

# Gilbert Neal: The Politics & Prose of 'The Mayor of Estes Park'



The eclecticism of **Gilbert Neal** might suggest a changeling, or a dilettante, or maybe a jack of all trades and master of none. But such a characterization would miss the mark. Neal is more curious than distracted, more inquisitive than restless. In his mastery of rock, funk, folk, blues, jazz, and even musical theatre, he embodies the modern pop artist: an intrepid tourist of styles.

After releasing four albums independently, Neal created his Wampus debut, *The Mayor of Estes Park*, by raising every bar — from songwriting to performance to arrangements. From the existential funk of "God's Board Game" to the plaintive wit of "Four Chords" to the loopy joy of "I Had a Girl," he grabs with hooks and

grooves, pranks and koans. Swinging from the mainstream

to the fringe, he is earnestly sincere one minute and brutally sardonic the next.

"The Beatles were my first and most powerful influence," he says. "I don't think saying that you 'love' the Beatles is sufficient. I think it's almost cellular. As the years went by, my influences included artists like Leonard Cohen, Pink Floyd, ELO, Stevie Wonder, and Steely Dan. And being a bassist for a local theater sparked my love of the form mastered by Sondheim."

[wampus.com/gilbert-neal](http://wampus.com/gilbert-neal) Neal sees himself as a dyed-in-the-

wool solo artist. "I have tried to be in bands and tried to treat them like democracies, and I guess I'm just not made for that sort of thing," he says. "When I got done with my last democracy, I just wanted to chuck everything. That lasted about two years. And then my first solo album came out, which was more or less a purging of demons..."

"All my albums touch on religion, sex, age, and hope," he says. "I treat them all like musicals."

*The Mayor of Estes Park* joins a Wampus roster that includes recent and coming releases from **tvfordogs**, **Uncle Green**, **Aux.78**, **Waterslide**, **Big Bus Dream**, **The May Bees**, **Johnny J Blair**, **Kowtow Popof**, **the matthew show**, **The Crowd Scene**, and **Arms of Kismet**, as well as the compilation albums *Hurry Home Early: The Songs of Warren Zevon*, *After Hours: a Tribute to the Music of Lou Reed*, and *If I Were a Richman: a Tribute to the Music of Jonathan Richman*.

release date:  
**July 1, 2016**



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