

# Alex Riel

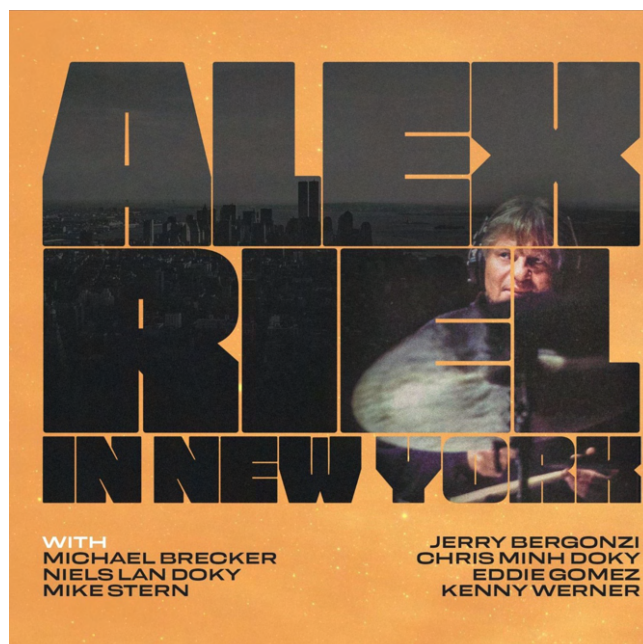
## IN NEW YORK

Stunt Records 2CD

– and in digital distribution

Few people have contributed or meant more to jazz in Denmark and throughout Europe than the former hairdresser from Vanløse, better known to the world as Alex Riel. The now-82-year-old drum icon accompanied virtually every musician who passed through the legendary Jazzhus Montmartre and was exposed to every style and subgenre imaginable. As he developed, Riel realized that playing in different contexts helped him grow musically - rather than being locked into any specific genre or playing with any particular band for too long. Exploring different avenues allowed him to keep his playing fresh and perpetually redefine his vision of what he could be at his very best. Alex still jokes today that he's always got his long-abandoned career as a hairdresser to fall back on. But the funniest part of that joke is that he would never have time for a career change now, as he still plays here, there, and everywhere, even at 82! His ever-boyish grin indicates that he still gets a kick out of playing and keeps audiences on their toes.

For generations, Alex Riel has provided a rhythmic foundation for countless influential musical personalities throughout jazz history. And his influence has not gone unnoticed by the legion of legends he's worked with. Bill Evans wanted to bring him back to the US. Dexter Gordon described him as the best drummer in Europe.



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Just an excerpt from the never-ending list of saxophonists he's played with is nothing short of breathtaking: Ben Webster, Yusef Lateef, Dexter Gordon, Don Byas, Paul Gonsalves, Brew Moore, James Moody, Booker Ervin, Roland Kirk, Stan Getz, Archie Shepp, Charles Lloyd, Benny Golson, Clifford Jordan, Bernt Rosengren, David Murray, Oliver Nelson - the list goes on and on.

And on Riel's recordings from New York, he added two more tenor titans to that list in Michael Brecker and Jerry Bergonzi. The music on ALEX RIEL IN NEW YORK comes from two previously released sessions - UNRIEL in 1997 and RIELATIN' in 1999 - recorded with some of the most celebrated top names of the period, including, in addition to the miraculous meeting of the saxophonists, Mike Stern on guitar, Kenny Werner and Niels Lan Doky on piano, and Eddie Gomez and Chris Minh Doky on bass. Hearing Michael Brecker and Jerry Bergonzi together is a revelation. There's a now-famous story that when asked how it felt to be the greatest tenor player in the world, Brecker replied: "I don't know. Ask Jerry Bergonzi."



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The repertoire consists of jazz standards mixed in with originals by Stern, Lan Doky, and Bergonzi - but there are also a few surprises, like Ben Webster's ear-catching *Did You Call Her Today?* Alex probably learned the song from its composer in Copenhagen many years ago. And although he's never been a man of over-indulgent self-promotion (even as a bandleader), on *In My Own 'Sweets' Way*, he treats us to a wonderful solo tribute to some of his early drumming heroes, including Zutty Singleton, Gene Krupa, and George Wettling. And Alex swings - mightily - all the way. Old-fashioned? Not at all. Apart from the breathtaking playing by the musicians and the exceptional quality of the recordings, listeners also witness a broad spectrum of Alex's preferred tools and forms of expression: solo, duo, trio, quartet, quintet, sextet, sticks, brushes, soft and gentle swells, and smokin', swinging stretches. Who could ask for anything more?

UNRIEL spent a few weeks on the American jazz charts, which was very unusual for European jazz recordings, and it was natural for Alex to continue working with the musicians from the first project a year and a half later. UNRIEL and RIELATIN' are the most significant of all Alex Riel's recordings as a leader, and it's easy to hear why. Astonishing musical interplay and simultaneous respect for tradition are front and center in the communication between some of the most celebrated musicians on Earth. And all in a program covering the full spectrum of intensities, from sweet embraces to energetic barn-burners.

This 2-in-1-CD reissue teaches the new listeners - while reminding those who already knew - that this has been Alex's world and Riel-ity for decades now, and we're just living in it!

***Alex Riel (d), Michael Brecker, Jerry Bergonzi (ts), Mike Stern (g), Kenny Werner / Niels Lan Doky (p), Eddie Gomez / Chris Minh Doky (b)***

***UNRIEL: Gecko Plex / He's Dead Too / On Again Off Again / Amethyst / Bruze / Moment's Notice / Channeling / Invisible Light / Unriel***

***RIELATIN': Did You Call Her Today / Bessie's Blues / Committed / Dexterity / In My Own "Sweets" Way / I Fall in Love Too Easily / The Bat / High Tops / Lille Empum***

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