

With Four Sold-Out Shows at Kennedy Center Jazz Club, NPR Coverage, and Rave Previews & Reviews, Steve Wilson Continues to Build a Remarkable Career

[New CD Planned for 2012](#)

Acclaimed jazz saxophonist **Steve Wilson** recently opened the 2011/2012 season at Kennedy Center Jazz Club with four sold-out sets, live coverage by **NPR**, rave previews & reviews and more. Wilson continues to sculpt an impressive career as a headliner, sideman, educator and jazz historian, and remains one of the most well-liked, in-demand and respected figures in jazz.

Standing ovations greeted Wilson's sets at the Kennedy Center, and shows were recorded for broadcast next year on *NPR's JazzSet with Dee Dee Bridgewater*, adding to Wilson's extensive NPR presence, as outlined below. While in Washington D.C., Wilson showed his ongoing dedication as an educator and mentor, with a workshop at the Ellington School and a sold-out clinic for middle school students at the KC Jazz Club with his quartet, discussing the evolution of jazz from swing to be-bop, and Charlie Parker's influence in that movement.



Recent, Current and Upcoming performances:

- Wilson made his 'Detroit debut' as a leader, performing with his own band, during September's Detroit Jazz Festival. Rapturous reviews ran in major daily **The Detroit Free Press** (see below).
- Wilson just traveled home from Europe, where he toured with the Maria Schneider Orchestra.

- A few days after his return from Europe, Wilson leaves for Japan with Terumasa Hino & Lewis Nash Japan-US All-Star Big Band, featuring Renee Rosnes, Terrell Stafford, Gary Smulyan, Peter Washington and Jimmy Green.

In November, Wilson returns to Jazz Standard with The Maria Schneider Orchestra for their annual Thanksgiving week engagement, as previewed with color photo in **THE NY TIMES**:
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/arts/oct-23-29.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=Maria%20Schneider&st=cse



- Wilson returns to the Village Vanguard with Christian McBride and Inside Straight the first week of December.

- Coming up next year for Steve, he's planning a return to his hometown of Hampton, VA with an all-star quartet, the Steve Wilson Super Band, featuring Patrice Rushen, James Genus and Billy Kilson in April 2012. He'll also be returning to University of North Carolina, Chappell Hill for a residency in February 2012.

- Continuing his commitment to education, from January 11-14, 2012, Steve will be in residence as Guest Conductor for the Div. 5 High School Jazz Band at East Meadow High School on Nassau, Long Island.

- Steve Wilson also has plans to record his band Wilsonian's Grain in 2012. More news coming soon!

Recent coverage:



WASHINGTONIAN - INTERVIEW
FEATURE By Sriram Gopal
<http://www.washingtonian.com/blog/articles/21091.html>

A Conversation with Steve Wilson - **The saxophonist revisits a jazz classic Kennedy Center**



In 1950, jazz icon Charlie Parker, better known to contemporaries as Bird, released a pair of albums collectively titled *Bird with Strings, Vols. I and II*. At the time, he encountered some criticism for choosing not to play the bebop compositions that had made him famous. Instead, Parker brought his innovations to orchestrated renditions of the Great American Songbook—the pop tunes of the day. Despite initial

controversy, the recordings were among Parker's favorite projects, and milestones that went on to serve as a template for future orchestral jazz by luminaries such as trumpeter Clifford Brown, saxophonist Stan Getz and vocalist Billie Holiday.

Steve Wilson, one of the today's most acclaimed saxophonists, will re-visit this seminal recording this weekend at the Kennedy Center. Though Wilson and his ensemble will be using many of the original arrangements from *Bird with Strings*, he's quick to note that the group isn't attempting to replicate the original experience.

"Charlie Parker is one of the greatest geniuses we've had in this art form, or any art form," says Wilson. "Simply, there's no one that can recreate that level of creativity."

While Wilson was very familiar with Parker's original recordings, he didn't know that the arrangements from the sessions were available until three years ago, when he performed a few that had been compiled by composer/arranger Robert Sadin. The two collaborators went on to acquire other arrangements that Parker used during live engagements at Carnegie Hall and the Apollo Theatre, which featured pianist Billy Taylor, the Kennedy Center's late artistic director for jazz. In addition to this material, which can be heard on various Parker compilations, this weekend's program will include orchestrations that were prepared for a third *Strings* session that never took place due to Bird's untimely passing in 1955. Playing all of these scores, familiar or not, has been an engaging and ear-opening experience for Wilson.

"The sensation of playing with a string section just can't be equaled, whether it's a quartet, quintet or an orchestra. It's one of the most exhilarating experiences that one can have as a soloist," Wilson explains. "For myself, I'm actually trying to shape my solo within the context of the string sound."

Joining Wilson for these concerts will be a veteran rhythm section comprised of first-call drummer Lewis Nash, pianist Bruce Barth and area native Michael Bowie on bass. Due to logistical and budgetary reasons, the ensemble will not include oboe and harp, which were present on the original recordings. However, the arrangements will be augmented in other ways. Nearly all of the solos were given to Parker's saxophone, but Wilson wanted to expand the improvisational passages to include not only the rhythm section, but also the string players. Wilson tapped Diane Monroe and Troy Stuart because he wanted violinists who could solo in a jazz setting. These two talents, along with local musicians who will round out the string section, constitute what Wilson sees as the heart and soul of this weekend's performances.

"Strings have such an emotional sound. When you get a great string section, those instruments evoke such an emotional content. It's close to the human voice," he says. "It makes you appreciate and realize why people love great classical music."



Washington Examiner –

Preview Feature. By Marie Gullard,
10/6/11

<http://washingtonexaminer.com/entertainment/music/2011/10/jazz-trio-strings-attached-opens-kc-jazz-club-season>

Jazz trio with strings attached opens KC Jazz Club season

When the acclaimed bandleader, songwriter and jazz saxophonist, Steve Wilson opens the season at the Kennedy Center Jazz Club, he will bring along a trio of performers.

This characteristic arrangement will present the original band arrangements from the seminal 1950 recording of the "Charlie Parker with Strings" album.

A compilation album, released in 1995 by Verve Records, originated from two recordings put out in 1950 by the late saxophonist -- one of the most influential improvising soloists in jazz. Instead of using his standard quintet, Parker's recording sessions featured a classical string section and a jazz rhythm section.

"This [album] was one of the first successful collaborations of a jazz soloist with strings,"

Wilson said. "It brought Charlie Parker, who was considered the innovator of bebop, into a large public forum and actually made him a star."

In fact those two releases became Parker's most popular sellers during his lifetime, and were admitted to the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1988.

In addition to playing songs from the 1995 "Strings" album, Wilson notes that the band will perform tunes that were written for Parker but never recorded because of his untimely death. Mercer Ellington and George Russell wrote the songs "Moon Mist" and "Ezz-thetic," respectively, which were only recently discovered and made available to the public.

"What we'll be doing differently with these pieces that were not on Charlie Parker's recordings is improvising in the string section. We will open up the string ensemble to get their turn at improvisation, as well as myself and the rhythm section," Wilson explained. "The rest of the music will come from the Great American Songbook and will include 'Easy to Love' and 'April in Paris.' "

Performing with Wilson on his alto and soprano saxophones are Bruce Barth at the piano, Michael Bowie on bass and Lewis Nash at the drums. The string section will be anchored by Diane Monroe on the violin, with other violinists, Cleveland Chandler and Naira Underwood. Dawn Smith will perform on the viola with Troy Stuart playing cello. Many of these musicians are based in D.C.

Of the combined sound, Wilson noted, "This is a beautiful balance of a lush background of strings and the finest jazz improvisation."

JazzTimes®

JAZZTIMES MAGAZINE –

Preview News Column, by Jeff Tamarkin
<http://jazztimes.com/articles/28389-steve-wilson-to-open-kennedy-center-jazz-club-s-2011-12-season>

Steve Wilson to Open Kennedy Center Jazz Club's 2011/12 Season Saxophonist will perform string concerts and lead student workshop

Jazz saxophonist Steve Wilson has announced that on October 7 and 8, he will open the 2011/2012 season at Washington, D.C.'s Kennedy Center Jazz Club, with a special "Strings" performance featuring Bruce Barth, Michael Bowie, Lewis Nash, Diane Monroe and Troy Stuart. Wilson will also conduct a workshop for middle school students at the Kennedy Center Jazz Club, on October 7. As an educator and mentor, Wilson has played a major role in two of his students' burgeoning careers, as they recorded new albums: Last October, Wilson produced his student Janelle Reichman's first album, *Middleground*. Wilson is also featured prominently as performer on Youngjoo Song's *Tale of a City*.

Detroit Free Press

DETROIT FREE PRESS

BY MARK STRYKER 9/11

Best set (outdoor division): Everybody's favorite sideman, alto saxophonist Steve Wilson, made his local debut as a leader fronting 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. (Sunday, Absopure Pyramid Stage.)

CONCERT REVIEW:

Alto saxophonist Steve Wilson has played frequently in metro Detroit with everyone from Chick Corea to Maria Schneider. But Sunday night at the 32nd annual Detroit Jazz Festival marked his local debut as a leader.

His post-bop quartet, Wilsonian's Grain, 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. Musicians known for their versatility like Wilson sometimes lack a strong enough point of view to put their own stamp on a group. Or they're so intent on putting a stake in the ground that they force the action.

But Wilson, pianist Orrin Evans, bassist Ugonna Okegwo and Detroit-born drummer Clarence Penn let the music come to them in unpretentious, charismatic fashion at the Pyramid Stage at Hart Plaza. The four players sounded completely comfortable in their own skins. They play what they know, and their best music Sunday showed they know a lot.

Wilson, 50, played with a tart sound that radiated warmth but also the blues. He had a way of phrasing in-the-moment that avoided clichés and kept his agile mind alive to true improvisation rather than paint-by-numbers soloing. The whole group sounded smart but not prone to overly intellectualizing the music, preferring to speak to and from the soul.

On Wilson's arrangement of Thelonious Monk's "Well You Needn't," which used a funky vamp to disguise the beat and played clever tricks with the form, the saxophonist got underneath the skin of the rhythmic displacements in his solo; serpentine phrases cut by sharply articulated riffs told a story. The rhythm section, focused and frisky, fed him ideas; Wilson and Evans, an unpredictable player, especially seemed to be listening to the same internal song.

Okegwo's precious waltz "For You" found Wilson playing the spare melody in his balcony register with a sound shorn of vibrato and perfectly in tune, capturing the purity of the line. He followed with a solo that downplayed technique for melody. The quartet drew on Ellington, bebop and modal ideas on a lickety-split, swinging version of the standard "Perdido."

A Wilson original inspired by the New York City subway was a nutty, herky-jerky ride, morphing in and out of free time and swing passages at varying tempos. Wilson improvised squiggly melodies that winked at Ornette Coleman. The trio -- Evans' jabbing chords, Okegwo's brawny counterpoint and walk and Penn's rhythmic sparring -- came and went as it pleased. The music sounded both fun to play and fun to listen to: Those are goals and results worth applauding.



MD THEATRE GUIDE - Review

Steve Wilson: Bird With Strings at The Kennedy Center By Elliot Lanes - October 9, 2011



The Kennedy Center's 2011/2012 jazz season opened with a big splash as saxophonist Steve Wilson

presented his authentic recreation of the 1950 jazz classic album *Charlie Parker With Strings*, Some people say Parker sold out when he made this album. I think he was just trying to push the envelope with a richer sound for a jazz recording. The original Joe Lipman and Jimmy Carroll arrangements are reconstructed to a 'T' by David O'Rourke. Starting off with "East of The Sun" which featured an improv violin solo by Diane Monroe – the evening just got better and better with every song. "What is This Thing Called Love" featured another great violinist, Matvei Sigalov, as well as bassist Michael Bowie, pianist Bruce Barth, and drummer Lewis Nash.

There are also some pieces that Parker was in the midst of recording when he passed away. One of them is a wonderful Mercer Ellington tune called "Moon Mist" and Neal Hefti's "Repetition" gave everyone in the band a nice feature solo. Steve Wilson referred to the string section as Jewels and indeed they are.

Diane Monroe, Matvei Sigalov and Naira Underwood (Violins), Dawn Michelle Johnson (Viola) and Troy Kenneth Stuart's (Cello) musicianship all complimented Mr. Wilson and his trio. Steve Wilson does not profess to be Charlie Parker – but his playing and musicianship are up there with some of the greats. If you can find the original recording of this album I urge you to give it a listen. If you get to see this concert somewhere I urge you to go. Steve Wilson and company did a Yeoman's job of paying tribute to a jazz great. The place was jumpin'!



Capitalbop preview

<http://www.capitalbop.com/tag/steve-wilson/>

"Steve Wilson – quite possibly the best contemporary saxophonist you've never heard of (well, unless you have)"

More about Steve Wilson –

As an educator and mentor, Wilson has taken the support of his students' development to the next level, and has played a major role in two of their burgeoning careers, as they recorded new albums: Last October, Wilson produced his student Janelle Reichman's first album, 'Middleground'. Wilson is also featured prominently as performer on Youngjoo Song's 'Tale of a City'.

BASS SUPERSTAR PROJECTS: Steve Wilson will be a featured performer on upcoming big band releases by two of the preeminent bassists of our time: **Ron Carter** – 'Ron Carter's Great Big Band' (Sunnyside) and **Christian McBride Big Band** – 'The Good Feeling' (Mack Avenue).

Wilson continues his education work, teaching again at both Manhattan School of Music and at SUNY Purchase. In addition to his recent workshops at the Kennedy Center, he'll be leading similar events at the Southern AZ Arts & Culture Alliance this fall.

Wilson's career shifted to the next level following saturation media coverage of his 50th Birthday at New York's Jazz Standard. Wilson featured six different bands over six nights, and each set during the birthday week

saw lines out the door. The diverse shows each reflected a different stage of Wilson's evolution into what **NPR** describes as *“one of the finest saxophonists in the business.”*

In addition to a major feature in **The Wall Street Journal** (link below,) Wilson was the sole Pop/Jazz event previewed in **The New York Times' Arts and Leisure** section's 'The Week Ahead' page; **The New York Times** also ran two Friday Weekend Arts preview columns; Wilson received a **WNYC Radio 'Gig Alert'**; **Time Out NY** gave his shows a 'Critic's Pick'; the **Village Voice** ran a 'Voice Choice' preview and photo; **Jazziz Magazine** ran a feature preview in their February Digital Edition; **HotHouse Magazine** ran a cover story interview; **The New Yorker** ran a 'Goings On About Town' preview, **JazzPolice** ran a preview, and more.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

NY CULTURE - FEBRUARY 7, 2011 - By LARRY BLUMENFELD

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703960804576119950902333990.html?mod=WSJ_NY_Culture_LEFTTopStories

The NY TIMES - Arts and Leisure

'The Week Ahead' Preview and photo - By Ben Ratliff, 2/4/11

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/arts/06weekaheadweb.html?scp=1&sq=steve%20wilson&st=cse>

WNYC GIG ALERT

2/11/2011 By Marlon Bishop

<http://culture.wnyc.org/articles/music-hub/2011/feb/11/gig-alert-steve-wilson/> (click link to hear audio sample)

NY TIMES WEEKEND ARTS by Nate Chinen 2/11/11:

★ **Steve Wilson's 50th Birthday Celebration**

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/04/arts/music/04jazz.html>

JAZZIZ Magazine - Digital Edition February Preview Feature - login to [Jazziz.com](http://jazziz.com) to flip through — Steve Wilson **'50 WITH A BANG'** is on page 18.

HOT HOUSE JAZZ MAGAZINE -

Cover feature: <http://www.hothousejazz.com/>

VILLAGE VOICE

Voice Choices By Jim Macnie, 2/2/2011

<http://www.villagevoice.com/2011-02-02/voice-choices/steve-wilson-quartet/>

TIME OUT NY - CRITIC'S PICK - <http://newyork.timeout.com/music-nightlife/music/727895/steve-wilson-50th-birthday-celebration>

The New Yorker

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/events/nightlife/2011/02/14/110214goni_GOAT_nightlife?currentPage=2

Steve Wilson's 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/2010/12/13/125076907/steve-wilson-live-at-the-village-vanguard>.

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.

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 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>

JAZZIZ.com called 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

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

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

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 or 212-873-1011.