

"Sweet" Nancy Wilson To Perform In Charlotte

By Loretta Manago
Post Staff Writer

A jazz singer? A blues singer? A pop singer? Or a cabaret singer? Which one is Nancy Wilson? For this versatile entertainer you have to check all boxes.

But the one descriptive term that Ms. Wilson prefers to be called is a "song stylist." For her that means whatever the style, as a singer she'll be able to handle it. And she has done that every since her big hit in '63, "Tell Me The Truth."

There has never been another career for Nancy Wilson. She has always wanted to be a singer. Even at the early age of four, Ms. Wilson knew that that was what she wanted to do.

"As a child she took an active part in church music as well as school choirs and dance bands. And at age 15, Ms. Wilson's professional career began. She had her own television show, "Skyline Melody."

If Ms. Wilson was ever to pursue another career it would have been when she enrolled at Central State College to obtain teaching credentials. But the call that Ms. Wilson was bound to answer was music and before long she had left college to join the Rusty Bryant Band. Those were years of important contacts. During that time she met Cannonball Adderly and the two became friends. Adderly was immediately interested in her career, once noting her determination and overwhelming talent.

It never seemed that Ms. Wilson had to really prove her singing ability even in the early stages of her

career. Her talent spoke for itself. When she moved to New York in '59, she had her first major break in one of the local nightspots as a substitute for Irene Reid. She so overwhelmed her audience and the club owner that she was booked there on a permanent basis.

But there were more important people to catch her act. And among those were Cannonball Adderly's manager, John Levy. She reminisced about this moment: "He called me the next day and set up a demonstration recording session. Ray Bryant and I went in and recorded "Guess Who I Saw Today," "Sometimes I'm Happy," and two other songs. We sent them to Capitol and within five days they called and said, 'wait until we get to New York' and within six weeks I had all the things I wanted."

That was 20 years ago, and magazines like Downbeat, Playboy and Time were giving her rave reviews, calling her "one of the top singers in the country" and "both singer and storyteller." And 20 years later, though much has changed, little has changed. "The critics are still lauding her talents. Jazz critic for the Los Angeles Herald Examiner applauded "her technique and taste and sass and intelligence...precise intuition, guts and raw confidence." Praise of this high caliber have sprung from the Washington Post and the Welch Daily News as well.

What is so striking about Ms. Wilson is that her style is timeless. "Her vocals

continue to embrace the subtleties of jazz, pop, blues and soul, creating a magical style that is always contemporary, always classic." It's no wonder that after so many years, awards, accomplishments and accolades that she still possesses the same qualities that have helped her win the hearts of millions of fans everywhere.

Like those who strive for perfection in their chosen field, Ms. Wilson has not been content to "rest on her laurels." And she recognizes a world aside from the

entertainment one. That is evident in the many community services in which she is involved.

And although her roles include those of an entertainer and a community-oriented person, Ms. Wilson confessed that her greatest role is that of wife and mother. Married to Rev. Wiley Burton and the mother of three—Kacy, Samantha and Sheryl—Ms. Wilson replied: "To me the family unit is so important that I always put my children before my career." She is careful to

insure that the demands of her career do not interfere with her family's needs.

The voice of the "thrush from Columbus", a tag lovingly placed by Ms. Wilson's long-time friend, Joe Williams, will be heard in Charlotte, Saturday, September 29, at 8 p.m. at Ovens Auditorium. This concert is being sponsored by the Afro-American Cultural Center and WSOC-TV-AM-FM. Tickets are \$14 and \$15 and are on sale at the Ovens Box Office and other regular ticket outlets.



Singer Nancy Wilson
....Versatile entertainer

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