

## Wilco – The Whole Love (2011)

Written by bluesever

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1-1 – *Art of Almost* 1-2 – *I Might* 1-3 – *Sunloathe* 1-4 – *Dawned On Me* 1-5 – *Black Moon*  
1-6 – *Born Alone* 1-7 – *Open Mind* [play](#) 1-8 – *Capitol City* 1-9 – *Standing O* 1-10 – *Rising*  
*Red Lung* [play](#) 1-11 – *Whole Love* 1-12 – *One*  
*Sunday Morning (Song for Jane Smiley's Boyfriend)* 2-1 *I Love My Label* 2-2 *Message From*  
*Mid-Bar* 2-3 *Speak Into The Rose* 2-4 *Black Moon (Alt)*

Bass, Piano, Vocals – John Cello – Nick Photinos Drums, Percussion, Cymbalom – Glenn  
Electric Guitar, Loops – Nels Mellotron, Acoustic Guitar, Electric Guitar, Piano, Tambourine,  
Vocals – Patrick Slide Guitar – Nels Synthesizer, Twelve-String Guitar, Lap Steel Guitar,  
Dobro, Loops Keyboards – Mikael Violin, Viola – Matt Albert Vocals, Acoustic Guitar – Jeff

Since 1994 Wilco have proved themselves one of the most reliable and enjoyable bands to occupy the upper tier of indie-rock hierarchy, though recent LPs *Sky Blue Sky* (2007) and *Wilco (The Album)* (2009) might have dented their reputation somewhat as one of the most exciting. Although not bad albums by any stretch of the imagination, they rarely displayed the depth of imagination and beauty present across the group's back catalogue, exemplified on 2002's stunning *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*.

It's pleasing to be able to report, then, that the band seems both relaxed and reinvigorated on *The Whole Love*, which is equally at home spinning into stormy electric guitar crescendos as it is offering up deft acoustic numbers. The current line-up has been in place since 2004, multi-instrumentalist Pat Sansone notably receiving a production credit here, while renowned guitarist Nels Cline's contribution feels more vital to proceedings than ever before.

But it is on the strength of Jeff Tweedy's songwriting that the band ultimately succeeds, and here he seems ready and willing to embrace some of the complexities and strangeness that have made their best work so enthralling. *Art of Almost* makes for a terrific, though slightly

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misleading opening gambit; Tweedy has noted its position in the tracklisting stems from not having any idea what people will make of it. A dark, hypnotic groove boasting programmed beats, sweeping strings and a deep low end before a thunderous wig-out to finish, it will doubtless (and not for the first time) earn the band many Radiohead comparisons. Yet with Tweedy's forlorn, husky pipes at its fore it remains indubitably a product of the Chicago sextet: one that confidently sketches out new territory for the group while sounding almost purpose-built to reward repeated listens.

Lead single I Might furnishes its chugging, catchy hooks with another expressive vocal from Tweedy, who whoops, sighs and hollers his way through the song in playful, free-associative style, while Open Mind is one of the most straightforwardly gorgeous ballads he's ever written, of a heartbreaking melody and yearning, unrequited lyric so intuitive you wonder it hasn't always existed (likewise the exuberant, sunny chorus of Dawned on Me). With the closing One Sunday Morning (Song for Jane Smiley's Boyfriend) the band gracefully unwinds over 12 minutes of twinkling, ruminative acoustica, thus bringing to an end their most adventurous, confident and engaging record in years. ---James Skinner, BBC Review

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