

**STEVE WILSON'S 50<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION: Five Different Bands Over Six Nights- A Musical Exploration of Acclaimed Saxophonist's Diverse Career**

**Jazz Standard, February 8-13, 2011**



From February 8-13, 2011, saxophonist **Steve Wilson's** 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday will be celebrated at New York's Jazz Standard. Featuring five different bands over six nights, the shows will traverse Wilson's diverse career, as each show will reflect a different stage of Wilson's evolution into what NPR describes as "*one of the finest saxophonists in the business.*"

Wilson notes, "*This 50<sup>th</sup> birthday engagement is a celebration of treasured friendships, creative collaborations, and personal milestones that have given me a wealth of joy, wisdom, incentive, encouragement, and love.*"

Much care has been put into the band line-ups for each night...Please take a moment to check out the context of each show:

**TUES, FEB 8: The Steve Wilson Quartet with Vocalists Karrin Allyson and Carla Cook With Bruce Barth (P), Ed Howard (B) and Adam Cruz (D)**

This version of The Steve Wilson Quartet is the original, and they have been playing together since 1997. Wilson's relationship with Karrin Allyson goes back to when he was signed to Stretch Records. They met in San Jose, CA (circa 2000), at the San Jose Jazz Festival, which featured Concord Records artists. Subsequently, Karrin asked Steve to perform on two of her recordings, *Ballads: Remembering John Coltrane* (2001) and *In Blue* (2002), as well as live engagements over the years. Carla Cook appears on Steve's 2003 recording, *Soulful Song* (MaxJazz), and went on to be a part of two European tours with the SWQ. In March 2005 they toured Italy, but it was a very

special tour of Spain in March 2004 that was a real family kind of hang, a grand epicurean adventure, and included some very profound experiences. On March 11 the band was in the northern city of San Sebastian when everyone awoke to the news of the Madrid bombings, three days before Spain's general election. The band's performance that night was incredibly special and they bore witness to the election just a few days later that completely changed the Spanish government.

**WED, FEB 9: THE STEVE WILSON QUARTET With Bruce Barth (P), Ed Howard (B) and Adam Cruz (D) – (Steve's actual Birthday!)**

This band was first under the leadership of Bruce Barth and was documented in August of 2007 on his live recording at Visiones (NYC), *Hope Springs Eternal*. Since then, it became Steve's working quartet, and they recorded *Passages* (Stretch Records) in 2000 and *Soulful Song* (MaxJazz) in 2003. With this band Wilson achieved many career milestones as a leader– first tour of Europe (and several subsequent), return engagements at the Kennedy Center, first tour of the west coast and many, many more. Bruce, Ed and Adam have been among Steve's favorite musical collaborators for over a decade. Bruce and Steve first played in sessions on Bruce's apartment in Brooklyn in the late '80s and immediately felt they were kindred spirits. They have played together in many, settings, including a recent duo recording *Live In Columbia, MO* (We Always Swing, 2010). Steve and Adam played together with percussionist Leon Parker, then recorded and toured with Chick Corea and Origin. Ed and Steve first toured together as part of Leon Parker's ensemble, back in the mid '90's in France. It is very appropriate that they should share this day with him, which is actually Steve's birthday (2/9/61)!

**THURS, FEB 10<sup>th</sup>: STEVE WILSON WITH STRINGS FEATURING MUSIC FROM BIRD WITH STRINGS: Bruce Barth (P), Ugonna Okegwo (B), David O'Rourke (G, Arranger), Lewis Nash (D), Joyce Hammann (Vln), Diane Monroe (Vln), Nardo Poy (Vla), Troy Stuart (C)**

Charlie Parker's seminal Verve Recording (1950), *Bird With Strings*, is still the standard bearer for jazz with strings. Since the original arrangements have become available, Steve has been doing college residencies with this music, working with student and faculty string ensembles. This performance will utilize those original arrangements, plus a few newly discovered arrangements of tunes meant for Parker to record – never before heard - with an all-star ensemble of longtime friends. Bruce and Lewis appear on Steve's second recording, *Blues For Marcus* (Cris Cross 1993), and Ugonna is currently a member of Steve's current working quartet *Wilsonian's Grain*. David O'Rourke has been the arranger and music director for this project for several years now. This all-STAR string section includes some new friends for Steve. Joyce Hammann and Steve toured the UK together with pianist Uri Caine, and her career has brought her to Broadway stages, concert stages, and to the contemporary music scene. Diane Monroe's visibility as a jazz artist began with her long-standing membership as first violinist of the Uptown String Quartet and the Max Roach Double Quartet. She was also a member of the String Trio of NY. Violist Nardo Poy been a member of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra since 1978, and is also appears regularly with several New York area groups including the Metropolitan Orchestra and the Orchestra of St Luke's. Cellist Troy Stuart is a founding member of the Phoenix Chamber Orchestra and was chosen to be a member of the prestigious New York String Orchestra, under the direction of famed violinist/conductor Alexander Schneider, and currently appears regularly with the Ritz Chamber Players.

**FRI, FEB 11<sup>th</sup>: SPECIAL EDITION: Freddie Hendrix (Tpt), Mulgrew Miller (P), Christian McBride (B), Lewis Nash (D)**

This is indeed a special group for Steve. He has had a long, long relationship with Mulgrew Miller, and has been member of his group, *Wingspan*, replacing Kenny Garrett around 1992. Mulgrew appears on Steve's very first recording, *New York Summit* (Cris Cross) in 1991, and appears again on *Generations*, his first recording for Chick Corea's label, Stretch Records, in 1998. Lewis Nash and Steve first met in 1987 when Lewis was playing with Branford Marsalis. Since then they have been musical compadres and have shared many different stages all over the world including a tour of Japan with Buster Williams, and recording together with both Joe Henderson's Big band, and also several recordings with vocalist Karrin Allyson. They have formed the critically acclaimed Lewis Nash/Steve Wilson Duo, and most recently toured and recorded with the Blue Note 7. That

recording, Mosaic (Blue Note 2009), spent many weeks at #1 on the weekly jazz chart. Lewis also appears on Steve's second recording, *Blues For Marcus* (Criss Cross, 1993). It was in 1991 when Steve first played with Christian McBride in the American Jazz Orchestra, and on a 1994 Don Braden Criss Cross recording, *After Dark*. Currently, Steve is a member of Christian's touring band, Inside Straight and appears on their first recording, *Kinda Brown* (Mack Ave). Steve first learned about Freddie Hendrix in the early to mid '90's when he was teaching at William Patterson University and Freddie was a student there. Steve has always admired his playing, and they have worked together professionally over the years, most recently with Christian McBride's Big Band.

### **SAT & SUN, FEB 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>: THE LEADERS: Geoffrey Keezer (P), Christian McBride (B) and Jeff "Tain" Watts (D)**

The concept for these evenings was to put together some of the bandleaders that Steve has worked with throughout his career, those he's admired and loves making music with - in any situation. This could have been a big band, as Steve has worked with so many great leaders since his arrival in NYC in 1986 (some of those have included Chick Corea, Dave Holland, James Williams, Buster Williams), but he couldn't invite them all! So, here are some of his closest musical friends. Steve was a member of Geoffrey's working quartet in the mid '90's which also included drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith. Steve also plays on his recording *Aurea*, and on a recording that they did on DIW, a Japanese CBS/SONY label, that was never released, entitled *The Pursuit of Melody*. Tain and Steve met around 1984 when Tain was playing with Winton Marsalis. They first worked together on Billy Childs recording, *The Child Within* (Shanachie/Cachet). They have played together many times during their careers. Steve is currently working in Tain's new quartet, The Jeff "Tain" Watts 4; they recorded in August 2010 for a future release on Dark Key Records.

### **Steve Wilson - First-person thoughts on his 50<sup>th</sup> B'Day Celebration:**

This 50<sup>th</sup> birthday engagement is a celebration of treasured friendships, creative collaborations, and personal milestones that have given me a wealth of joy, wisdom, incentive, encouragement, and love.

I've been a New Yorker for 23-plus years - and to think that I was going to give it one year to see what would happen. Well, it's been the longest year ever because the music keeps happening and keeps getting better. Pianist Bruce Barth, who will be with me 3 nights of this great week, has been my close friend and musical partner for 22 of those years. It was at his Brooklyn apartment in numerous rehearsals and jam sessions where much of my musical growth took place. And here we are with our just recently released first duo recording. Since those earliest years when I did my first gigs at the age of 12, my journey has allowed me to perform with some the world's greatest musicians, and to nurture friendships with some of the greatest supporters of our music.

Having this celebration at Jazz Standard is significant in that I have an extensive history with this great venue. My good friend and pianist Jonny King chose the house Steinway baby grand piano, and we were the first artists to play there when it was opened by James Polsky. Subsequently I've worked the Standard as leader more than any place else, and as a sideman with many ensembles. For the last 5 years as part of The Maria Schneider Orchestra I'm there during Thanksgiving week, which reminds me...the food...THE FOOD! I'm a big fan of Danny Meyer (present owner and NYC's top restaurateur) and his "enlightened hospitality" philosophy on which the greatest staff operates the venue. The artists and the patrons are treated with genuine care that makes you feel welcomed. They make it easy to do what we do. The Standard is indeed a special place, and special home.

I'm truly honored that these friends whom I respect and love are gracing me with their presence and artistry for this event. I'm inspired by the past experiences that we've shared, and it gives me great pleasure to consider all of the musical journeys we have yet to take.

**Steve Wilson's Long-Time Manager, Laura Hartmann, Reflects on their 14 years working together:**

February of 2011 is not only the month of Steve's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, it is also the month he and I celebrate our 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary as manager and client. We met in November of 1996, he was a member of the Mingus Big Band; I was their road manager. At the time an article had just appeared in the New York Times, a profile on Steve entitled "A Sideman's Life" that called him "the quintessential sideman." That moniker has stuck with Steve ever since.

It was actually Steve that convinced me to start my own management company, and he was my first client, I hung out my shingle on 1 February 1997. I have heard him in so many different settings, with so many different musicians, it quickly became clear to me what the quintessential sideman was! One night after a Chick Corea concert, we went out to a local bar in Englewood, NJ, he sat in with a local Latin jazz band, he knew some of the guys (which is ALWAYS the case with Steve, wherever he goes), and he fit in like he'd been playing with them for years. It was the first time I realized what a chameleon he really is. That is likely one of the qualities that have earned him the respect, and calls for gigs: Steve always plays to fit into any other bandleaders music, rather than making the music to fit Steve. He is the most humble person I know.

At the time we met, he was in Dave Holland's Quintet, and then soon after, we received the call from Chick Corea who was forming a new band which came to be the Grammy winning sextet, Origin. I remember meeting Steve one day at Newark Airport, he had just arrived home from a four or five week tour with Holland, and then we left hours later with Corea for Mexico, Steve and the band then continued on for several weeks in South America. I believe that was one of Steve's happiest days, having back to back tours with two of his heroes. Of course, that couldn't last long, and he had to make a choice!

It's very fitting that we are having Steve's birthday celebration at Jazz Standard. Steve played there the first week it opened with Don Braden's octet in October of 1997. He then played there with his own quartet in January 1998 and was the first person to sell out the room. Since then, Steve has played there on a regular basis. When Steve mentioned that he wanted to work on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, Jazz Standard was the obvious choice, for both of us, it's our favorite club to work with in NYC.

Over these past 14 years, Steve and I have developed our careers together, with each other's work. I have produced all of his tours, and larger projects. He is always a willing participant in the many events I have produced: tributes to Dr. Billy Taylor and Chick Corea, a concert series in NYC at the Loft at Quilty's (where he debuted his duo with drummer Lewis Nash), he debuted the series

Jazz @ Wall Space in my home town of Kingston, NY and will return in December for another concert. He will be the Artistic Director for a festival I am producing in the Burlington, VT area, and we have co-produced three recordings together. I have traveled extensively on his own tours. I remember our very first tour together on the west coast back in 1999, with Bruce Barth, Ed Howard, Adam Cruz, and Ingrid Jensen, the tour of Spain in 2004, the first time he played at the Kennedy Center with Billy Taylor on his NPR program (now check out his own extensive catalogue on NPR!), and then his own band played the jazz club there. He has returned several times, and he has just been invited to open the '11/'12 season at the Kennedy Center Jazz Club with his strings project. I was there to witness his orchestra debut in 2009 with the Vermont Mozart Festival Orchestra, and then again in 2010 when he commissioned an Ellington medley that was arranged by one of his students, Jonathan Ragonese. Together we have worked steadily to build his presence as a bandleader at performances a wide variety of venues, festivals, and educational activities.

His work as an educator is unparalleled. One of the most satisfying times for both of us was the residency at the University of Maryland at College Park, the first with the Bird with Strings music. What a week – everything was perfect, and the students had a fantastic time – it should always be like this.

While Steve has grown as a musician in so many ways over the last 14 years, so many things about him have remained constant. I was reminded of that the other night when I went to see him play with Maria Schneider at Jazz Standard, I always look forward to seeing him. He greets me like family, and that night, as with most nights, we were laughing in a matter of minutes at some stupid joke – usually about ourselves! What draws people to Steve is his instant likeability, his grace (in ANY situation), his humility, his sense of humor, and his genuineness. As a player, he's known for saying more with less, having his own distinct sound, his great taste, his creativity, his sensitivity, and the sheer delight and beauty with which he plays. THAT has only gotten better with age! As a person and a player, Steve is someone you can count on – every time. As a friend, well, I am proud to say that he has become one of my dearest, most precious friends. And, I am so honored to be able to help him put together this stellar line up of people he most enjoys being around and making music with, this is the greatest testament to how well loved and respected Steve Wilson is in the world of jazz. Happy Birthday my dear, dear friend – I look forward to planning your 80<sup>th</sup>!

#### **More about Steve Wilson:**

**Steve Wilson's** recent headlining stand at the legendary Village Vanguard in New York City was documented by **NPR** and featured in a riveting '*Live at the Village Vanguard*' broadcast: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=125076907>.

Wilson previewed the appearance with a terrific interview about the state of jazz on **WBGO's** '*The Checkout*' with Josh Jackson: <http://www.wbgo.org/thecheckout/?p=2154>. While at the Vanguard, Wilson and his band Wilsonian's Grain were filmed for inclusion in an **MSNBC-TV** segment of "Your Business" on the historic venue and its proprietor, Lorraine Gordon.

Acclaimed saxophonist **Steve Wilson**, described as *“an endlessly adaptable alto and soprano saxophonist, at home in myriad settings,”* by The NY Times’ Nate Chinen, and as a *“stellar altoist”* by Time Out NY, continues to generate rave coverage for his eclectic activities. In addition to his triumphant return to the legendary Village Vanguard as a headliner, and an appearance at The Kennedy Center (broadcast on NPR,) Wilson recently appeared live on nationwide television, with a multi-song performance on **The CW Network**. Watch clips of his performance here: <http://www.wgntv.com/news/liveperformances/wgntv-live-music-steve-wilson,0,672046.story>

Hailed by NPR as *“one of the finest saxophonists in the business,”* Wilson is among the most well liked, in-demand and respected figures in jazz. JAZZIZ.com echoed this sentiment, calling him *“an especially skilled and sensitive saxophonist...”* JAZZIZ followed up with news of Wilson’s tributes to jazz greats Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman and Joe Zawinul. See the article, here: <http://www.jazziz.com/events/2009/12/03/steve-wilson-to-honor-davis-coltrane-coleman-and-zawinul/>



NPR featured Steve Wilson on JazzSet: ***Steve Wilson: A First-Call Saxophonist***  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=102700887&ps=rs>

In addition to the airing of his 2009 Kennedy Center event and his 2010 Village Vanguard show, NPR has featured Wilson in a live recording with the Blue Note 7. He was also recorded with Christian McBride and Inside Straight at the Detroit Jazz Festival, and was featured as a Special Guest with the Michael Wolff Trio at the Kennedy Center last year.

Wilson’s multiple roles as a band leader, sideman, educator and jazz historian have lead journalists to praise him as *“a dynamic improviser,” “a musician’s musician,” “one of the finest saxophone players today,”* and more. DC’s Express (A publication of The Washington Post,) described his recordings as *“captivating.”* John Murph’s interview with Steve may be seen here: [http://www.expressnightout.com/content/2009/03/finances\\_and\\_all\\_that\\_jazz\\_steve\\_wilson.php](http://www.expressnightout.com/content/2009/03/finances_and_all_that_jazz_steve_wilson.php)

Wilson’s performance at the Kennedy Center, heard on NPR JazzSet (click NPR link, above,) was also previewed in the DCist: [http://dcist.com/2008/10/16/preview\\_steve\\_wilson\\_the\\_kc\\_jazz\\_cl.php](http://dcist.com/2008/10/16/preview_steve_wilson_the_kc_jazz_cl.php)

JAZZIZ.com featured Wilson in a NEWS column timed to his ‘09 Orchestral debut: ***STEVE WILSON - A TOUCH OF CLASSICAL*** <http://www.jazziz.com/news/2009/06/25/steve-wilson-a-touch-of-classical/>

In a live review in **ALL ABOUT JAZZ – NY**, Wilson's performance at the Rubin Museum in New York was described as follows: *“Wilson wove his sound through the music in a manner that was spellbinding in its nuance and attentiveness to dynamics.”*  
[http://www.allaboutjazz.com/newyork/aaj\\_ny\\_200809.pdf](http://www.allaboutjazz.com/newyork/aaj_ny_200809.pdf)

Nominated once as Alto Player of the Year by the **Jazz Journalists Association** (and this year for Soprano Saxophone Player of the year,) and profiled in **ALL ABOUT JAZZ**,

Wilson is known for his modest, warm personality...and for his in-depth knowledge of all-things-jazz. Read the major 'career' feature on Steve Wilson, from ALL ABOUT JAZZ, here: <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=29437>

At <http://www.stevewilsonmusic.com/>, visitors can 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.

For more information about Steve Wilson, or to set up an interview, please contact [SethCohenPR@earthlink.net](mailto:SethCohenPR@earthlink.net) or 212-873-1011.