



## **Wild Rivers – *Sidelines* Biography**

“The more I see, the less I know about it.” It’s one of the first, most prominent lyrics on *Sidelines*, the much-anticipated full-length album from indie trio Wild Rivers. The phrasing is brief but says everything about adjusting to young adulthood — and beyond. The world places infinite pressure on us to have a plan for the future, but, as Wild Rivers eloquently articulate throughout *Sidelines*, it’s healthier to acknowledge — and even embrace — the not knowing.

Comprising Khalid Yassein [guitar, vocals, keys], Devan Glover [vocals], and Andrew Oliver [lead guitar, synths], Toronto’s Wild Rivers have a gift for penning introspective lyrics and genre-fluid melodies that transmit wisdom beyond their years. The 10-track *Sidelines*, co-produced by Peter Katis (The National, Interpol, Sharon van Etten) and Wild Rivers and recorded in Connecticut, Los Angeles and Khalid and Devan’s college town of Kingston, Ontario, touches on coming-of-age themes, such as learning how to be more present and coming to terms with life’s unpredictability.

In many ways, the group’s own story is one about embracing the unknown. Born in Canada, Khalid, who is half-Egyptian, and Devan, who spent her childhood in London, England before returning to Canada, first connected at Queen’s University in Kingston in 2013. Starting out as an acoustic singer-songwriter project, Khalid and Devan expanded their aesthetic to a more full-bodied sound, adding multi-instrumentalist Andrew, who Khalid calls their “Swiss army knife.”

Together, right before their first show, the band decided on the name Wild Rivers “in a Subway restaurant,” laughs Andrew. “Our friends were going to be there and there was a lot of pressure on making a big reveal, just cause we had really left it to the last minute,” adds Devan. “There wasn’t too much thought put into it. We just were like, ‘okay, this sounds cool. I’m going to get a foot-long’”.

A portrait of their early post-college years, *Sidelines* is where Wild Rivers poured their collective impressions about merging into their mid-20s — a strange, liminal age where it’s easy to romanticize childhood. *Sidelines*, according to Andrew, looks back longingly upon “the time when you are truly present and you’re not having this forward-thinking vision where you’re worried about the next thing.”

“A lot of [*Sidelines*] is about perspective and longing to be somewhere that you’re not, or trying to figure out how to get to a place that you want to be, whether it’s physically, emotionally,” says Devan. “I think we’re all kind of struggling with our sense of identity, in the stage of life that we’re in.”

Sonically, Wild Rivers pull from a spectrum of sounds, imbuing pop, rock, indie, and folk into each song’s blueprint. “We all listen to a wide range of music, from hip-hop to indie

rock to pop,” Devan says. “We like to pull our favorite parts of every genre and patch them together and see what works and see what feels good.”

The contemplative, keys-driven “Long Time” digs into the divisions between head and heart, telling a story about hearing from an ex for the first time in months. “It’s from the perspective of a couple of years post-breakup,” says Khalid, whose gentle voice forms a perfect harmony with Devan’s on the track. “You’re growing up / while I’m in a rut,” they sing together, neatly encapsulating the insecurities most of us feel when faced with when an ex-lover comes back into the picture.

Elsewhere, in a co-write with Nashville singer-songwriter Caitlyn Smith, “Neon Stars” is a nostalgic, wistful acoustic ballad about young love. “Singing with Caitlyn was very surreal and fun,” says Khalid. ““As a writer, she really excels at visual storytelling. There’s just a lot of lines that paint a very specific picture of the nostalgia that we’re talking about.”

Meanwhile, the mid-tempo “Bedrock,” which settles in with easy drum beats and smooth vocal harmonies, considers the way hard times have a way of always showing up. “The song came out of a period of depression,” says Khalid. “Even after you check all of the boxes, practice mindfulness, drink eight glasses of water a day, it can still rear its ugly head. This is the moment where you throw your hands up and give in to it. This song is like the catharsis that comes with that feeling.”

The mood brightens on “Stubborn Heart,” which showcases a jangling, sing-along melody and breezy rhythm. Written in the artistic community of Los Angeles’ Echo Park, where the trio rented a house for a few months to write, ““Stubborn Heart is a moment of levity in the album,” Khalid says. “It’s about trying to coax someone out of a fight, making jokes and making light of things until you both get over it.”

Sidelines also captures Wild Rivers’ collective sense of humor, on the upbeat, crisply strummed “Weatherman.” “I think we were joking about how being a weatherman is the chilliest job ever,” Devan reveals. “Because you could be wrong 90% of the time and you don’t lose your job.”

“Your perception of a sure thing is rarely a sure thing,” adds Khalid. “It’s more fruitful to just live life in the moment and take everything as it goes. It’s okay to be wrong.”

As they embark on the next chapter of their journey, Wild Rivers, who first caught audiences’ attention with their 2016 self-titled debut, followed by two EPs (2018’s Eighty-Eight and 2020’s Songs To Break Up To), are especially eager to take Sidelines on the road. The live setting is where they originally cultivated a dedicated following and opening for celebrated acts like The Paper Kites, Donovan Woods and Jake Bugg. Building an authentic relationship with fans, while channeling classic singer-songwriters like James Taylor and Fleetwood Mac, has been vital to Wild Rivers’ connection with audiences.

“We’ve been fan-facing rather than industry facing,” Khalid explains. “I think most of the success we’ve had up to this point is because of that. Music fans find us.”

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