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# JHP ENTERTAINMENT

ENTERTAINMENT NEWS, REVIEWS AND INTERVIEWS

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## Rapid Fire 20Q With Heart of Atlanta; Heart Tribute Band Playing WCPAC Saturday, July 19

JULY 18, 2025 BY [JONATHAN](#)



As part of its sizzling 2025 **Summer Tribute Series**, the **Williamson County Performing Arts Center** welcomes **Heart of Atlanta**, the premier Heart tribute band delivering the soaring vocals, driving guitars, and electric energy that defined the Wilson sisters' iconic sound. Ahead of their one-night-only concert on Saturday, July 19, I recently had the chance to go behind the scenes with four members of the band for the latest installment of my **Rapid Fire 20Q** interview series—where we chat about the forming of the tribute, various aspects of the show and what it takes to channel one of rock's most legendary acts.

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## RAPID FIRE 20Q WITH MEMBERS OF HEART TRIBUTE BAND, HEART OF ATLANTA

### RAPID FIRE WITH HEART OF ATLANTA FOUNDING MEMBER, GUITARIST MIKE WILSON

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** In researching to chat with you and three of your fellow bandmates, I discovered that the genesis of **Heart of Atlanta**, your tribute to rock 'n' roll Hall of Famers, **Heart**, occurred during quarantine of 2020. Can you tell me a little more about that? Why **Heart**?

**MIKE WILSON:** Like most people in 2020 – there wasn't much you could do in a public setting. So we thought trying a new band during this "down time" would be a good



use of time. Made sense that we work on it then and when things opened back up we could hit the stage. Worked out pretty good on that timeline. We chose Heart for a few reasons. There is no Heart tribute in the Atlanta area. I had noticed at some of the local tribute venues in this area that no one did Heart. Also, Heather has been a huge fan of Heart since forever. She has been singing Heart songs since she was a kid and this was a good opportunity to do a tribute that really fit us.

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** When the casual **Heart** fan thinks of the supergroup, I'd imagine they first think of sisters **Ann** and **Nancy Wilson**, who, over the years have become the faces of **Heart** as the group's frontwomen, but it was actually guitarist **Roger Fisher** and bassist **Steve Fossen** who 'got the band together. You being a guitarist yourself, did that fact come into play in choosing **Heart** as the band you wanted to honor with a tribute band?

**MIKE WILSON:** I didn't really look at individual members of Heart as the drive to do the tribute, but more the songs as a whole. I am definitely a 70s Heart fan more than the 80s as far as the guitar and song structures. The more I dove into the songs and all the parts, the more I respected Heart as a group. I agree that most people see Heart as Ann and Nancy, but Roger's impact from the beginning was really a major factor in the development of their sound and sonic makeup. His playing style is quite unique, and his use of open string voicings adds a much fuller sound to the standard chord structures.

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** Now I know you're lead guitarist and your wife, **Heather** takes on lead vocals. Who else is in the lineup of **Heart of Atlanta**, and what do they bring to the group?

**MIKE WILSON:** There are 6 of us – much like the original lineup. Scott Ellison holds down the beat on drums and percussion. Great with managing tempo and keeps the rest of us on point. Jerry Tew is on bass. He has played in several tributes over the years and is rock solid holding down the low end. Rachel Burdge is on guitar and vocals. You made note above that I'm lead guitarist, but I would more say I'm one of the guitarists. Rachel and I equally share the guitar work. We work hard to blend our

tones and create that full guitar sound Heart does so well. We both share solos and harmony lines. In addition, Rachel adds vocal harmonies. Meredith Burns is on keyboard, flute and vocals. Between her and Rachel, they bring the vocal harmonies to Heather's leads that the Wilson sisters are known for. And the flute parts are so cool to be able to add to the songs. Meredith is the one in the band we always go to if we need "one more thing".

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** What was **Heart of Atlanta's** first gig for an audience?

**MIKE WILSON:** Our first show was at a restaurant/ bar. Like first shows for most bands, it had its issues. We forgot the drum rug, and the stage was wood, so Scott had to keep pulling the kick drum back into place as it would slide around as we played, but we made it through and got a good response from the crowd.

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** How did your upcoming performance at **Williamson County Performing Arts Center** come about? Did you reach out to **WCPAC's Victoria Reed**, or vice versa?

**MIKE WILSON:** I was aware of the WCPAC doing tribute shows from other bands playing there. I thought Heart would be a good fit for the type of tributes they typically host, so I reached out with our promo reel to Victoria and she agreed.

#### **RAPID FIRE WITH HEART OF ATLANTA LEAD VOCALIST, HEATHER WILSON**

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** Alright, I just chatted with you husband **Mike**, and noted that **Heart** was co-founded by lead guitarist **Roger Fisher**. We talked about how the band **Heart of Atlanta** began, but let's get right to the *Heart* of the matter (pun fully intended)...were you in on the idea from the beginning?



**HEATHER WILSON:** Yes. Heart is one of my all time favorites. The other being Zeppelin. Like Heart, Heart of Atlanta does a little of both. So when we looked into forming this band, I was super excited to sing some Ann Wilson vocals. She is one tough act to follow.



**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** While you guys are based in Atlanta, those **Grammy**-winning and **Rock n Roll Hall of Fame Wilsons** hail from Seattle, but you do share a last name. Have you and Mike ever done 23 and Me or one of those other dna sites to see if there's a relation?

**HEATHER WILSON:** We have not looked into a familial relationship. That's an interesting question. I suppose anything is possible.

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** Checking out the band's site and some videos I found online before chatting with you all, it's apparent you've got a definite **Ann Wilson** vibe. You mention above you were already a fan of **Heart**'s music, right? Do you purposely emulate Ann's sound as lead singer of **Heart of Atlanta**?

**HEATHER WILSON:** Yes and yes. I LOVE Ann Wilson. Growing up, she was my rock and roll hero. Whaaat?!! A woman can rock too?!! Hat's off to her and her entire band for changing the course of rock and roll history. Vocal-wise, She and Freddie Mercury are my greatest influences. I try to stay as close as I can to her interpretation of the music. I may not sound like Ann Wilson. There is only one Ann Wilson, but I do my best to keep her emotional vibe intact.

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** There's a subtle difference between tribute artist and impersonator. For the uninitiated, can you elaborate as far as **Heart of Atlanta** is concerned?

**HEATHER WILSON:** I think an impersonator steps completely into the shoes of the icon emulated. I have too much respect for the artists' work in Heart to assume that role. This truly is a Heart felt "Thank you" to all the members of Heart for their incredible contribution to the world of music.

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** During the course of their partnership, occasional waves between Heart's **Ann** and **Nancy Wilson** have been frequent fodder for the media. As husband and wife, I gotta know...how do you and **Mike** handle performing together during the unlikely event of occasional martial spats?

**HEATHER WILSON:** Mike and I have a great relationship and a mutual great love for music. Mike is a multi-Grammy winning engineer and the co-owner of one of the most successful music studios in the world, but you would never know. He is very humble

and the kindest, most genuine man I've ever known. When it comes to music, he knows his stuff. We are Heart to Heart and Soul to Soul.



## RAPID FIRE WITH HEART OF ATLANTA GUITARIST, RACHEL BURDGE

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** How did you come to be part of **Heart of Atlanta**?

**RACHEL BURDGE:** It was actually a pretty old school approach of joining a band – I was working in a music store at the time as a guitar instructor, and we had a little community board in the back. I walked back there one day and there was a flyer for a Heart tribute band as 'Nancy'. I'd been playing in a cover band prior

and I was looking for something a little more fulfilling, so I texted the number, we set up a day for me to come in, I practiced the *Crazy On You* intro every day until then, and that was that.

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** As a member of **Heart of Atlanta**, much like **Heart's** own **Nancy Wilson**, you provide guitar, mandolin and vocals. I got tell you, I love mandolin. What is it about the instrument that interest you?

**RACHEL BURDGE:** I think mandolin interests me because it's a very traditional and a very history rich instrument when you consider the styles of music that are typically associated with it. A lot of American bluegrass, Irish traditional, etc. There's a lot of fiddle tunes and jigs and a lot of traditional songs that are very generational and have a lot of history to them, and I love learning music history so that checks out a bit. And I think mandolin just has that uniquely folky sound to it when you play it, but there's also some really cool players that are doing new things on the instrument that create a hybrid of old and new sounds, which is a winning combination in my book.

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** Since I'm based in Nashville, I'm conducting these interviews to get the word out about **Heart of Atlanta's** upcoming performance at **Williamson County Performing Arts Center** in Franklin, TN. This season alone, **WCPAC** has featured tribute band showcasing the careers of everyone from **Santana** and **Springsteen** to **Alabama**

and **Burt Bacharach**. What is it about tribute bands that makes them such an audience favorite?

**RACHEL BURDGE:** I think there's a few things about tribute bands that interest all sorts of people. Obviously one of the big reasons is nostalgia, there's people that want to hear the music of their youth and maybe those bands aren't around anymore, or maybe they are still around but don't tour close enough, don't have affordable tickets, etc. For younger generations, there's bands that they never even had the opportunity to see. I never got to see Nirvana or the Ramones or The Smiths because I wasn't even born then. Finally there's things like the stage performances, like maybe a Pink Floyd tribute that does a laser show or a Talking Heads tribute with all the choreography. Put all that together and you have a pretty big pool of people that would find interest in tribute bands.

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** Over the years, I've attended multiple tribute band performances, and I've noticed that, for the most part, they focus primarily on the hits. I understand you guys dig a little deeper, offering up deep cuts, and some tunes that the band has only ever performed live. Of the current set list, do you have favorites?

**RACHEL BURDGE:** I'm really partial to the 70's tracks. There's a lot of cool guitar work where the guitars kind of play around each other instead of the typical 'lead guitar, rhythm guitar' formula, and it just sounds more interesting and it's a lot more fun to play that way. *Little Queen*, *Kick it Out* and *Heartless* are some of my favorites in this set that have really distinct parts like that.

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** Music fans can be the most ardent fandom. Have there been any memorable interactions with fans following a **Heart of Atlanta** show?

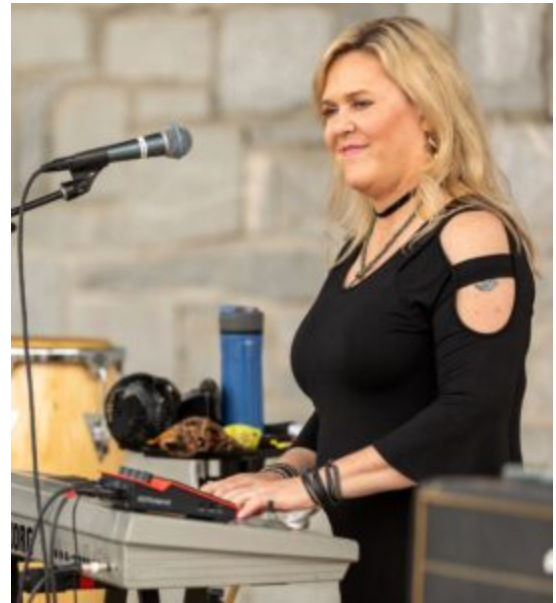
**RACHEL BURDGE:** I still don't know to react when people ask for autographs. Or even pictures, really. I'm awkward like that. But I've had people ask me for setlists and picks and to sign setlists and shirts and all sorts of stuff. I even had someone ask me to sign their guitar case once, because they randomly had their guitar in the back of their car. It's definitely a good feeling though when you represent the original work well enough to receive that kind of reaction.

**RAPID FIRE WITH HEART OF ATLANTA KEYBOARDIST AND VOCALIST, MEREDITH BURNS**

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** When Mike approached you about joining **Heart of Atlanta**, was it an immediate 'Yes' from you?

**MEREDITH BURNS:** Absolutely! I'm always grateful to do music. It was actually Heather who called me – they were already forming the band, and I jumped right in!

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** While **Heart of Atlanta** is a tribute band and not an impersonation, you gotta admit you and **Heather** do share some physical similarities as well as musical acumen with the sisters **Wilson**. Heather's definitely got Ann's vibe and you, like **Nancy**, are blonde, and you, like **Nancy**, both play keyboard and sing. Did any or all of that come into consideration or conversation while developing the look of **Heart of Atlanta**?



**MEREDITH BURNS:** Thank you! We really focus on doing justice to the music and trying to be true to Heart's renditions, so it was really more serendipity that the look also worked. I wish I could play the guitar! But we're lucky to have Rachel, who kills it! So between the two of us, we've got it covered! We're also grateful to have our talented bass player, Jerry, and fantastic drummer, Scott. I'm honored to play with every member of this band!

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** In another lifetime, I was part of the art department at **CMT, Country Music Television**. At the time, we produced a series of **Crossroads** music specials where we'd take a country artist and pair them with an artist of another musical genre and they would perform each other's songs in concert. One of the most memorable I remember working on was **Heart** and **Wynonna Judd**. In that same vein, if **Heart of Atlanta** were to pay tribute to another band or singer of any genre, who would your personal pick be?

**MEREDITH BURNS:** That's cool, and what a great idea! I love all the collabs Heart, and Ann and Nancy on their own, have done. I have a lot of favorites, so let's see... of course they, and we in their honor, already do Led Zeppelin, one of my all-time favorites. I also would love to hear them do more Alice in Chains – ooh, and System of



**a Down! Heather and I sang System's *Aerials* in a prior band we were in with Mike and our friend Steve, and it was a blast!**

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** Following the band's **WCPAC** date, **Heart of Atlanta** heads back to Georgia for a few dates, then your off to North Carolina for ***Cherokee Fall Festival***. What's your favorite aspect of touring with the band?

**MEREDITH BURNS:** **We always laugh, and we've got some great story-tellers in the band, so it's never a dull moment.**

**JHPENTERTAINMENT:** I always end my interviews with some version of the following... After seeing **Heart of Atlanta** in concert, what do you hope audiences take with them?

**MEREDITH BURNS:** **We hope that people feel the shared love of music, our love and appreciation for them for coming out to see us, and that they feel we did it justice.**

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If you're a fan of the legendary rock band **Heart**, you won't want to miss **Heart of Atlanta**, the ultimate **Heart** tribute act delivering all the passion, power, and timeless hits you love when they take the stage at the **Williamson County Performing Arts Center** (112 Everbright Ave. Franklin, TN 37064) on Saturday, July 19 as part of the ***WCPAC Summer Tribute Series***. Tickets to the **WCPAC** show are \$30 for Adults and \$27.50 for Seniors. The show begins at 7p.m. [CLICK HERE](#) to purchase tickets. To learn more about the band, check out there site [HERE](#) and follow them on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and check out [Bands In Town](#) for details and tickets for their upcoming shows in Atlanta, Griffin, Cherokee, NC and more.

For the full list of events happening at **WCPAC**, [CLICK HERE](#) to check them out online and follow them on [Insta](#), [Facebook](#) and [X](#).

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