



Stacy Widelitz

March 28, 1956 - June 17, 2025

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“I enjoy martinis, good cigars, my dog Max, and fast British sports cars. In other words, I’m just a simple country boy.”

The above quip was a favorite of music composer, songwriter, photographer and raconteur Stacy Widelitz, who passed away on June 17 in Nashville, Tennessee, after a recent diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. Stacy was 69 years old, brilliant, irreverent and exceedingly funny. He was preceded in death by his parents, Paul and Pauline, and is survived by his brother Jody Widelitz from Staunton, VA. Stacy started composing professionally at 19, but came to prominence with the song "She's Like the Wind," co-written with Patrick Swayze and featured in Swayze's blockbuster movie Dirty Dancing.

“Growing up in Plainview, NY, I started playing music the way so many others have over the years,” Stacy said. “I signed up for band. It was 4th grade, and I wanted to learn the cello but—to my great disappointment—was assigned the flute instead. My parents rented one, and I couldn’t make heads or tails of it. After a month of frustration, the band director sent me home with a note to my parents: ‘Please return the flute to the music store. I am dropping Stacy from the band program, as he exhibits no musical ability whatsoever.’”

Luckily, a few months later his father picked up an old upright piano and put it in the basement. After teaching himself from the Schaum method book, Stacy was hooked and began a much more productive relationship than the one he had with the flute. “As a short, fat kid with a girl’s name, I had to be really good at something,” he said.

By 15 he was playing the piano in clubs on Long Island, then landed his first TV theme at 24 for “The Richard Simmons Show.” When it became a hit Stacy moved to Los Angeles and scored more daytime TV themes before crossing paths with an actor named Patrick Swayze. Turns out they lived around the block from each other and became friends. Swayze had an idea for a song and asked if Stacy would work on it with him. The idea became “She’s Like the Wind” which ended up being licensed for a little low-budget film called Dirty Dancing. That song catapulted Stacy WidELITZ’s life into a dazzling swirl of magic and wonder, amazing and delighting him right up to his very last breath. Over the course of his career, he composed music for feature films and more than 20 made-for-TV movies, and was nominated for an Emmy for his work on ABC’s World of Discovery. He also penned the end-title song for Disney’s Pocahontas II.

Then in 2000 he decided to spend his time giving back, so he moved to Nashville where he immersed himself in new creative endeavors and became a community volunteer to make his big, generous heart happy. He served on the boards of numerous local organizations, including the Nashville Opera, Nashville Film Festival, Alias Chamber Ensemble, and Dismas House, holding the role of President at several. He was also a longtime member and Past President of the Leadership Music Board of Directors. From 2016 to 2020, he served as a City Commissioner in Oak Hill, Tennessee.

Most recently Stacy explored a new creative path through black-and-white

street photography, earning multiple awards and exhibiting his work at Chauvet Arts in Nashville. His photography took him around the world, including to Italy, Cuba, Paris, London, Berlin, Barcelona and across the United States.

A few days before his death he wrote to his friends: “When I look at my life, I’ve been on an incredibly lucky streak. I pursued my dreams of a career in music from an early age, and made a success of them. I even found further satisfaction and success with new and unexpected pursuits, such as photography and civic leadership. It’s been gratifying, fascinating, at times challenging and infuriating, but mostly it’s been a whole lot of fun. I’m not torturing myself with ‘shoulda’ or ‘coulda.’ As Edith Piaf sang, ‘Non, je ne regrette rien.’ I regret nothing. It actually takes a certain kind of soul to ignite magic and wonder into life, though. And Stacy had that soul in the biggest way. Those in his orbit relished every bit of who he was as he told his ridiculous stories, completely inappropriate jokes, and quoted movie lines to fit any situation. He was the first person to show up for friends in need, along with an irreverent quip, always going for the laugh. A Nashville memorial service is being planned for the near future where Stacy will be sent off in style with laughter, stories, music and praise of his life of “winning” that he would surely expect. Until then, if any of you so desire, you could honor his memory by telling a terrible joke that makes only you laugh; listening to Sinatra’s *In the Wee Small Hours*; enjoying a vodka martini — stirred, not shaken — with an extra olive; adopting a dog; volunteering in your community; randomly quoting from *The Godfather*; or challenging yourself to do something you’ve only dreamed of. That would fill his already overflowing cup with more razzle dazzle and magic. And he’d laugh and declare that even in death he’s still winning.