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[Wall Street Journal Feature, NY Times Arts & Leisure Preview, WNYC, New Yorker, Time Out NY, Village Voice, Jazziz.com and More, as STEVE WILSON'S 50<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION Earns Blockbuster Coverage](#)

**WSJ Headline: "The Sideman Becomes the Star"**  
**"Mr. Wilson is essential to this city's jazz landscape"**

Acclaimed saxophonist **Steve Wilson's** career shifted to the next level this past week, as he celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday at New York's Jazz Standard. In a major interview feature preview, America's largest newspaper **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL** proclaimed, "***The Sideman Becomes the Star.***" The WSJ article, by respected writer Larry Blumenfeld, added, "***Mr. Wilson is essential to this city's jazz landscape.***"

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.***"

Media coverage of the Birthday Celebration exceeded anything Wilson has experienced thus far in his career - in addition to **The Wall**

**Street Journal** feature, 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](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703960804576119950902333990.html?mod=WSJ_NY_Culture_LEFTTopStories)

## *The Sideman Becomes the Star*

### *Steve Wilson Celebrates His Birthday With the Musicians Who Shared His Path*

A popular myth holds that the 1980s New York jazz scene was on its last legs, saved by a posse of young mainstream-minded neotraditionalists, mostly from New Orleans, who revived the music and its appeal. There were pockets of less conservative action—say, the layered rhythms of saxophonist Steve Coleman's Brooklyn-based scene. But, so the story goes, that was about it.



Saxophonist Steve Wilson will play at Jazz Standard for six nights beginning Wednesday, which is his 50th birthday. Musicians know the more complex truth. Not long after Steve Wilson brought his alto and soprano saxophones to New York in 1987, he learned that the sextet he'd joined, Out of the Blue, had only a few engagements booked. He'd gone from working regularly in and around Richmond, Va., to mostly subbing and looking for gigs. Yet Mr. Wilson sensed he'd found precisely what he came for. "I arrived with an open mind," Mr. Wilson said recently at a Midtown Manhattan lounge. "People wanted to place me in this or that camp—some even assumed I was from New Orleans. But I was here to soak it all up, and it was all here, all interesting. Guys I'd heard on all these great recordings were playing nearly every week somewhere, with someone. I figured I'd give it a year, see what happened."

Cut to 2011. Mr. Wilson is still here. The stellar lineup—nearly all former and current musical associates—slated for his six-night, 50th-birthday engagement at Jazz Standard beginning Tuesday, hints at the diversity and depth of talent alongside which Mr. Wilson came of age in New York. And it makes clear that, by now, Mr. Wilson is essential to this city's jazz landscape. In the late '80s, largely at now-defunct clubs such as Bradley's and Sweet Basil, Mr. Wilson found the established players he'd sought out, including pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Buster Williams and drummer Victor Lewis. (When Mr. Williams invited Mr. Wilson into his band in 1990, "I figured I had arrived," Mr. Wilson said.) He also met distinctive players his own age with whom he quickly fell in.

The quartet anchoring Mr. Wilson's first two nights this week—with pianist Bruce Barth, bassist Ed Howard and drummer Adam Cruz—has played together since 1997. Mr. Wilson's connection with Mr. Barth began a decade earlier, in jam sessions at the pianist's Brooklyn apartment.

"Even then, Steve's voice was identifiable," said Mr. Barth, "earthy and funky but also extremely sophisticated in terms of harmony and rhythm. We also shared a sensibility—a love of blues and swing but an equal commitment to staying wide open and in the moment." That liberated sense and an easy camaraderie come through on a recent duet album, "Home" (We Always Swing). Mr. Wilson's Jazz Standard gig will reference a fair chunk of the more than 100 recordings on which he has played. He's recorded with both singers slated for opening night, Karrin Allyson and Carla Cook. Drummer Lewis Nash, who plays in Thursday night's expanded ensemble (with a string section) and Friday night's quintet, and pianist Mulgrew Miller (Friday) played on Mr. Wilson's earliest recordings as a leader. Mr. Wilson was integral to "Kind of Brown," a sleekly swinging 2009 album by bassist Christian McBride (Friday and Sunday). And he plays on a forthcoming quartet album from drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts (Saturday and Sunday). If the music's stylistic palette shifts night to night, "that reflects the playlists of the radio stations I grew up hearing," Mr. Wilson said.

And it owes to his broad experience. Mr. Wilson got his first top-tier touring gig with vibraphonist Lionel Hampton in 1988. He played in some of jazz's most creative small groups through the '90s, especially those led by drummers Ralph Peterson and Leon Parker, and with such large ensembles as the Mingus Big Band and the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. He joined a terrific edition of bassist Dave Holland's quintet, then left that band for Origin, a chamber-like acoustic sextet led by pianist Chick Corea. "Steve quickly became far more than the saxophone player in that band," said Mr. Corea. "We became partners. I began to write with him in mind." A 1996 New York Times profile called Mr. Wilson "the quintessential sideman," which might have seemed damning praise to some career-conscious colleagues. But he remembers feeling pleased. In fact, he laments "what the industry did in the 1980s and '90s to dismantle the apprenticeship system by promoting young guys who maybe weren't ready to be bandleaders." The spotlight thrown squarely on Mr. Wilson through his Jazz Standard engagement is overdue, according to former employer Buster Williams. "This week makes you stand back and appreciate what an innovative force Steve has been," he said. "But he was just a kid when he started with me. When did all this happen?" —Mr. Blumenfeld writes about jazz for the Journal.



## 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>

### Pop/Jazz - Ben Ratliff

The alto and soprano saxophonist **STEVE WILSON**, who moved to New York in the late 1980s, is one of his jazz-playing generation's greatest all-rounders. A learned musician with a bright and beautiful tone, he made sense of the fundamentals — Johnny Hodges, Charlie Parker and Cannonball Adderley, say — and combined them with other currents in jazz's fragmented development after Ornette

Coleman. Lots of bandleaders have hired him for his clear, lyrical improvising, including Mulgrew Miller, Dave Holland, Chick Corea and Leon Parker. In turn he's hired dozens of New York's better musicians for his own projects. At the Jazz Standard he will celebrate his 50th birthday week surrounded by his peers, showing much of his range. His quartet, including the pianist Bruce Barth, the bassist Ed Howard and the drummer Adam Cruz, will appear with the singers Carla Cook and Karrin Allyson (Tuesday) and alone (Wednesday). On Thursday he'll play music from Charlie Parker's "Bird With Strings" with a string ensemble directed by the guitarist David O'Rourke; on Friday, in an ad hoc band called Special Edition, with Mr. Miller, the bassist Christian McBride, the drummer Lewis Nash and the trumpeter Freddie Hendrix; and on Saturday and Sunday in another band of high-profile friends, the Leaders, with the pianist Geoffrey Keezer, Mr. McBride on bass, and Jeff (Tain) Watts on drums.



## 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)

*The New York Times* called alto saxophonist Steve Wilson the "quintessential sideman" in

1996, an apt description since he's played with just about everybody in his 50 years on the planet, including Dave Holland, Chick Corea, and Lionel Hampton. In the process, he's contributed his muscular, groove-heavy bebop solo style to over 100 records. Now, at long last, Wilson is stepping out from the shadows and is shining as a major bandleader himself. This week, he's celebrating his 50th birthday with concerts at the Jazz Standard. Each night, Wilson will lead a different group filled with appearances from some heavyweight friends. Expect to see trumpeter Freddy Hendrix, drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts, and bassist Cristian McBride gracing the stage. This funky, free-wheeling track is from *Home*, a live album of duets recorded in 2010 with pianist Bruce Barth.

**The  
New York  
Times**

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

★ **Steve Wilson's 50th Birthday Celebration** (Friday through Sunday) Mr. Wilson, an alto and soprano saxophonist who combines economy and modernity in his playing, turned 50 on Wednesday, and he has been celebrating with a brisk succession of bands. On Friday he connects with the trumpeter Freddie Hendrix, the pianist Mulgrew Miller, the bassist Christian McBride and the drummer Lewis Nash. On Saturday and Sunday

he turns the tables on several of the bandleaders he has worked with over the years: Mr. McBride, the pianist Geoffrey Keezer and the drummer Jeff (Tain) Watts. At 7:30 and 9:30 p.m., with an 11:30 set on Friday and Saturday, Jazz Standard, 116 East 27th Street, Manhattan, (212) 576-2232, [jazzstandard.net](http://jazzstandard.net); \$30. (Chinen)

2/4/11: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/04/arts/music/04jazz.html>

# JAZZIZ

## JAZZIZ Magazine - Digital Edition

February Preview Feature – login to **Jazziz.com** to flip through — Steve Wilson **'50 WITH A BANG'** is on page 18.

## HOT HOUSE JAZZ MAGAZINE –

Cover feature – read the full article, here: <http://www.hothousejazz.com/>

**HOT HOUSE**  
February 2011 [www.hothousejazz.com](http://www.hothousejazz.com)

<b>STEVE WILSON</b> Jazz Standard Page 29	<b>JOEY DEFRANCESCO</b> Dizzy's Page 30
<b>HOWARD ALDEN</b> Feinstein's Page 10	<b>NELS CLINE</b> Le Poisson Rouge Page 10

### 50 With a Bang

Steve Wilson is turning 50. To celebrate and commemorate the occasion, the guy that NPR describes as "one of the finest saxophonists in the business" is going to play with five different bands over six nights in February at New York's Jazz Standard. The intention is for each show to reflect a different stage of Wilson's artistic evolution. Here's what's in store:

- ▲ **Tuesday, February 8** — The Steve Wilson Quartet with vocalists Eamonn Aloysius and Carla Cook. This is Wilson's original quartet with whom he's been playing with since 1992. The group features pianist Bruce Barth, bassist Ed Howard and drummer Adam Cruz.
- ▲ **Wednesday, February 9** — On this, Wilson's actual birthday, he'll be playing with the above-mentioned quartet, and the seven singers.
- ▲ **Thursday, February 10** — This should be a fun evening — Wilson with strings, featuring music from 2004 with strings, the seminal Charlie Parker soundings from 1950. Since the original arrangements of these records have become available, Wilson has been doing college residencies with the 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 — but never before heard — with an all-star ensemble of longtime friends, including Barth, bassist Ugonna Okegwo, guitarist David O'Rourke, drummer Lewis Nash and a string quartet.
- ▲ **Friday, February 11** — Wilson will be playing this night with a fine assemblage of longtime associates: trumpeter Freddie Hendrix, pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Lewis Nash.
- ▲ **Saturday and Sunday, February 12 and 13** — The concept for these two nights was to put together some of the band leaders that Wilson has worked with throughout his career. And so he'll be sharing the stage with pianist Geoffrey Keezer, bassist Christian McBride and drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts.

"Having this celebration at the jazz standard is significant in that I have an extensive history with this great venue," Wilson says. "My good friend, pianist Henry King, chose the house Steinway baby grand piano, and we were the first artists to play there when it was opened by James Pólosky. Subsequently, I've worked the Standard as leader more than any place else, and as a sideman with many ensembles.

"It's truly honored that these friends whom I respect and love are joining me with their generous and artistic for this event," the saxophonist continues. "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."

For more information, music and performance footage, go to [www.stevewilsonmusic.com](http://www.stevewilsonmusic.com). ▲

Photo by John Adams

# the village VOICE

## VILLAGE VOICE

### Voice Choices

By Jim Macnie, 2/2/2011

[http://www.villagevoice.com/2011-02-](http://www.villagevoice.com/2011-02-02/voice-choices/steve-wilson-quartet/)

[02/voice-choices/steve-wilson-quartet/](http://www.villagevoice.com/2011-02-02/voice-choices/steve-wilson-quartet/)

Versatility and informality are the saxophonist's calling cards. Wilson's wise mainstream swing allows room for both subtle avant notions and witty r&b maneuvers, and his best work is marked by agility and nuance. Vocalists, string sections, heavy-duty guests - these birthday gigs at the Standard all week will be a fun way to turn 50.





## TIME OUT NY - **CRITIC'S PICK** -

<http://newyork.timeout.com/music-nightlife/music/727895/steve-wilson-50th-birthday-celebration>

Long one of New York's most dependably satisfying performers, bandleaders and sidemen, alto saxophonist Steve Wilson hits the half-century mark in style this week with an engagement that finds him tangling with all sorts of friends. Vocal fanciers will want to be on hand Tue 8 when Karrin Allyson and Carla Cook join Wilson, but there's something special happening every single night.



## The New Yorker

[http://www.newyorker.com/arts/events/nightlife/2011/02/14/110214goni\\_GOAT\\_nightlife?currentPage=2](http://www.newyorker.com/arts/events/nightlife/2011/02/14/110214goni_GOAT_nightlife?currentPage=2)

The saxophonist and flutist **Steve Wilson**, a fixture on the contemporary jazz scene as both a valued sideman and a skilled bandleader, turns fifty. A weeklong birthday celebration finds him leading five different bands, collaborating with the likes of Karrin Allyson, Carla Cook, Christian McBride, and Mulgrew Miller.

**Wilson will continue to celebrate his 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday year at these upcoming gigs:**

### **March 5**

Chris' Cafe  
1421 Sansom Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
Sets @ 8p & 10p  
215-568-3131  
www.chrisjazzcafe.com <<http://www.chrisjazzcafe.com/>>  
215-568-3131

BAND: Wilsonian's Grain featuring Orrin Evans (p), Ugonna Okegwo (b), Bill Stewart (d)

### **March 9:**

Massry Center for the Arts  
The College of St. Rose  
Kathleen McManus Picotte Recital Hall | D'Arcy-Brady Stage  
1002 Madison Avenue  
Albany, NY 12208

[http://www.strose.edu/campus/massry\\_center\\_for\\_the\\_arts/premiererperformances/article3911](http://www.strose.edu/campus/massry_center_for_the_arts/premiererperformances/article3911)

PROGRAM: The Leipzig String Quartet with Steve Wilson and Pete Malinverni: Haydn's The Seven Last Words of Christ

As part of the College's observance of Ash Wednesday, please join these great artists for an evening of sacred music.

*The Seven Last Words of Christ*, considered Joseph Haydn's greatest work, have been given various treatments over the years. This version has alto saxophonist Steve Wilson and pianist Pete Malinverni performing improvised interludes that include several of Duke Ellington's sacred works ("Come Sunday," "Solitude," and "Heaven") that break up each of the seven adagio movements, adding a contrasting reverence to the performance.

### More about Steve Wilson:

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/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.

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>

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.