

he creates characters

BY SHIRLEY J. SASOR

Illustrator writes songs for children

Going to the Moon and One Fat Frog probably won't climb the Billboard Hot 100 chart, but Key Wilde is hoping his songs will become classics for generations of children.

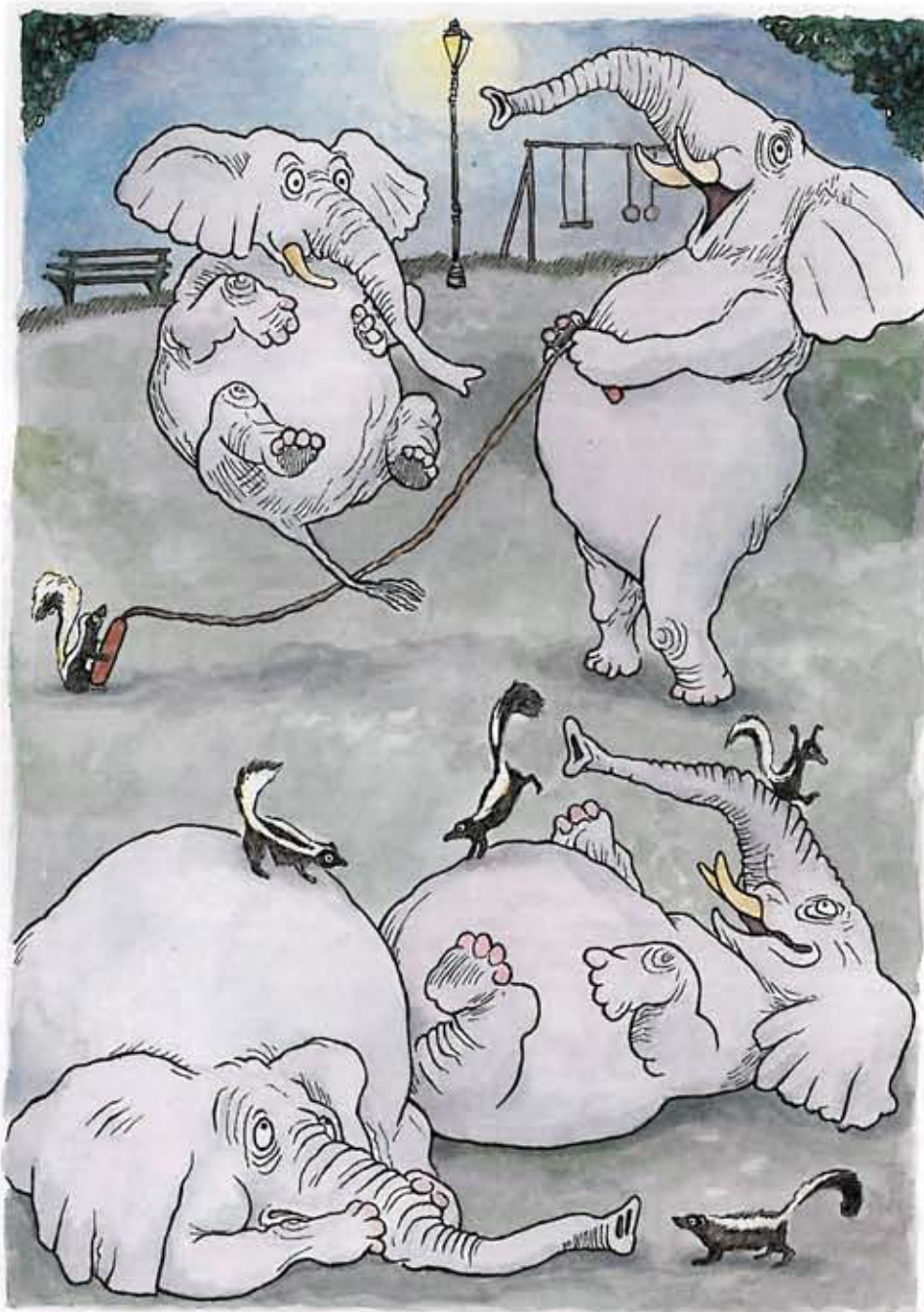
Rise and Shine, the Franklin Township songwriter's newest CD and first release with Little Monster Records, will be in stores next month. It features tunes including I Had a Little Dog, 18 Wheeler, The Rattling Can and Pekepoo. His partner in the project is Richard Clarke or Mr Clarke as he's popularly known. Mr Clarke — who prefers not to use a period after Mr — is a New York City schoolteacher.

Wilde describes their music as upbeat and a little quirky, with an emphasis on memorable characters.

"There's a dog who thinks he's a frog and Sylvester the pig, who has a voracious appetite. When Sylvester starts eating everything in sight, people begin believing he's the answer to the world's garbage problem; this pig will take care of everything! As he gets bigger, he inadvertently creates destruction and suddenly, the solution becomes the problem. They catapult him into space, but he doesn't go far — he's too heavy."

Wilde and Clarke have been performing together since the early '90s when Wilde answered an ad in *The Village Voice* for a collaborator. They share an enthusiasm for duos with tight vocal harmonies, including the Stanley Brothers and Everly Brothers. Wilde also likes surf bands and country blues singers. Mr Clark spends his summers with local musicians in Brazil. The result is music with a folk/bluegrass/Brazilian beat.

They didn't start out composing children's songs. In the '90s, they performed for adult audiences in the East Village and Brooklyn. Wilde started to write music for the juice-bar set in 1997 when his daughter Ilona was born, taking his songs on the road to her preschool. "I did a combination of traditional kid's songs and original tunes," he said. "What I found was the kids responded more to my own quirky songs. So I started adapting my material for a younger audience. One thing I didn't want to do was to talk down to kids... I just wanted to create and share good music with them, but really, with people of all ages, music you can just have fun with."



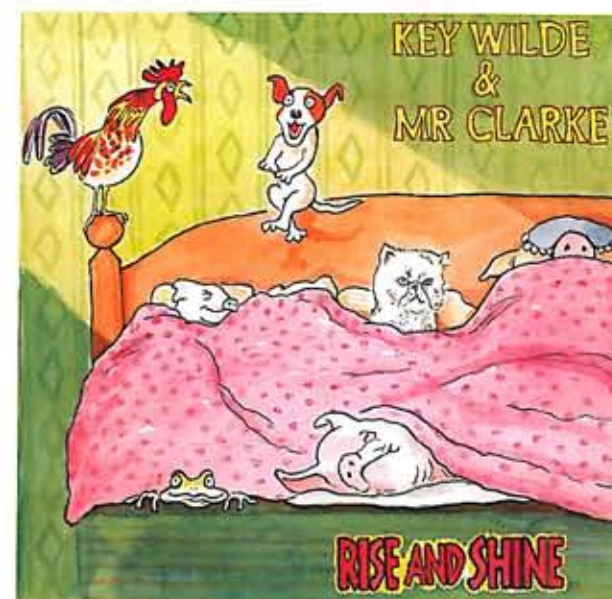
Music is a second career for both Wilde and Clarke. Wilde, a graduate of Parsons School of Design, is an artist. His illustrations have appeared in newspapers, magazines, children's books and on greeting cards. He's designed everything from menus for a muffin store — of which he was a part owner — to original fabrics for furniture. "I spent five years designing and hand-printing fabrics. I learned a lot about color and the silk-screening process, but it wasn't really what I wanted to do."

He yearned to write and illustrate children's books. "I have always loved to draw, even at a young age. My fourth-grade teacher used to call me her little Walt Disney. She always said, 'I'm going to see your work somewhere, I know I will.'"

Wilde illustrates the jacket covers for all his CDs, but *Rise and Shine* will also include a board book he created for parents and children, with an illustration for each song and character. Excerpts from his songs and representative artwork are online at www.keywilde.com.

Wilde and Clarke are now working on a series of animated videos featuring their music. They're also developing an animated television show for kids.

When his children are older — Ilona is 12 and son Liam 3 — Wilde hopes to travel with his photographer wife, Sylvia Bors, live in different places and collaborate on projects with local musicians. "I think it would be fun to play our music with their players and instrumentation — to really share music. I'm definitely into how people use music in a community. Music is a special way of communicating with people. It's the best way to get to know someone, to connect with others. If you can play music together, it feels like you really know a person."



Key Wilde works from home in his Franklin Township studio. His new CD, *Rise and Shine*, will be available in stores next month. He designed the jacket cover (below) and also the business stock illustrations shown here.

