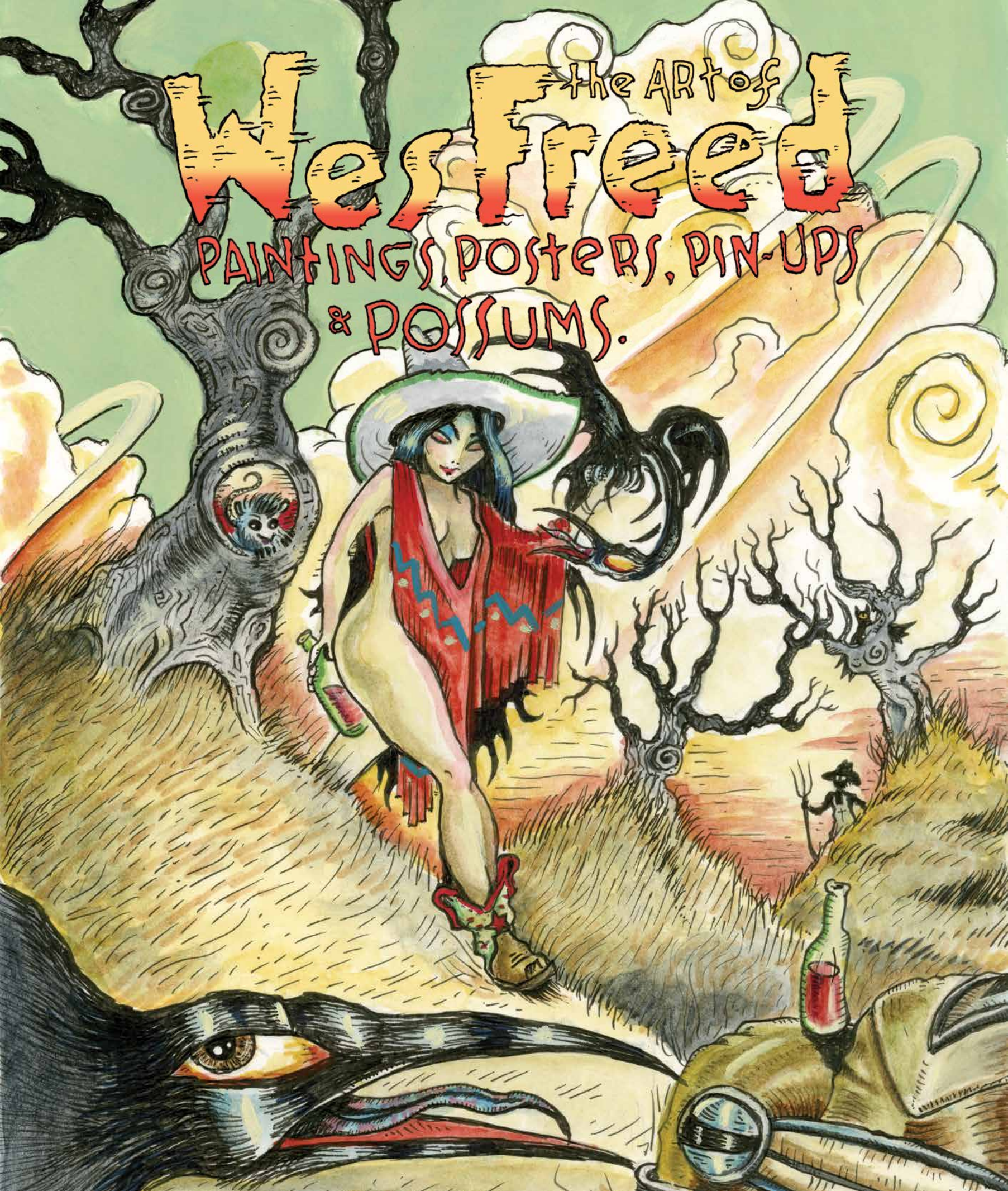


the ART of **WestFreed**

PAINTINGS, POSTERS, PIN-UPS
& POSSUMS.



THE HAUNTED AND SUBLIME UNIVERSE OF WES FREED

Love at first sight. That's the best description of the relationship between Drive-By Truckers and Wes Freed. It includes the personal relationship we've always had which is intrinsically connected to our artistic and business dealings. We've always considered Wes a part of the band's inter-family. His beautiful art has adorned our albums and tour posters and stage backdrops and serves as one of the foremost visual elements of our identity.

Wes's art seems to inhabit its own universe, a world where Hank Williams and Patsy Cline still walk among us, where people co-exist among big scary black birds and there's an owl in every tree. Every yard has a well and cemetery. It's a vision that is both cinematic and dreamlike yet you get them immediate impression that to Wes, it's a world as vivid and real as the one most of us live in day to day.

I met Wes Freed on Memorial Day Weekend 1997. His band Dirtball was playing the Bubbapalooza music festival at Atlanta's infamous Star Community Bar, as was my band Drive-By Truckers. We were a new band tasting our very first burst of local success playing to our first ever sold out room. Dirtball was led by Wes and his wife Jyl. Jyl Freed was a firecracker, freckles and

red pigtails and the kind of personality that never met a stranger. She came up to me after our set and introduced herself by inviting us to play a Capital City Barn Dance, a then-monthly musical show that they used to put on in Richmond, Virginia. Part rock show, part old-time medicine show, a little vaudeville and Opry thrown in for good measure, our appearance there built us an instant and sizable following that helped us to launch our band beyond North Georgia.

A couple of months later, Drive-By Truckers (DBT) drove up to Wes and Jyl's house on Mechanicsville Turnpike in "The Huffer", our old 1978 Plymouth Voyager van. It was early fall and the leaves were starting to turn. The Freed's yard stood out as the one with the tall grass, well and tombstones. Picture the best Halloween decorations imaginable and you can visualize their year-round dwelling. A skeleton trying to crawl out from the well, grave markings from all of the beloved deceased country singers and the remains of an old Triumph motorcycle on the front porch. Jyl said that the neighborhood kids would cross the street rather than walk by their house on the way home from school like something straight from the old Boo Radley stories from To Kill A Mockingbird.

Nowadays, Wes sells his art as fast as he can create it, but in those days, the inside of their house was like a gallery with his paintings from floor to ceiling in their small but atmospheric old house. Paintings of Wes and Jyl (Dixie Butcher was her name in the paintings) co-mingling with Hexter the Blood Possum and beloved honky tonk singers from by-gone days. Patsy Cline drinking a shot of whisky with a look to kill.

Mike Cooley and I formed DBT about ten years into our partnership. It was

our fourth band together but the first to ever taste any hint of success. Our artistic ambitions were such that even though we had yet to release our first album, we were already working on its follow up and writing for an album that turned out to be our fourth. That album, then called Betamax Guillotine, but now known as Southern Rock Opera was a concept album about growing up in the post-civil rights south, juxtaposed with the story of a fictional band (loosely based on the mythology surrounding Lynyrd Skynyrd). We spent six years writing and recording it and it ended up being the project that brought us our first taste of national success. It was an album steeped in southern gothic folklore and upon walking into the Freed's home, we knew we had found the artist to bring the visual elements to life.

For the next several years, Richmond became a key stopping point for the band and we spent many a nights staying up all night drinking with the Freeds, swapping stories and songs until sunup. I wrote "Heathens" in their living room. Wes painted the majority of Southern Rock Opera's artwork and Jyl sang back up on many of the songs. It was beyond a partnership and beyond a friendship. We became family.

People identify Wes's art with our band and vice versa to a point where the two seem to be linked to a point where even I picture his imagery when I sing some of those songs. It's been a wonderful relationship that I'm sure has benefitted us both in so many ways, but I've sometimes wondered if the extent of it has sometimes threatened to eclipse what an amazingly self-sufficient artist Wes has always been in his own right. Long before we ever met, Wes was creating paintings and comic strips plus being a fine musical performer in his various bands (past and present) Mudd

Helmut, Dirtball, The Shiners and now The Mag Bats. Over the two decades of our partnership, we've seen his work evolve and expand, adding new dimensions while always being recognizable as being his.

Our lives have gone through many changes in the two decades since we first crossed paths. Jyl began having health issues leading to diagnoses of Lupus and cancer. She passed away in 2017 after over fifteen years of horrific health struggles.

Wes now lives in town, in historic and haunted Richmond. He and his wonderful partner in crime Jackie share a lovely apartment in a cool part of town and his painting continues to thrive and evolve. He's still conjuring up the ghosts of the past but also incorporating elements of our present social and political realities into his unmistakable universe.

This book presents a long overdue examination of the old and new work of one of the best artists currently working. I can't wait to delve into page after page of its haunted beauty.

PATTERSON HOOD

Songwriter and performer, co-founder of Drive-By Truckers

CHAPTER 1

Drive-By Truckers

I first met the Drive-By Truckers, a band that has had more effect on my life than any other band, including bands that I've been in, in 1997, in Little Five Points, Atlanta Ga., at the Star Community Bar. My group, Dirtball, was playing Friday night at Bubbapalooza, a celebration of the short but storied life of Redneck Underground luminary Gregory Dean Smalley. At the time, my wife Jyl and I were part of the Virginia equivalent of Georgia's Redneck Underground, a scene based loosely around a showcase we put on called the Capital City Barndance. It was, as Jyl described it "the Little Rascals meets Hee-Haw, on a punk rock budget." So, while the rest of the Dirtball contingent (or most of them) headed home to Richmond Saturday morning, Jyl and I stuck around to scout acts for the Barndance. We saw a lot of great bands that second night of Bubbapalooza, still friends with some of them, but meeting the Drive-By Truckers changed everything. Eventually...

In September of '97 the Truckers played their first Richmond show, at our little Barndance, in the Floodzone, a big ol' warehouse, converted to a barebones concert hall. A few years earlier it was where Dave Matthews' Band made their name in Richmond. In those days touring was at best a sketchy affair, sleeping on sofas,

if you were lucky, but stretching out on a floor was considered a luxury (if you've ever tried to sleep curled up in the drivers seat of a cold, or steaming hot van, you know what I mean). When the Truckers played in our town, they stayed on our guest beds, sofas and floors, according to seniority. They saw my paintings and posters and other objects that lead them to believe that I might be the person to put the visual touch to what they were doing sonically. I'd like to think it was a good match. We've been pretty damn happy working together for over two decades now, and the word Cooleybird comes up on my smartphone spellcheck a lot more than you'd think. It was a match made at a rock show, my favorite kind.

A Blessing and
a Curse Tour, 2006

Acrylic on wood, 2' x 3'

DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS

A BLESSING AND A CURSE



CHAPTER 2
Rock n Roll legends/Inspirations

Hank Williams — Ramblin' Man, 2007

Watercolor, pen, ink, and
acrylic on paper, 9.5" x 6.5"



WES 2009
AUGUST

CHAPTER 3
Capital City Barn Dance

Capital City Barn Dance, Sept. 5, 1997

Acrylic on board, 11" x 17"

CAPITAL CITY

Born
Dance



HARVEST
MOON

LIBERTY

TICKETS:
\$7 TIL 9:30
\$10 AFTER
\$2-OFF
W/ VALID
STUDENT
I.D.

9
O'CLOCK

DRIVE-BY
TRUCKERS
DIRT BALL

AND
USED CARLOTTA
CELEBRITY PLUS
BIG "SCOTTY" CORN SHUCKIN'
BARN DANCE GALS AND THE
PRICE

Flood & Zone
FRIDAY SEPT. 5TH

CHAPTER 4

Wes's Bands

**Mag Bats @ Legend Brewing Co,
April 21, 2018**

**Watercolor, pen, ink, and
acrylic on paper, 9.5" x 6.5"**

MAG^W BATS

With:

DANIEL
Miller
& THE
HIGH
LIFE

SA
APRIL 21st

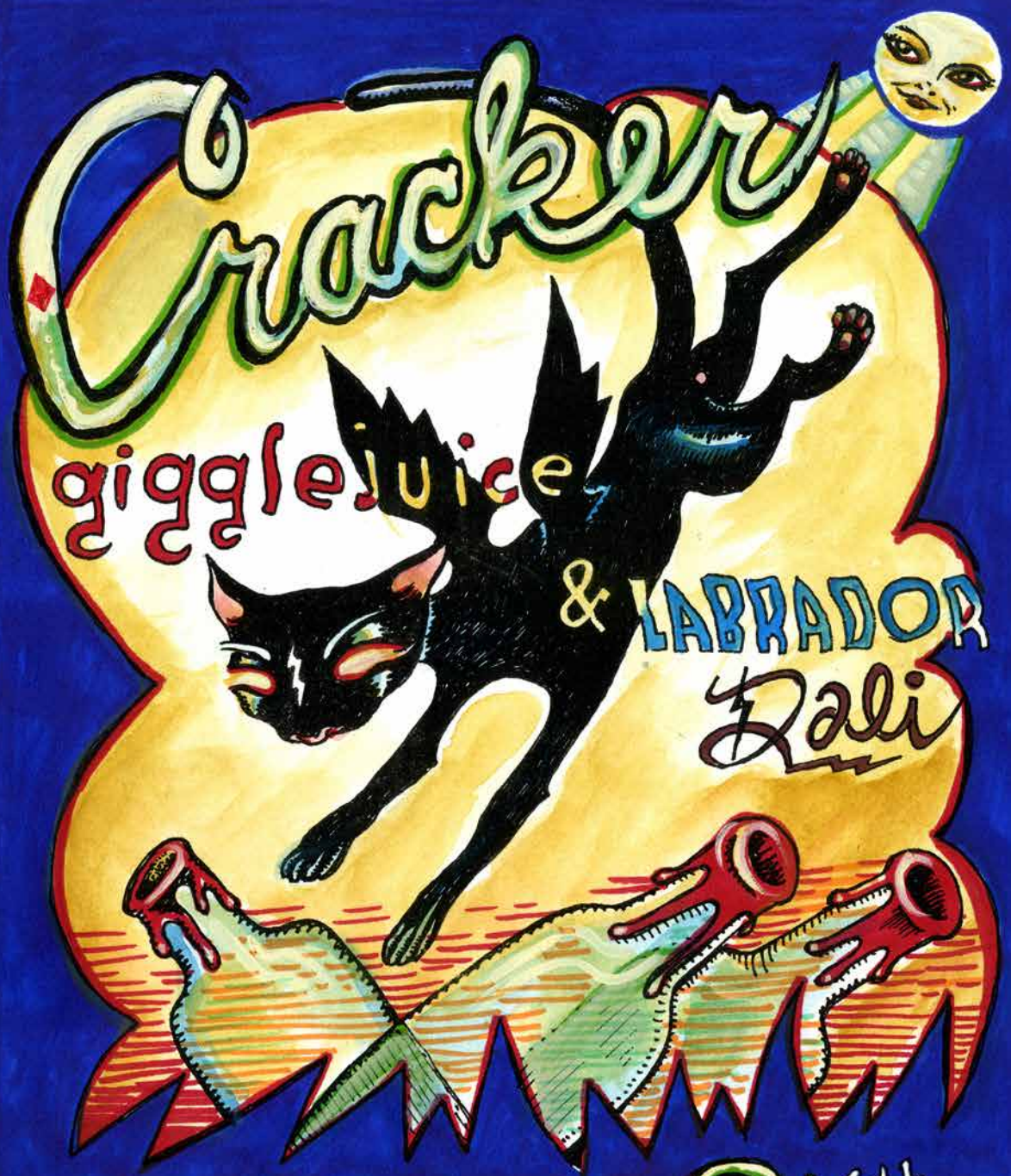


Legend
BREWING CO.

CHAPTER 5
Concert Bills

Erinstock, May 16, 2009

Watercolor, pen, ink, and
acrylic on paper, 9.5" x 6.5"



MAY 2009 16th
ERIN STOCK
TROY, ILLINOIS

2009-05-16

CHAPTER 6
Willard's Garage/Moonshine Tales

Cecil Lone-Eye, 2010

Watercolor, pen, ink, and
acrylic on paper, 9.5" x 6.5"

