

NEWS

Hal Willner, Producer for Lou Reed, SNL, and More, Dead at 64

Willner also worked with Marianne Faithfull, Jeff Buckley, and others across his career

By Eric Torres

April 7, 2020



Hal Willner, April 2015 (Chelsea Lauren/WireImage)

Film, TV, and music producer Hal Willner has died at the age of 64, a representative tells Pitchfork. A formal cause of death has not been established, but Willner experienced symptoms consistent with COVID-19, according to the representative.

Willner, born in Philadelphia, produced records for Lou Reed, Marianne Faithfull, Laurie Anderson, Lucinda Williams, and more. He was also a producer for *Saturday Night Live*'s music skits beginning in 1980.

His career began when he worked with a local record distributor as a teenager, which led to him assisting on the Sun Ra recording "The Antique Blacks." From there, Willner continued to hone his production skills. He became known for his ability to assemble stars for tributes and compilations, such as 1988's *Stay Awake: Various Interpretations of Music from Vintage Disney Films*, which included Michael Stipe, Bonnie Raitt, the Replacements, Ringo Starr, Sinéad O'Connor, and more.

Other works include tributes to Fellini composer Nino Rota, Thelonius Monk, and Kurt Weill. In the 1980s, Willner produced several spoken word and music records by poets like Allen Ginsberg (*The Lion for Real*) and William S. Burroughs (*Dead City Radio*). In 1991, Willner invited a young Jeff Buckley to perform at a tribute concert for his father Tim Buckley. The concert is often cited as the launchpad for Jeff Buckley's career.

In addition to television, Willner also worked in film and produced scores and soundtracks for many movies including Robert Altman's *Short Cuts* and *Kansas City*, Martin Scorsese's *Gangs of New York*, and Adam McKay's *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby*.

In 1999, Willner released a solo record titled *Whoops, I'm an Indian*. His last releases included a pair of *Rogue's Gallery* compilation albums featuring Tom Waits, Iggy Pop, Courtney Love, Patti Smith, and others reimagining sea shanties, inspired by his pirate-themed live-stage show of the same name.

Creating Saturday Night Live: The Music Department



TAGS [OBITUARY](#) [HAL WILLNER](#)

"