

He's one of hip hop's most dynamic forces. But, as Mick Wilson discovered, will.i.am has never forgotten where he came from



I never felt like doing the whole Beverly Hills, Bel Air thing. It ain't me. And to be reminded of where you came from ain't a bad thing either

our relationship, so I felt our relationship should get a percentage of the profit."

The gesture wasn't appreciated. "She was furious, screaming, 'What is this for? I don't want your money'. But I left the money with her and if she wants it, it's hers."

Although *Songs About Girls* comes hard on the heels of Fergie's solo album, *The Dutchess*, fans of the Black Eyed Peas needn't be concerned that the group is drifting apart. They'll begin work on a new album during an upcoming world tour, and Adams remains close friends with fellow band members Apl.de.Ap and Taboo, both of whom

he used as sounding boards for *Songs About Girls*.

"Making a solo album wasn't really any different to making a Peas album," Adams says. "In Peas, we all think exactly alike – me, Apl and Taboo grew up together. And even if I'm working solo I still confide in them. It's exactly the same process, only they don't have to come to the studio, and I don't have to ask anyone what time I need to show up to work."

The new Black Eyed Peas album will be recorded on the road. Adams' home recording studio can be accessed via computer anywhere in the world, enabling the band to record out of a suitcase.

"When we made *Monkey Business*, we were on the road, and we'll do the same for the new album," Adams says. "I can log on to my studio from anywhere."

Exactly where Adams and the Black Eyed Peas might be when they start work on the album is anyone's guess. The group have made a habit of playing exotic venues throughout the world in recent years, and the next tour will be in keeping with that. Gigs in Ethiopia, Ghana,

Nigeria, Kazakhstan and Mongolia are planned.

"After this tour, there won't be many places left that we haven't played," says Adams. "We'll have to find a bunch of new places."

Adams' energy is frightening. As well as recording a solo album and preparing for a world tour, he has found the time to pursue one of his other great passions: fashion. A graduate of the Los Angeles Fashion Institute, he's working on a range of clothes due out later this year, plus a solo album of duets. Making clothes involves the same processes as making music, he says.

"When you're starting to think about making a song, you think about what kind of song you want, and then you experiment with what you come up with until you're happy. But you're always within a framework – whether it's rock 'n' roll, blues, hip hop or samba. And it's the same with clothes. There are only so many types of clothes you can wear – whether it's a tux, a pair of jeans or a polo shirt. When you're designing, it's all about the twist that you put on it – the thing that identifies it as yours."

Adams also plans a separate EP next year that will be largely made up of politically themed songs. An ardent environmentalist, he made headlines earlier this year when he announced that he was going to blow up his gas-guzzling Hummer. Since then, he has had a change of heart, and now plans to destroy the vehicle more elaborately.

"The political album is going to be released on the internet – all viral," he says. "And in one of the videos I'm going to put the Hummer in one of those car-compactors. So you'll see it being crushed in slow motion."

Might there be a risk that the myriad creative projects will dilute his energy? "Not at all," he says. "The opposite, in fact. If I'm not doing something I start going crazy. If I'm just left alone with my mind I start thinking too much. And then I'll be one of those guys who walks down the street obsessed by numbers, you know, those dudes who come up to you and say 'Nine! The number nine! It's all about number nine! What's that all about?'"

Songs About Girls is out on September 25

Mad for it - music and Manchester - to the very end

Paul Morley

If you lived in northwest England at any time after 1973, it was impossible to ignore the indefatigable broadcaster, music mogul, social activist, proud northerner, football fan, writer and exhibitionist Tony Wilson, who died last Saturday aged 57 of a heart attack, after being diagnosed with cancer earlier this year.

For years, Wilson was known as an extremely opinionated, populist Granada television presenter and as an idiosyncratic Manchester music impresario who dedicated his life to making the city internationally famous for its music, nightlife and pop culture. From the moment he appeared on television, and especially after he combined his daily Granada duties with his antics as self-appointed ringleader of the Manchester music business, he was someone you loved or hated – or loved and hated at the same time.

In the 1990s, typically writing his own history as he went along, he made it clear that he preferred to be known as Anthony H. Wilson. The pompous self-publicist part of him, enjoying the fact that the bigger name sounded grander and would take up more space, announced that this was because he wanted "to wind up all the people in Manchester who think I'm a flash c***". The more reflective Wilson admitted to me that: "I never liked Tony. I was always Anthony to my mum. I just wanted to be Anthony again."

Wilson was born in Salford, Lancashire. His German grandfather came there in 1901, and his family ran three jewellers' shops before moving, when he was five, to the leafier Marple, near Stockport. His mother felt it would be a better place to bring him up, but he kept in contact with the grittier, more darkly romantic Salford. Wilson won a place at the Catholic boys De La Salle grammar school in Salford. He developed a love of literature and language after he saw a performance of *Hamlet* at Stratford-upon-Avon.

He felt, as someone who understood the accelerating importance of popular culture, that he was always in the right place at the right time. He was 13 "in the school playground when the Beatles happened", and he was studying English at Jesus College, Cambridge, "when the revolution in drugs happened". A flirtation with anarchic politics possibly contributed to his underperforming, but certainly infected his unique, often haywire approach to life, work, art, music, family and business; the way he would take everything ridiculously seriously, and not seriously at all.

After Cambridge, he began his career in journalism, as a news reporter for Granada. At that time, Granada was one of the great northern institutions, and he found a home there, one that could, occasionally, indulge his tendency for a naughtiness that in the bland context of an afternoon magazine show was almost dangerous. With schoolboy long hair and a hippie/glam twist to his newsreading suit, he exploited his sweet side and became a teenybop hit and grandma's favourite. Many in the north never forgot when he was a cross between David Cassidy and David Frost, when he would be not so good-naturedly booed as he arrived at rock concerts, and this contributed to suspicions later when he pursued more provocative stunts.

Wilson, though, quick to adopt new personas, and adapt to new circumstances, adored the attention, and shrewdly exploited his role as local minor celebrity when it came to what he was really interested in – helping Manchester to recreate itself as a major city, with its radical, inventive and progressive traditions intact.

As a now respected mainstream broadcaster, in 1975 he accepted a job on the BBC's *Nationwide* magazine show. He was driving down to London to a new life when he had misgivings. A few kilometres outside the capital he rang his boss at Granada and asked if his old job was still open. It was. He turned back. He would never entertain the idea of leaving the north again.

The first sign of Wilson's interest in the counterculture and in radical ideas was when Granada allowed him to present his own *What's On* section of *Granada Reports*. This covered the local arts and music scene, and in 1976 it turned into his own pop music show, *So It Goes*. His suit replaced by a leather jacket, his hair still heart-throb long, the overeager Wilson looked out of place, as he did as one of the 40 or so people who turned up to see the Sex Pistols play at Manchester's Lesser Free Trade Hall in June 1976.

Everyone in the audience

was inspired by this incendiary performance to react creatively. Many formed bands – Buzzcocks, Magazine, the Fall, the Smiths, Simply Red and Joy Division members were all present. Others became designers, writers or took up roles in the music business. Wilson was galvanised by the event, by the combination of anarchy and music, philosophy and pop, danger and delight, image and protest, and it changed his life, as it did Manchester itself. He immediately invited the Sex Pistols on to the second and final series of *So It Goes*, which was never shown in more than three UK TV regions. Taking pop culture seriously as a social and political force, it was ahead of its time. It still would be today.

By 1978, still a grinning Granada personality, Wilson formally entered the music business by opening the Factory Club to showcase new local music talent. Factory then became a record label. Wilson ran it with fellow northern Catholic grammar school boys, designer Peter Saville, producer Martin Hannett, actor and manager Alan Erasmus and Joy Division manager Rob Gretton. Inevitably, the label was like no other: deeply northern, stubborn and disorganised, it released records with a reckless anarcho-capitalist verve and an indifference towards profit that verged on performance art. It became the great Manchester label, despite not signing Buzzcocks, Magazine, the Smiths, the Fall or the Stone Roses. What it did have was Wilson, part glib newsreader, part cultural curator, part exuberant nuisance, part revolutionary warrior, inspiring, or needling, those around him. The subversive Factory Records became the link between Manchester's reforming radical past, the Sex Pistols' legendary performance and the new modernised Manchester that Wilson had in mind.

Factory's best-known group, Joy



Tony Wilson in 1976 as host of the short-lived *So It Goes* for Granada

Division, became New Order after the 1980 suicide of singer Ian Curtis. Wilson fed off even this dark energy, confirming the views of those doubting his motives. He blithely carried on with his great plan. With Joy Division/New Order money, Factory "gave back to the community" by opening the Hacienda Club in a textile factory turned yacht showroom. Beautifully and wittily designed by Ben Kelly, it looked like something you found only in New York, and anticipated a new, bold 21st-century Manchester filled with canal-side loft apartments and boutique hotels. After a shaky few years, by the mid-80s it found its function as a dance club importing experimental house music from Detroit and New York.

Factory's Happy Mondays bound together the exotic new dance rhythms with a groggy Lancastrian verse, and in the movement known as Madchester was born the commercialisation of the abstract, agitating spirit of Factory, and the spirited post-modern skittishness of Wilson. Wilson, as the self-appointed public face of the movement, became the tabloids' Mr Manchester, and enthusiastically presided as militant marketing mastermind over the transformation of the city into a global brand.

Factory farcally collapsed in 1991 with debts of £2 million. The Hacienda was eventually shut down in 1997 by order of the police.

Wilson was played by Steve Coogan in the 2002 film *24 Hour Party People*, which represented his life as chaotic comedy and him as a daft Dada daredevil. He lived out his final months after having a cancerous kidney removed with typical restlessness, curiosity, anger, good humour and fearlessness. His enormous impact on his beloved Manchester over the past 35 years is undeniable. He was married twice, to Lindsay, and Hilary, who was the mother of his two children, Oliver and Isabel, and is also survived by his partner, Yvette Livesey.

Guardian News & Media

The free man heading our way

The big news of the week for jazz fans is unquestionably that Ornette Coleman (right) will be playing the 2008 Hong Kong Arts Festival.

One of the most controversial figures in jazz in his day, he has outlasted most of his critics and his peers, and at 77 is now receiving the sort of tributes reserved for elder statesmen of the music.

This year, in particular, has been kind to Coleman. He has received the Pulitzer Prize for Music, a Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award, and was voted Musician of the Year in the 2007 Jazz Journalists Association (JJA) Jazz Awards.

The new-found esteem in which the avant garde in jazz is now held is also reflected in a lifetime achievement in jazz award from the JJA for Andrew Hill, who died earlier this year. He was a year younger than Coleman.

Age hasn't slowed down the man who gave free jazz its name, although he did spend a brief spell in hospital in June, after collapsing with heat stroke during a performance at the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival

All That's Jazz

Robin Lynam

in Manchester, Tennessee. Last year, Coleman released a live album recorded in Germany in 2005, featuring a characteristically idiosyncratic lineup, with two basses – one plucked and one bowed – played by Tony Falanga and Gregory Cohen, and drums by his son and regular sideman, Denardo. Coleman features on alto sax, violin and trumpet.

Sound Grammar features the first new music from Coleman in a decade and has clearly rekindled interest in him. So, booking him at this particularly opportune time in his career is quite a coup for the Arts Festival, and his performances on February 28 and 29 at the Cultural Centre Concert Hall will be eagerly awaited.

Another distinctly unusual lineup features on a new CD by David Braid, a Canadian pianist who appeared here last September with his multi-award-winning sextet, and who returns in October

to perform with fellow Torontonian and trombonist Darren Sigsmond. *Tuotet/Deuxtet* is a two-headed collaboration between Braid and cellist Matt Brubeck. The cello isn't an instrument that crops up much in jazz, although Yo-Yo Ma has recorded with a jazz piano trio, and a number of bassists who double on it have applied it to the music.

Most notable among these is Ray Brown, with his 1960 Verve album *Jazz Cello*. Oscar Pettiford, Sam Jones, Eberhard Weber and Jack Bruce are other examples.

Brubeck – one of Dave's children – is a cellist who doubles on bass from time to time, rather than the other way around, although there are moments on this CD when he employs the smaller instrument with its higher register in a swinging, distinctly upright bass-like manner.

There are eight compositions featured here – three are from

Braid, four from Brubeck, and one improvisation is credited to both musicians – covering a range of moods and occupying musical territory somewhere between jazz and classical music.

Spirit Dance, another Braid composition, blends elements of folk music from all over the world, including the mainland where Braid the pianist has now toured several times.

It's difficult music to pigeonhole. Wide-ranging, exploratory, contemplative and at times surprisingly funky, it is the work of an interesting duo, and it sounds as though they had fun making it. It's available from davidbraid.com/recordings.php.

• The death of Max Roach last Wednesday at the age of 83 robs us of one of the few remaining living links to the bebop revolution of the 1940s, and of arguably the most influential drummer of his generation. A fuller appreciation will appear next week.

