

Wilco's new album delivers

By **Ryan Kamphuis**
A&E EDITOR

Chicago's own Wilco have been playing their brand of experimental alternative rock for over 15 years now. This past week, Wilco released their eighth studio album, *The Whole Love*. *The Whole Love* is a significant album for Wilco, being the first album released on the band's newly formed dBpm record label and the first album the band recorded in their secluded practice loft.

When listening to *The Whole Love*, it becomes clear that this album makes a departure from Wilco's past two releases. *The Whole Love* is much more experimental than recent albums, and hearkens back to Wilco's earlier efforts such as *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. While the last few albums by Wilco have been good, they seemed to have lost sight of the experimental style that they are known for and excel at, churning out what could almost be called generic alternative rock.

This dramatic departure is clear with the very first track on the album. The track, *Art of Almost*, begins with a catchy drum and synthesizer beat that transitions into a fabulous string crescendo, and Jeff Tweedy's scratchy, nasal singing. The whole song is daring. It tries

to do things that Wilco hasn't tried before, and is a bold proclamation that this whole album is going to be something new.

That feeling doesn't leave as the album progresses. Each song has a new feel to it compared to Wilco's earlier work, even the tracks that go back to the folk-rock style of Uncle Tupelo, the band that morphed into Wilco. The album closes with the track *One Sunday Morning (Song for Jane Smiley's Boyfriend)*, a twelve-minute-long song that serves as the perfect ending to the album. While the track doesn't try to do as many new things as the earlier tracks on the album, the song still is epic and unmistakably Wilco. Making a twelve-minute-long song is quite ambitious and often leads to failure, but Wilco pulled it off. The song doesn't feel lacking, and flows throughout. It has grown to become one of my favorite Wilco tracks.

Overall, *The Whole Love* is clearly the best of Wilco's recent releases. It returns Wilco to their experimental roots, and is constantly changing as it tries new things. It sets the mood for an exciting future for Wilco, one where they return to constantly changing what alternative rock is. Wilco is best when pushing the envelope and casting off convention, and it is exciting to see them doing that again.

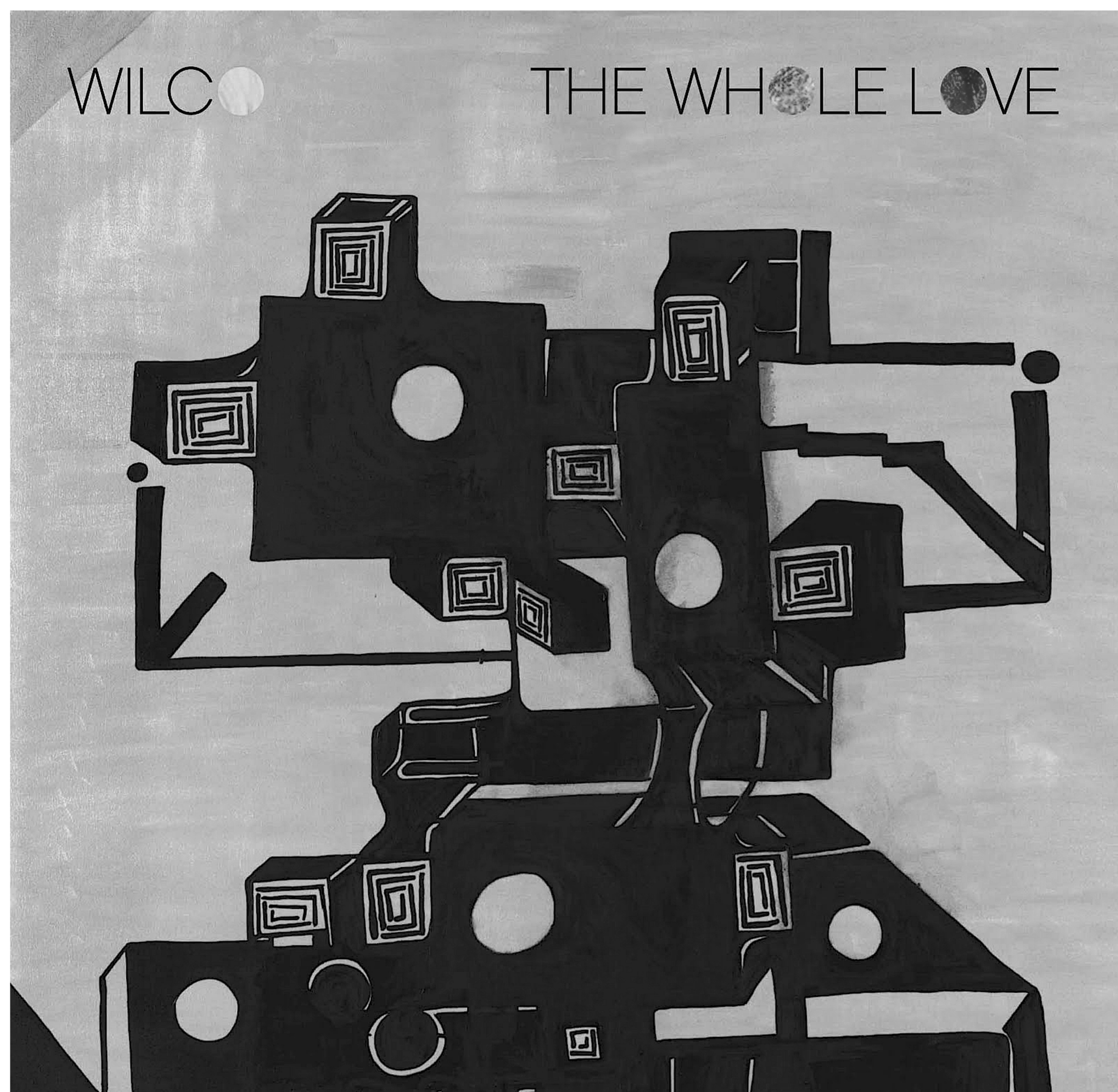


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Warhammer 40k grim, decent video game

By **Erik Johnson**
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It's always been my dream to be a genetically engineered Space Marine, firing a near infinite stream of bullets into a horde of space Orks. So when I played the demo for *Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine* I found myself overwhelmed with indescribable joy. In fact, I freely admit to emitting at least three loud fangirl squeals. These weren't your average fangirl squeals, either - on a scale from a *Naruto* on Ice show to Harry Potter playing tonsil hockey with Captain Picard, my squeals were well beyond your favorite Harry/Picard slashfic. The demo was, in a word, perfect. The game ran beautifully, the action and story was perfectly paced, and it left me twitching on the floor, begging for more Space Marine on Ork action.

Things were different when I played the full game. *Space Marine* had changed. I knew it wasn't me - it had to be the game! It just wasn't anywhere near as enjoyable as it had been previously. Now, before continuing, I think it's worth mentioning that I'm a huge fan of the Warhammer franchise. I have spent hours upon

hours painting miniature figurines, I've played through the Dawn of War series, and I won't deny recording audio fanfics to supplement my Warhammer tabletop games. As far as I'm concerned, the Warhammer universe is pretty darn awesome. It's so grungy and melodramatic and, quite frankly, it's hard not to love a franchise that claims that "in the grim darkness of the 41st millennium, there is only war!"

Relic's *Space Marine* brings the Warhammer universe to console and PC as a 3rd person shooter with an emphasis on intense action featuring hordes of enemies and tons of explosions. It's the first of its kind for the Warhammer franchise and Relic did an excellent job translating the aesthetics from their RTS Warhammer titles to the realm of blockbuster titles such as *Gears of War*. In fact, comparisons to Epic's fist bumping frat-boy shooter have been a common theme throughout the development of *Space Marine*. These are unfortunate for a few reasons, particularly in that the Warhammer universe far predates *Gears* and the games really play quite differently.

While the player will spend most of his time in *Gears of War* ducking into cover and pumping enemies full of a few clips worth of bullets, *Space Marine* ensures the

player is wholly immersed in the role of the titular character. During play, one feels almost unstoppable. Most encounters possess a similar rhythm of running at the enemy while shooting, then beating them to death with weapons ranging from giant hammers to chainsaw swords (note: these "chainswords" also predate *Gears of War*). Additionally, instead of playing to the new standard of regenerative health, the game includes an excellent healing mechanic - the player gains health by stunning and then executing enemies.

While this rhythm of play is fun and immensely satisfying - I've never felt quite so badass - it gets extremely repetitive. *Space Marine* is an entirely linear corridor shooter and each encounter is essentially the same. This might be okay if there was a stimulating plot to back up the repetitive gameplay, but there isn't. The twists and climax can be seen at nearly the outset of the game, even if one isn't remotely familiar with the Warhammer universe.

Space Marine does at least look good. The environments are generally cool looking, albeit not particularly unique. When the game does feature the future-gothic architecture of Warhammer, it is definitely awe inspiring. The animations are also fantastic, and the variety of

the aforementioned execution moves is totally cool. Relic, a traditionally excellent developer, also packs in high performance to complement the great graphics.

There is a multiplayer mechanic available, although as of this article it is relatively unpleasant. There's no server browser, and it runs off of a forced matchmaking system. This might be okay on console, but it's not cool on PC. Most of the games I've played have been unplayably laggy. In the few multiplayer matches that have worked, the gameplay doesn't amount to much more than stand around and shoot at the other players until they die. Supposedly, a cooperative "horde" mode is in the works, which might add some replay value.

Space Marine isn't a bad game, but it's also not an amazing game. For 40-50 bucks, it's about an 8-10 hour experience, not including multiplayer. It's fun, but can get repetitive, particularly if it is played in large chunks. Really, the best part of the whole thing is seeing the Warhammer universe rendered in glorious, shiny 3D. It's cool to see such a unique and influential setting in a new light. In short, this is a game that is worth picking up - just not if one is short on cash. It'll also be a lot more meaningful if one is familiar with the Warhammer franchise.



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