

### Steve Wilson & Wilsonian's Grain

#### Live In New York: The Vanguard Sessions

RANDOM ACT 1017

★★★★

Steve Wilson has commanded respect as a sideman 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 indisputable, and this exciting live date is clearly 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 idiomatic wit before a pecky, rangy solo from Wilson and press rolls, clickety clacks and assorted commentary 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

**Live In New York:** Well, You Needn't; Spot It You Got It; Chrysalis; Perry Street; Spheresophically; If I Were A Wind Of Spring; Patterns. (59:59)

**Personnel:** Steve Wilson, alto and soprano saxophone; Orrin Evans, piano; Ugonna Okegwo, bass; Bill Stewart, drums.

**Ordering info:** [randomactrecords.com](http://randomactrecords.com)

### Steve Gadd Band 70 Strong

BFM 3020624292

★★★★

Seventy may be "the new 60." But in Steve Gadd's case, 70 may well be the new 25. Celebrating his septuagenarian year, the revered drummer is still grooving deep with one of his most organic and personal bands to date. The emphasis here is "strong."

In a long, prolific sideman career, the highly influential drummer has excelled with artists from Chick Corea to Eric Clapton. Always nailing the sweet spot, Gadd brings a satisfying and swinging r&b heart to his pulse, a quality that made him a studio session kingpin.

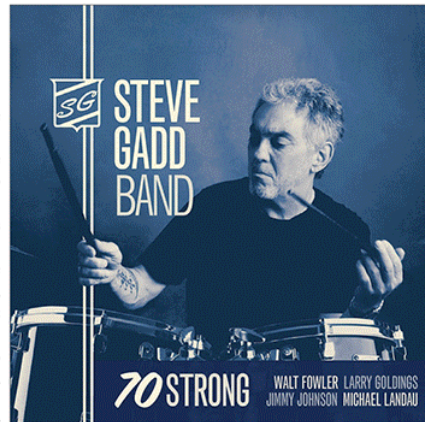
Though his recorded output as a leader has been sporadic and occasionally uneven, Gadd's current band is a rewarding culmination of his multi-genre trajectory. The quintet—featuring trumpeter Walt Fowler, keyboardist Larry Goldings, bassist Jimmy Johnson and guitarist Michael Landau—debuted on 2013's excellent *Gadditude*. The longtime friends—who are also in James Taylor's backing band—possess myriad chops but value restraint, eloquent space and the joy of collective groove. While *Gadditude* highlighted a subdued, cool burn, this disc sports several aggressive spikes, such as the swaggering, medium-tempo funk "Oh, Yeah?" sparked by Landau cranking his amp to 11 for a string-bend fest. Gadd makes ample use of brushes this time, while keeping the groove every bit as powerful. On "Freedom Jazz Dance," Goldings jabs and weaves with a vintage distorted Rhodes sound, coloring the tune in a '70s Miles jamming vibe. In contrast, "Written In Stone" is a delicate number suggesting a mix of Americana and tango. Gadd fluidly transports the tune with an overlap of brushes with a delicate cadence, supported by Golding's accordion swells. Johnson's five-string solo on his composition "Desu" is tenderly elegant, while Fowler's thoughtful soloing and warm tone lend richness and breadth throughout the set. On the Gadd-penned opener, "Foam Home," the drummer tips a hat to the Steely Dan tracks he endowed with landmark grooves.

It's a given that any Gadd project will groove. But this consummate band offers more: a confidence and mutual trust that exudes patience, warmth and openness. After all, it's not just Gadd who's getting older and wiser. —Jeff Potter

**70 Strong:** Foam Home; Freedom Jazz Dance; Written In Stone; The Long Way Home; Sly Boots; Duke's Anthem; Elegant Squares; Desu; De Volta Ao Samba; Oh, Yeah?; Blues For... (73:34)

**Personnel:** Steve Gadd, drums; Walt Fowler, trumpet, flugelhorn; Larry Goldings, keyboards, accordion; Jimmy Johnson, bass; Michael Landau, guitars.

**Ordering info:** [bfmjazz.com](http://bfmjazz.com)



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