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From left: Mark Abrahams, Joe Crabtree, Andy Powell, Bob Skeat

In the ramp-up to Wishbone Ash's 50th anniversary, the band is celebrating its 49th year in characteristic fashion: with an extended tour. Dubbed XLIX (49 in Roman numerals), the tour began in October 2018 in the UK, followed by dates in Europe and, in Spring 2019, comes to North America. Longtime fans and new converts alike will revel in the group's signature twin-guitar mastery and powerhouse rhythm section as they present classics spanning their career.

The US leg of the XLIX Tour will revisit some of the band's favorite venues as well as new ones from the Eastern seaboard to the Rocky Mountains.

"We always look forward to meeting old friends and fans alike on our annual Midwest and East Coast tours," says founding member Andy Powell. "American audiences are so supportive and enthusiastic!"

Formed in 1969 in London, England, Wishbone Ash is one of the most influential guitar bands in the history of rock. True road warriors, each year they log around 30,000 miles, roughly equivalent to circumnavigating the earth.

Mark Abrahams, the group's newest member, has been trading licks with Powell for two years. Right out of the gate, Abrahams earned rave reviews from critics and fans on both sides of the Atlantic. Longtime rhythm section Bob Skeat on bass and Joe Crabtree on drums continue to provide the solid groove that is their hallmark.

By 1969, The Beatles, the blues boom and psychedelia had made their impact on

classic rock, and the creative possibilities were infinite. Pioneering the use of twin lead guitars, Wishbone Ash jumped on board the burgeoning progressive rock scene. Taking full advantage of the fertile musical environment, they produced a distinctive brand of melodic rock.

Inspired equally by British folk traditions, American jazz and R&B, the group played to public and critical acclaim. Power and melody have made the Ash a hard act to follow, while they are currently being discovered by new generations of loyal rock fans.

Through the years the band has delved into various musical genres, from folk, blues and jazz to pedal-to-the-metal rock and electronica. Whatever the style, Wishbone Ash's signature is the distinctive twin-melodic lead guitar interplay that has influenced such bands as Thin Lizzy, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Iron Maiden and, more recently, Opeth.

The quintessential road band, Wishbone Ash has gained worldwide recognition based firmly on a regime of relentless touring.

"The band basically lives together year-round on the road, so we have a very strong level of communication that translates in our performances and recordings," says Powell. "We've come to an era where the industry has to pigeonhole a band as Classic Rock, Prog Rock, Heritage Rock and so on. The truth is that we have always kept our options open and always relied on the musicianship of the players to lead the way. It's fun to be stylistically diverse and this has, in its way, contributed to our longevity."

Wishbone Ash has to its credit 24 original studio recordings, 11 live albums and five live DVDs along with a DVD rockumentary ("This is Wishbone Ash"). Released April 2018, "The Vintage Years" 30-disc box set, three-and-a-half years in the making, is a special collection dedicated to the band's output from 1970 to 1991, including all 16 studio albums, three live albums, eight previously unreleased live shows from 1973 to 1980, a 156-page coffee-table hardcover book and an assortment of memorabilia.

Also now available is the fifth Roadworks CD, "Live in Sacramento," recorded on the 2018 North American tour; and the first official re-releases in decades of "Twin Barrels Burning" from 1982 and "Raw to the Bone" from 1985, plus definitive editions with all-new 2017 re-masters.

In 2015, Powell released his musical memoir, "Eyes Wide Open: True Tales of a Wishbone Ash Warrior," co-written with renowned Irish music journalist Colin Harper and available in Kindle and Apple iBook formats.

"It's quite an undertaking to put 46 years of being a touring musician in this one band into book form," he says. "I've seen a lot of changes in the music business and the world in general, as you can imagine."

There is no other rock band in history that has done more with the twin guitar concept than Wishbone Ash. Be sure to catch them on the XLIX US Tour in April-May 2019, and stay tuned for the 50th anniversary tour in 2020!

Tour dates and more information can be found at www.wishboneash.com.

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