

Jim Wilson

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH MUSIC LEGENDS AND FINDING THE ARTIST WITHIN

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TUNED IN

Emerging from a troubled childhood in a broken West Texas home, a young man moves to Los Angeles to pursue fame and fortune as a singer-songwriter. He soon strays from his mission when his piano tuning sideline blossoms into a career as piano technician to the entertainment industry's biggest names. His help in the development of the world's first MIDI-adapter for acoustic piano leads to him sharing adventures, sessions, meals, and laughs with dozens of his childhood heroes. His front row seat provides him with a rare and fascinating view into their creative processes.

But when his world is shattered by his dearest friend's sudden and untimely death, he is forced to question the true meaning of success. He returns to his heart's purpose, takes a leap into the unknown, and sets out on a solo career, recording and performing his signature style of piano-featured instrumentals. Along the way he battles countless obstacles, including crippling panic attacks.



Endorsements

"Tuned In is a fantastic read! Fascinating insider stories. World traveler, gifted artist, and his knowledge of all things piano is incredible. Great job with all you've accomplished!"

- David Foster, 16-time Grammy-winning producer

"I adore this memoir so. *Tuned In* is a truly fascinating tale by a fascinating man. I can't wait to re-read it with the television off."

- Martin Short, actor, comedian, singer, writer
- "... a wonderful story that will encourage the reader to follow their dreams."
 - Alan Bergman, lyricist with 3 Oscars, 4 Emmys & 2 Grammy awards

"I don't trust just anyone to care for my pianos. Jim has been the man to do that for me for over 35 years! His story's enlightening and inspiring, especially for anyone trying to make it in music.

- Diane Warren, Grammy, Emmy, & Oscar-winning songwriter

"Not only has Jim Wilson made my life more harmonious for the past 30 years, but he used his amazing gift to enhance the work of many a musical legend. He shares this long and amazing career with us in *Tuned In*. I could not put it down! Brilliant, funny and touching."

- Ed Begley Jr., author, actor, environmentalist

"Jim Wilson can do anything with or to a piano, writes music beautifully, out-skis me and now this; a most interesting life recalled with the clarity and flow that a good memoir requires."

- J.D. Souther, multi-platinum, Hall of Fame songwriter

"Brother Jim, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your profound professionalism in restoring and caring for my piano over the decades."

- Quincy Jones, 28 -time Grammy-winning producer

"Over the decades I've known Jim Wilson, I've found him to be a meticulous craftsman, a wonderful artist, and honest to the core."

- Herb Alpert, Grammy-winning artist, co-founder of A&M Records

"Jim is a genius technician, musician, and a dynamite piano tuner! *Tuned In* is fascinating. Who knew? Congratulations, Jim!"

- Barry Manilow, Grammy, Emmy & Tony-winning Hall of Fame artist with 85 million albums sold
- "...Jim's book is filled with wonderful stories and anecdotes of his adventures in our musical world. I recommend it highly."
 - Carole Bayer Sager, Grammy & Academy Award-winning songwriter

"Who'd have thought the story of a piano tuner could be so enthralling? *Tuned In*, Jim Wilson's beautifully-woven tale, gives an emotional, creative, and revealing insight to the world of music from bar bands to superstars. Deeply honest and personal, occasionally heart-rending, often hilarious and enlightening about what makes music and musicians tick. Little wonder so many musical heroes took him to their hearts."

-Neville Farmer, author, music journalist, filmmaker

"Tuned In is so much more than I expected. Jim shares his adventures and experiences with some of the world's greatest music icons, filling every page with humor and insight. But more than that, his story is both inspiring and relatable, and will resonate with anyone who has ever faced adversity in pursuit of their goals. Highly recommended."

- Ray Romano, Emmy-winning actor

"Your love of music and the heart and soul that you put into tuning is captured here. Thank you."

- Herbie Hancock, 15-time Grammy-winning artist

"Your musical sensibility is wonderful. ... You captured a part of my heart."

- Arlo Guthrie, multi- platinum Americana folk icon

"My friend Jim is an articulate and succinct storyteller; a literary artisan. I enjoyed every page of *Tuned In* - I couldn't put it down!"

- Walter Afanasieff, Grammy-winning music producer, songwriter

"Your gorgeous music inspires me to play again!"

- Olivia Newton John, Grammy-winning singer, actor, activist

"I so enjoyed reading *Tuned In*. Jim's traveled life's unsteady road with an open heart while seeing the world through hope-filled eyes."

- Melissa Manchester, Grammy-winning artist

"I loved *Tuned In.* It's a great, fun read. It's an inspiring story of perseverance and a window into the LA music scene."

- Steve Porcaro, Grammy-winning songwriter, founding Toto member

"Besides being a piano master, my old friend Jim Wilson is a great cat. His book *Tuned In* is a fantastic read – check it out!

- Steve Lukather, Grammy-winning songwriter, founding Toto member

"Congrats on your well-written memoir, *Tuned In*, Jim. What a fun read! So many fantastic stories and your journey from piano tuner to recording artist is relatable and uplifting!"

- Stanley Clarke, Grammy-winning artist

"Your writing is keen, quick-witted, entertaining and informative."

- Richard Carpenter, multi-platinum recording artist

"To have our pianos tuned over the decades by a master like Jim Wilson is totally satisfying. But hearing him play his own music is sheer joy".

- Mike Stoller, Hall of Fame songwriter of over 70 classic hits

"Jim's experience as a musician offers him special insights in service of his own music, as well as the musicians he works with. Congrats, Jim, and happy reading everyone!"

- Patrice Rushen, Grammy-nominated artist

"Jim Wilson's entertaining memoir reads like a musician's version of 'Forrest Gump', offering rare insights into the offstage lives of some of the music industry's most famous and fascinating characters. Two thumbs up!"

- **Michael Neill**, *international bestselling author of* The Inside-Out Revolution *and* Creating the Impossible

"Northern Seascape is a delicately-woven romantic classic, a magical musical carpet ride of melodic beauty."

- Carole King, Grammy-winning artist & songwriter

"Beautifully written and told, *Tuned In* is a heartfelt and deeply moving memoir of one of the unsung greats who's had a 'front-row piano bench' to some of the greatest moments in modern music history."

- Dave Koz, Grammy-winning artist
- "... a fabulous book! What a life, what a career, what a storyteller."
 - Loren Gold, keyboard player for The Who and Chicago
- "... full of fascinating stories and adventures. *Tuned In* is brilliant a beautifully written memoir!"
 - Nathan East, Grammy-nominated bassist, producer, songwriter

"I've known Jim for years and I trust him beyond. He can make a toy piano sound good!

- Courtency Cox, Emmy, Golden Globe & SAG-nominated actress

"I recommend *Tuned In* to anyone ... it's not just about music, pianos and the biz, it's about life and how to deal with it when the shit gets thrown hard early on. A wonderful story by a great dude."

- Richard Page, hit songwriter, Mr. Mister founding member

"Northern Seascape is a beautiful, inspiring work. I highly recommend it."

- Dan Fogelberg, multi-platinum recording artist

"What a surprising read! ... a deeply personal story about how seemingly random events led Jim out of darkness and created a life of purpose and inspiration. Jim is a dear friend, a master craftsman, and a great storyteller."

- Paul Mirkovich, musical director for The Voice

"Yours is beautiful, melodic, emotional, delicious music."

- David Crosby, multi-platinum Hall of Fame recording artist

"Without guys like you, guys like me would surely be lost. Thanks for all the excellent piano care over the decades, Jim."

- Stephen Stills, multi-platinum Hall of Fame recording artist

"I admire Jim's musicianship and creativity."

- Burt Bacharach, Grammy and Oscar-winning songwriter

"Congrats on your heartwarming and inspiring memoir, Jim! A beautiful tribute to the power of friendship, music, and the human spirit!"

- Steve Tyrell, Grammy-winning Producer & artist

"Jim Wilson is one of the best piano tuners I've come across."

- Chick Corea, 27-time Grammy-winning artist

"I shouldn't have been so surprised that Jim's rascal gift as a storyteller would produce such a great read...but wow! With an extraordinary eye for detail, *Tuned In* captures not only the bygone era of the 80's LA Studio scene and the dawn of MIDI, but also reveals through his own vulnerability the heart of every artist drawn into our city of dreams."

- Eric Persing, Spectrasonics founder

"Your music is mystical and calming. I use it to lose myself."

- Lionel Richie, Grammy-winning artist

"Jim rebuilt and tunes the piano handed down from my grandmother, he's played me beautiful songs, and now he's taken me on his life's journey so far. He's a skilled writer and *Tuned In* is a wonderful read!"

- Lisa Loeb, Grammy-winning Recording Artist

"Tuned In is a captivating window into the brilliant and inspiring mind of Jim Wilson, whose natural elegance, playfulness, exuberance, and talent has allowed him to seamlessly grace the worlds of some of the greatest legends on the planet! His own music has opened hearts and captured imaginations, and his story is a treasure!"

- Lili Haydn, Grammy-winning artist

"Tuned In has heart, humor, and humility. Lovely storytelling from a lovely guy!"

- Larry Klein, Grammy-winning producer

"... I'm blown away by not just the stories but what an incredible raconteur Jim is. Such a great read."

- Denny Tedesco, Award-winning director, The Wrecking Crew

"Jim Wilson's wonderful memoir is a heartfelt tale of the ways the ordinary and extraordinary worlds of the music business intersect that few outsiders will ever experience."

- Zac Rae, music producer, member of Death Cab for Cutie

"With Jim's usual affability and good humor, *Tuned In* gives us an intimate look behind the scenes of his famous, and infamous - clients and friends, a group I'm proud to be a part of."

- Marc Shaiman, Oscar-nominated, Grammy, Emmy & Tony-winning film composer

"From the moment I started reading *Tuned In*, I became totally engrossed. Jim's style of writing is compelling, extremely easy to read and triggered wonderful memories of my own life."

- **Peter Collins**, rock producer (Rush, Alice Cooper, Queensryche)

"Tuned In is a wonderful ride! Thank you, Jim for letting me play a small part in your adventures."

- Matthew Wilder, Grammy-winning producer

"Jim Wilson was 'the man behind the curtain' for decades, tending the pianos of some of our greatest artists before stepping out on to the stage with his own gorgeous and timeless music. Bravo, Jim!"

- Jean Fogelberg, Artist, Photographer, wife of Dan Fogelberg

"Tuned In is a story of redemption and reinvention. Jim played in the personal sandbox of the most creative and innovative musicians of our era and in an oily rags to artistic riches story, he found his own inner artist and became a composer of the highest order."

- Daniel J. Levitin, 4-times New York Times bestselling author

"For decades, Jim has taken care, time and consideration with our pianos, as well as filling our house with his beautiful playing, and recollections. And now, his insightful, humorous stories are passed on to the reader. *Tuned In* does not disappoint. *Enjoy!*"

- Katey Sagal, Golden Globe-winning actress

"Tuned In is absolutely tremendous. It's a gripping story of perseverance told with warmth, humor and unfailing honesty. I couldn't put it down!"

- Adam Belanoff, TV producer, writer

"Jim Wilson: great technician, talented musician, lovely man."

- James Newton Howard, Grammy & Emmy winning film composer

"Tuned In is an incredible, inspiring story. A real page-turner."

- Chris Standring, recording artist with ten #1 Billboard hits

"Jim, you're the one that connected Yamaha with Elton. Thank you for steering him to us all those years ago. You're truly a man of many talents: an amazing piano technician, a great piano player, an excellent writer. Congrats on your amazing book, *Tuned In!*"

- Bill Brandom, former National Piano Service Mgr, Yamaha Corp.

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PART I Gearing Up

"A journey is a person in itself; no two are alike. All plans, safeguards, policing, and coercion are fruitless. We find that after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us."

— John Steinbeck





August 30, 1985

ou must be Jim!"

He calls me by my name. And just like that, I'm once again the 8-year-old boy who obsessed over this icon's hit songs; the pudgy kid who yearned to enrapture fans with music; the dreamer whose life direction was shaped by the trail this legend blazed. It feels like I have cotton in my mouth. Amazingly, my lips move, words come out.

"And I'm guessing you must be ... I wanna say... Paul?" He laughs and extends his hand.

My anxiety begins to ease. Just. I've met and worked for quite a number of celebrities by now, but this is Paul McCartney, a frigging Beatle. His music has underscored my whole life, made me cry, laugh, sing at the top of my lungs, worked its way deep into my musical DNA.

This is like meeting Mozart, Gandhi, and Obi-Wan Kenobi, rolled into one. I mean, here's a guy who's literally changed the world with his music.

But I don't have the luxury of succumbing to nervousness. I'm here on a limited mission: to install an adapter in Paul McCartney's piano and show him how to work it.

Thankfully, I can speak with assuredness about the adapter installation. I even suggest ways I could improve the touch and tone of his Hamburg Steinway B grand piano.

Have I overstepped my bounds?

But he smiles.

"Have at it!" he says. We agree to meet the following morning and I ask what time.

"Tennish, anyone?" He gives a grin and his iconic raised eyebrow. That a figure from the musical version of Mt. Rushmore enjoys a corny "dad joke" puts me further at ease.

Alone in his studio, I hit pause for a second to take in where I am: Hog Hill Mill, an eighteenth-century windmill overlooking the English Channel that Paul's converted into his personal recording studio. Scanning the room, I see the usual trappings: amps, guitars, microphones, an "iso booth" where vocals are recorded, rows of console tape with mixer markings stuck on the wall.

But this isn't just any studio. It's the Santa's Workshop where one of the most extraordinary musical geniuses of our time transforms the ideas in his head into reality. I sneak a closer look at the dozen drawings taped to the wall. Puzzled by these peculiar pictographs, I squint my eyes and try to decipher the first one. I slowly realize this is Paul's clever way to represent his vision of each song's mix. Each graphic is a road map of sorts, using different shapes drawn with felt pens to depict the positioning of each element in the mix — a red circle in the middle represents the vocal, two green ovals to either side represent the stereo guitars, a black rectangle at the bottom symbolizes the bass.

I take in the row of guitars. Ten instruments in a stand is not unusual — I've seen as many in countless LA studios. But *these* guitars?

One in particular has a distinctive shape that stops me in my tracks. I hold my breath as I ponder the history of Paul's left-handed Hofner bass,

one of the most iconic instruments in all of modern music.

What would it have been like to stand on stage, enthralling screaming fans with this Hofner, at Liverpool's smoky Cavern Club, on the Ed Sullivan show, in Shea Stadium, or atop the Apple building at that legendary rooftop concert?

Drawing closer, the bass line to "Come Together" starts playing in my head. Followed by "Taxman", then "Day Tripper" — this instrument has anchored countless Beatle classics.

At the Louvre, 15 feet is as close as you can get to the Mona Lisa. Glancing left and right as if there were a docent standing guard, I reach toward the strings and lightly pluck the low E.

Man, if this thing could speak.

Late into the night, I work to regulate, voice, tune, and install the "Forte MIDI-Mod" — the world's first MIDI-adapter for acoustic piano. Just a couple of years earlier, I had the good fortune of having a hand in its development. Bartolomeo Cristofori's "PianoForte" was fashioned from its meek predecessor the clavichord 300 years ago. Now for the first time, it could connect to the new world of electronics via our adapter.

Looking back, it's humbling to think that I — a diffident kid from a small West Texas town — would become part of a bridge from 17th century northern Italy to a recording studio on the south coast of England belonging to one of the world's most influential recording artists.

For many years I was about the only guy on the planet you could get the MIDI-Mod from. I had the honor of serving the royalty of rock: Elton John, Phil Collins, Keith Emerson, Pete Townshend, Lionel Richie, Bruce Springsteen. But Paul McCartney had been my first musical hero. I wanted to deliver above and beyond his expectations.

It's the wee hours of the night and I finally wrap up my work. Paul's driver and personal manager, John Hammel, gives me a lift to The Mermaid Inn, in the town of Rye. A sign on the building says "Rebuilt in 1400 A.D." The inn dates back to 900 A.D. and had been home to pirates after raiding ships at sea. Blackbeard himself might have roamed these halls. Exhausted, I drift off with visions of merciless marauders dancing in my head.

Saturday morning. The skies are a canvas of vibrant blue as my taxi winds

its way through the picturesque English countryside. But I'm too preoccupied to appreciate the beauty. Prone to panic attacks, I measure my breath. Somehow, I managed to keep it together yesterday with Paul. But that meeting had been quick and relatively predictable. Today, I need to teach him the features of the adapter. I've developed a slick, LA veneer I can hide my insecurities behind but as soon as Paul walks in, I drop my guard. He's in a light, playful mood, not an ounce of pretension.

I jump into tutorial mode. I point out that his grand now has a MIDI output, which I've connected to a synthesizer, that he can trigger from the piano. I show him how to turn on the unit, how to transpose. He sits down beside me on the bench and begins to check out the unique blend of his piano doubled by an electric piano sound. He plunks around, plays a few chords. I switch the synth to a string pad sound and he varies his chord choices, playing longer-held notes. He looks at me and smiles. "Lovely!"

He launches into a chord progression. "I've been working on this piece, but I'm stuck for a middle-8 section." He plays and sings the verse and chorus he has so far. His voice is competing with the one in my head telling me *this is really happening, so just chill the fuck out and be here*.

Like a cheeky bastard, I step well beyond my boundaries with a suggestion. "Fantastic! For the bridge, what about going from C, to B7, to E7, to A minor?" He tries the chords on for size and stops. "Hey! That's me "Yesterday" change!"

Oops. Embarrassed that I'd unwittingly proposed that Paul McCartney plagiarize himself, I laugh and quip, "All my chords come back to me in shades of mediocrity." He gets the reference. "Paul Simon, right? Great lyric."

The morning goes on, I ease into the moment. He's Paul McCartney, but also a great dude, a musician, a kindred spirit with a razor-sharp wit and a limitless reserve of amazing stories. Bouncing around from one topic to another, we talk about his friendship with Jimmy Page, my brother's bout with substances, Paul's recent work with David Foster, whose glowing introduction landed me here.

We talk about our mutual friend Steve "Luthaker" ("no, trust me Paul, it's *Lukather*"), and how hanging with Luke was "like being a high school kid all over again." We chat about his old Northern England rivals Gerry and the Pacemakers, an aunt in Liverpool whom I "must visit one day if

you're ever up north," and his early rock influences.

Paul starts playing a Beatle song and I join in on harmony. Looking back, I recall it being "Can't Buy Me Love", but if I'm honest, it's all a bit of a surreal blur.

Four hours fly by. When he walks me to the studio door, he smiles and says, "Any time you're in the UK, give us a bell."

As the lush, green fields of Sussex fly by the limo, a ray of sun lights my face. I catch my smiling reflection in the window. Part of the trick I played on myself to keep from getting overwhelmed was to convince myself, "This ain't no big deal. This happens all the time." But that mental Novocaine is wearing off and I'm shaking my head, laughing, wondering how the hell I got here.

I picture my chubby, insecure 7-year-old self. I wish I could embrace him and reassure him that everything's going to work out. I'd tell that music-obsessed miscreant from a broken home to just hang tough.

There'll be plenty of challenges to come, but one day you'll blast off in a rocket ship built for one. You'll share adventures, sessions, meals, and laughs with your heroes, including Paul McCartney, Elton John, Carole King, and Dan Fogelberg. But more important than rubbing shoulders with them, your front row seat will provide you with a rare view of their creative processes that will inspire you on your own musical mission.

Dark nights of the soul will push you to your limits, but they'll be the necessary fire that will forge you, helping you tune in to your deepest purpose. You'll perform to audiences around the world, have chart-topping albums, PBS specials, and your music will be streamed by millions of fans around the globe.



With Sir Elton at his home outside London.



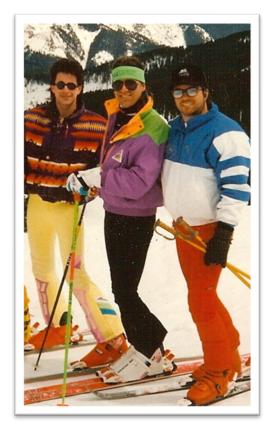
Phil and me at "The Farm"



Pitstop en route to Idaho. Note the gas price.



Dan, Me, Equine.



Todd Pasquin, Dan and me, about to carve some turns in Wolf Creek.



Dan and me, after the long ride to the back side of his property.



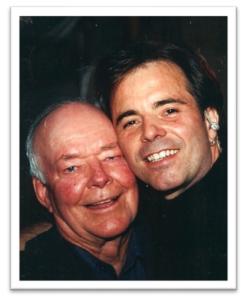
With my "grands" (L-R) Ethan, Jace, Bella and Serena.



Bella looking over (L-R) Serena, Moi, Jason, Ethan, Robin and Jace.



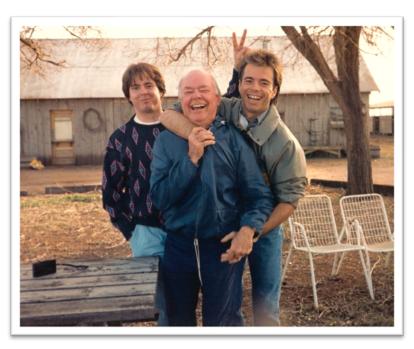
Me dear ol' Mum at the first PBS taping.



Me dear ol' Pop at the first PBS taping.



Sweet pic of sister Jenny \mathcal{C} me – back in the day!



My sweet lil' bro Paul, Dad and I havin' a larf at Dad's farm.



Mom and Dad about to accompany me and band back to LA in Paxton's jet.

Best canine photobomb ever.



Dad and Stepmom Andi – in their wedding outfits!



Claude and me, about to head out for a night on the town.



Dinner with the Genesis lads at their UK studio. (L-R: Phil Collins, Mike Rutherford, Tony Banks, (Unknown).



Backstage with Sir Elton.



Moi with Carole King, after she checked out my MIDI piano. in my North Hollywood apartment.



Sir Pablo, holding a stained-glass piece my mom made for him.



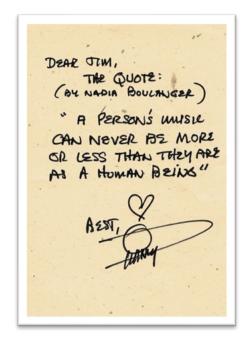
Fun night on the town with Dan Fogelberg at a Beverly Hills awards ceremony.



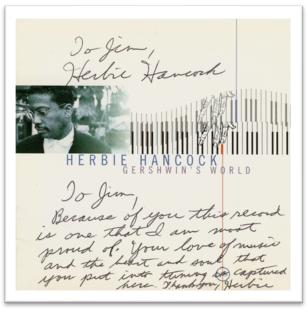
Hitting the slopes with my "Amarillo bro" J.D. Souther.



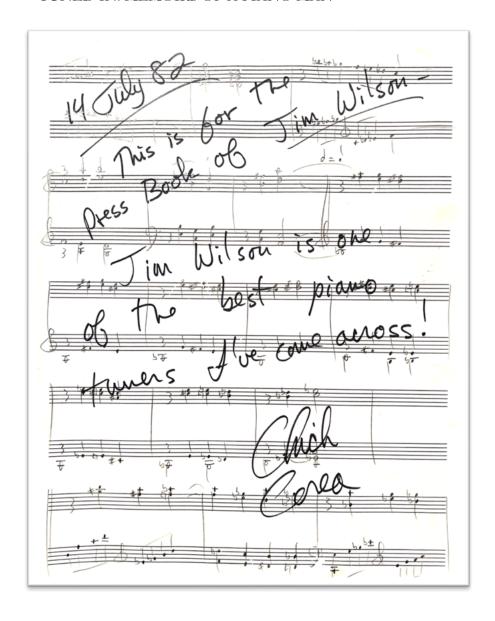
Hangin' with Quincy – a true music legend.

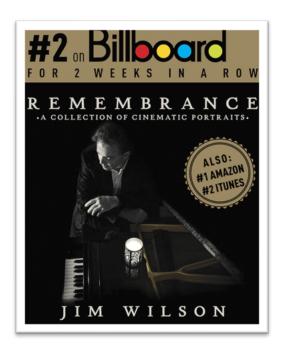


A cherished note from Quincy.



A cherished note from Herbie.







Me and Arlo Guthrie, in front of the church he sings about in "Alice's Restaurant." It's now "The Guthrie Center" – a non-profit organization helping people in need.



Virginia laughing at me mercilessly, for which she no doubt had good reason.



Our ceaseless source of amusement, the Marvelous Ms. Maxie.

About the Author

Jim Wilson's life direction was set when he was given a guitar at age 7, then began composing songs at age 9. Soon after moving from West Texas to LA in his early 20's, he gained notoriety as a respected piano technician, catering to the highest echelon of the music industry. Jim helped develop the first MIDI-adapter for acoustic piano in the 80's, which became an instant hit with artists and studios around the world.

Jim also collaborated with Spectrasonics — a leading innovator of world-class, award-winning virtual instrument software plug-ins — on the release of "Keyscape." Keyscape is a virtual instrument that features the largest selection of unique, collector keyboards in the world and features Jim's personal, customized Yamaha C7.

Four of Jim's 10 recordings have hit the *Billboard* Top-20, he's had two PBS specials, and his music has been streamed over 75 million times by fans around the globe. NARAS recently made him a "Lifetime Member" of the Recording Academy. He enjoys scuba diving, skiing, pilot lessons, and shares the love of traveling with his life companion of fifteen years, Virginia, a gifted actress and film producer. *Tuned In* is Jim's first book.

TUNED IN

The unique confluence of Jim Wilson's two careers — piano technician and confidant to the stars and a globally successful recording artist — has led to exraordinary experiences with some of the world's most exalted music legends: singing Beatle songs with **Paul McCartney**, limo rides with **Elton John**, road trips with **Carole King**, and horseback riding with **Dan Fogelberg**. But beyond this everyman's unique telling of intimate celebrity tales, *Tuned In* is an inspiring story of one man's relentless pursuit of a dream, and a revealing testimony to the power of music in all our lives.

"Tuned In is so much more than I expected.

Jim shares his adventures and experiences...
filling every page with humor and insight...
inspiring and relatable, and will resonate with
anyone who has ever faced adversity in pursuit
of their goals. Highly recommended."

Ray Romano - Emmy-winning Actor

"... A truly fascinating tale about a fascinating man..."

Martin Short - Actor, Comedian, Singer, Writer

"Jim is a genius... Tuned In is fascinating. Who knew?!!"

Barry Manilow - Hall of Fame artist with 85 million albums sold

"... I could not put it down!
Brilliant, funny and touching."

Ed Begley Jr. - Author, Actor, Environmentalist

"His story is enlightening and inspiring..."

Diane Warren - Grammy & Oscar-winning Songwriter

"... a front-row seat to some of the greatest moments in music history."

David Koz - Grammy-winning Recording Artist

