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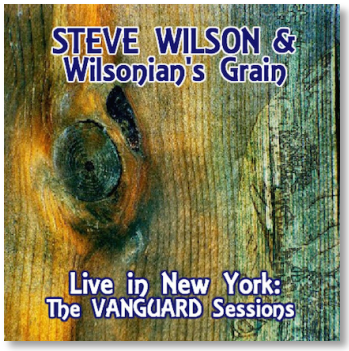
WBGO: ***"Wilsonian's Grain is jazz at its finest – in conception, execution and spontaneity"***



National Coverage also coming via JazzTimes, Stereophile & More, as Steve Wilson Earns Raves for First New Album Release in 12 Years; Jazz Standard Concerts Set for May 7-10

Jazz saxophonist **Steve Wilson** has earned high praise from **DownBeat** and **Jazziz**, and **JazzTimes** is set to run a feature in the coming months. In an enthusiastic Jazziz album review, Sascha Feinstein highlights the ***"adventurous, exhilarating performance,"*** and says that Wilson offers ***"bright, authoritative, searing"*** alto. DownBeat's Michael Jackson praises, ***"The deep sync of this driving quartet is indisputable, and this exciting live date is clearly enjoyed by the crowd at the Vanguard, who whoop and holler…"*** The favorable national magazine attention is anchored to Wilson's first new album release in over 12 years: ***'Steve Wilson & Wilsonian's Grain Live in New York: The Vanguard Sessions'***. The new CD, Wilson's first on **Random Act Records**, features tracks recorded live at the Village Vanguard in mid-2014, and showcases Wilson along with the great talents of **Orrin Evans** on piano, bassist **Ugonna Okegwo** and **Bill Stewart** on drums. **WBGO**'s Tim Wilkins said, ***"Wilsonian's Grain is jazz at its finest – in conception, execution and spontaneity."***

Wilson will celebrate the CD release with multiple concerts in New York on **May 7-10**, at Jazz Standard. Sets are at 7:30pm & 10:00pm + 11:45pm on Fri & Sat (with Orrin Evans, Ugonna Okegwo and Bill Stewart): http://www.jazzstandard.com

Jazziz – Album Review By Sascha Feinstein, 4/2015

This latest CD by saxophonist Steve Wilson — his first as leader in a

dozen years — has "Bring it on!" emblazoned into every cut. Recorded in May 2014, these live selections from the Village Vanguard present Wilson at his most voracious, firing off compelling solos that enliven and, in the best ways, exhaust the listener. This hour of music captures the intensity of live performance and some of Wilson's finest playing to date. The quartet begins with a semi- deconstructed rendition of Thelonious Monk's "Well, You Needn't," with Wilson on alto (bright, authoritative, searing) spurred on by drummer Bill Stewartwho, as he does throughout the album, keeps extraordinarily busy with fillsand flourishes without ever interfering. Pianist Orrin Evans composed the next tune, "Spot It You Got It," with Wilson switching to soprano and bassist Ugonna Okegwo providing a thoughtful solo.The center of the album presents three compositions by Wilson, starting witha ballad ("Chrysalis") and a medium groove ("Perry Street") before turning to "Spheresophically," Wilson's second nod to Monk, with a head that sounds a bit like the bridge to "Epistrophy." Evans seems particularly inspired here, tossing in Monk-ish phrases and even strolling to let Wilson light up the stand in a trio setting. The following waltz ("If I Were a Wind of Spring") provides a necessary breakfrom the intensity — although, here, too, Wilson brings up the heat like well-salted water for pasta. And then they chargeinto the finale: "Patterns," a burner by Joe Chambers that features incendiary solos by Wilson and Evans, as well as a marvelous, out-of-tempo drum solo by Stewart. It's a rousing close to an adventurous, exhilarating performance. —Sascha Feinstein

DOWNBEAT
Jazz, Blues & Beyond Since 1934

DownBeat – Album Review

By Michael Jackson, 5/2015 – Four Stars

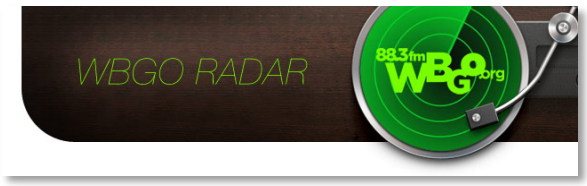
Steve Wilson has commanded respect as a side- man to musicians such as Dave Holland, Michele Rosewoman and Chick Corea, and took over as a leader in his 30s on the Criss Cross and Stretch labels. This is his first headlining disc, though, for a dozen years despite several broadcasts of this supergroup since their formation in 2008.

The deep sync of this driving quartet is indis- putable, and this exciting live date is clear- ly enjoyed by the crowd at the Vanguard, who whoop and holler after the superb gear-crank- in' tear through "Patterns," the outstanding final track.

The rhythm section is faultless, digging in with detail and control even at breakneck tempos. Orrin Evans channels his Philly homie McCoy Tyner with a pile-driving left hand, always with clarity and relevance. The session opens with a metrically hip "Well, You Needn't" and elsewhere Wilson's original "Spheresophically" pays blatant props to Thelonious Monk, Evans flashing idiom- atic wit before a pecky, rangy solo from Wilson and press rolls, clickety clacks and assorted com- mentary from the brilliant Bill Stewart.

Wilson's full-bodied soprano has always been an equal partner in his arsenal, and it sounds lovely on the reflective "Chrysalis," which Evans cracks into a complex, dark, little sunflower.

Japanese pianist Migiwa Miyajima's "If I Were A Wind In Spring" is a lilting waltz. "Perry Street" is a similarly easygoing Wilson original, with Evans' "Spot It You Got It" benefiting from Okegwo's mighty swing and the pianist's bluesy, expansive talent. —Michael Jackson



WBGO – Interview Column by Tim Wilkins

http://www.wbgo.org/radar/steve-wilson-and-wilsonians-grain-live-in-new-york

How does the complete musician grow? He steps outside the box. That's exactly what alto saxophonist Steve Wilson does with his group "Wilsonian's Grain" on their new live CD, recorded at New York's Village Vanguard. "I wanted a new kind of energy," says Wilson about the project. "One that would take me out of my comfort zone and make me think differently."

This is no small task - Wilson's comfort zone is astonishingly large. A virtuoso and mainstay of New York's jazz scene since the eighties, he plays a full range of woodwinds, with orchestras, leads six regular ensembles and has recorded hundreds of albums with everyone from Chick Corea to Maria Schneider.

He's played at the Vanguard so many times, he can't recall how many. Probably hundreds, too. But he does remember the very first time, when as a fresh arrival in New York in he subbed in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, led by Mel Lewis. He sat down between Joe Lovano and Ted Nash. He played his best, but was still nervous after the gig.

"Mel came over and told me I did a great job, and that he'd call me again - that was a real turning point for me," Wilson recalls. "I never imagined I'd be playing at the Vanguard; it's still the center of the jazz universe. It's priceless, beyond measure. It's very humbling to stand on all of those shoulders, and now to be a part of its history."

For Wilsonian's Grain, Steve recruited a set of like-minded, and equally skilled New York veterans - Orrin Evans on piano, Ugonna Ukegwo on bass, and Bill Stewart on drums. The group made its debut at the Kennedy Center in a JazzSet broadcast in 2008, and has been at the Vanguard three times, in 2010 and 2013, and again in May of last year, when this album was recorded.

"From that very first gig, there was a very special kind of chemistry," he says. "I wanted us to feel free to take chances and to be as spontaneous as possible."

The disc features three Wilson originals, one by Evans, and one each by Thelonious Monk, Migiwa Miyajima and Joe Chambers.

Monk's "Well You Needn't" sets the tone for the session: Stewart's muscular, unpredictable drumming throws surprise into the mix and keeps the ensemble on its toes.

Wilson responds with lightning-quick conception and execution. It's a good thing this was recorded live - the audience's excitement is so real, you can almost touch it.

"We don't have a set format, where we go to swing at a given point, it's just whatever we feel, the energy in the room at that moment," says Wilson. "With this group, that's the whole idea, so I'm trying to make a lot of the music like that."

Wilson takes his heart-rending ballad "Chrysalis," which he first recorded with pianist Mulgrew Miller's Generations in 1998, and opens it up with an extended middle section, where Evans shines.

"We play it less like a tune and more like a sketch or a tone poem," says Wilson. "Every night we do it differently."

Wisonian's Grain is jazz at its finest - in conception, execution and spontaneity. The group is on a two-week tour of the Midwest March 20-31 with dates in Michigan, Ohio, Missouri and Kansas, then in Richmond, Virginia on April 7 and in Durham, North Carolina on April 18.

The band celebrates the CD's release at New York's Jazz Standard May 7 through 10, then will be at the Freihofer's Saratoga Jazz Festival June 27.

Columbia Tribune – Tour Interview Feature:

http://www.columbiatribune.com/arts_life/ovation/fits-just-right-saxophonist-sounds-at-home-with-latest-band/article_b59bbf21-56b9-5946-81db-6ad7f16cb2ff.html

JazzPolice – Cd release article:

http://www.jazzpolice.com/content/view/11588/116/

Recent short-lead reviews have praised the ***"explosive performance,"*** and have stated, ***"this seemingly disparate grouping ends up pulling dramatic new thoughts out of one another."*** A major U.S. tour is confirmed for Wilson, with full itinerary below.

Blogcritics – 4.5 Star CD review
2/27/15 by Jack Goodstein
http://blogcritics.org/music-review-steve-wilson-wilsonians-grain-live-in-new-york-the-vanguard-sessions/

SomethingElseReviews –
Exclusive Song Premiere: "Spheresophically"
2/27/15 By Nick DeRiso
http://somethingelsereviews.com/2015/02/27/steve-wilson-spheresophically-village-vanguard/

The Record-Journal – (Meriden, CT) –
Cd Review, By Jim Pasinski 1/15
http://jpsmusicblog.blogspot.com/2015/01/cd-review-new-independent-jazz-releases_14.html

JazzTimes.com News item, here:
http://jazztimes.com/articles/150243-saxophonist-steve-wilson-to-release-first-album-in-12-years

In addition to being Wilson's first headlining release since 2003's 'Soulful Song', the new album marks a number of other 'firsts': Wilson's first time doing a live recording as a leader, first time recording at the historic Village Vanguard, and first time/debut recording with his 'go-to-band', Wilsonian's Grain. The project was also partially financed thanks to the support of 214 contributors to Wilson's first-ever Kickstarter campaign.

Wilson's goal for the recording was to capture the distinctive vibe of performing in the Village Vanguard. The room is famous for it's wonderful, warm sound, and Wilson's aim was to capture that essence for the listener. To add to that, the tracks on this recording were chosen and sequenced to reflect his approach to planning a live concert set. Wilson wants fans to *"sit back, push play, close your eyes, and enjoy this live experience in the comfort of your own home."*

Wilsonian's Grain's first gig was at the Kennedy Center Jazz Club, October 17, 2008. It was recorded by NPR and appeared on JazzSet with Dee Dee Bridgewater the week of April 2, 2009. They also appeared on WBGO's The Check Out with Josh Jackson, recorded at the Village Vanguard in March of 2010. They have performed together regularly in the years since.

Upcoming 2015 performances (Dates Subject to change):
(Note band update– for March tour: George Colligan (replacing Orrin Evans), Ugonna Okegwo and Bill Stewart)
April 18: B.N. Duke Auditorium, North Carolina Central University, afternoon workshop, 9:00pm Concert (Kevin Hays, Ugonna Okegwo and Clarence Penn)
May 7-10: Jazz Standard, NY, NY Sets at 7:30pm & 10pm + 11:45pm on Fri & Sat (Orrin Evans, Ugonna Okegwo and Bill Stewart)
June 27: Saratoga Jazz Festival, Saratoga, NY, time TBA
Sept 18: Side Door Jazz, Old Lyme, CT, 8:30pm
Sept 19: Vermont Jazz Center, Brattleboro, VT, 8:00pm

Other workshops and residencies, Steve alone:
April 29: West Hartford School District
April 30- May 2, Guest Conductor, CT All State Jazz Ensemble
July 19-26: Centrum, Jazz Port Townsend, Port Townsend, WA
Aug 3-8: Samba Meets Jazz, Bar Harbour, ME

"Wilsonian's Grain, a post-bop quartet that channeled the saxophonist's best qualities — selflessness, a fresh and well-made take on the tradition, and the ability to reference a broad spectrum of strategies and styles without falling prey to pastiche or sacrificing an original voice. " Detroit Free Press

Wilson was interviewed on **NY-1 TV News** in conjunction with the abovementioned recording sessions at The Village Vanguard: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_8VoNEwKFY

At http://www.stevewilsonmusic.com/, visitors can get updates, sample new tunes and see performance footage. The site, part of the Jazz Corner family, also includes a streaming audio player, details of Wilson's numerous band configurations, and more.

Visit www.randomactrecords.com

For more information about Steve Wilson, or to set up an interview, please contact SethCohenPR@earthlink.net. www.sethcohenpr.com