fixture forever. I’m in love
104 with him. It’s part of Brattleboro.

105 I like to go down to Echo [Restaurant & Lounge in
106 Brattleboro] as well. We do check in with Michael [Fuller] at T.J.
107 Buckley’s also.

108 **V.C.:** You have a song on your new album called “For
109 Shorty.” Tell me about that one.

110 **W.A.:** At the height of Windham Hill’s fame, [the label]
111 was monstrously famous in Japan. Japanese media actually
112 chartered a jet from Japan to arrive in Boston, and we were

113 descended upon. I had day after day of doing interviews. One of
114 the guys asked me, "Who is your teacher, your guru?"

115 And I said, "Shorty."

116 Shorty, whose name was Sylvio Forrett, was this tiny guy
117 with twinkling eyes who worked at Brown & Roberts.

118 He had no warning at all when a pile of Japanese media
119 stopped by [the hardware store] to ask about me. He didn't bat
120 an eyelash. He taught me a lot about chain saws.

121 Shorty was one of the kindest people I've met in my life. I
122 wish I could say to him, "Here's a song I wrote for you."

123 * * *

124 *If you'd like to donate to the effort to fund Home via the*
125 *Kickstarter campaign, visit bit.ly/865-windhamhill. The campaign*
126 *ends atnoon on Sunday, May 17.*

127 * * *

128 *Editor's note: Stories presented as interviews in this*
129 *format are edited for clarity, readability, and space. Words not*
130 *spoken by interview subjects appear in brackets, as do editorial*
131 *clarifications.*

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

132 **VICTORIA CHERTOK** is a contributing writer to *The*
133 *Commons* and *The Keene Sentinel*. Since 2017, she has
134 published more than 250 arts and entertainment features,
135 interviews, and columns in both newspapers, as well as in the
136 *Brattleboro Reformer*.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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