



## Søren Kristiansen / With A Song In My Heart

Imagine this: What if you were a talented pianist and during a stroll through town you happened to pass by a showroom with the top models of an internationally acclaimed grand piano maker. You walk in, sit down and play a little on one of the models on exhibit. A salesman approaches, nodding in acknowledgement of your performance. He then asks if perhaps you may want to choose the most suitable instrument and return in that weekend to play as long as you feel inclined.

This is – almost – how Søren Kristiansen happened to record this solo CD in the Copenhagen showroom of the Italian piano makers Fazioli. When he returned that weekend, recording gear had been set up and for a few weekends the showroom was transformed into a recording studio of sorts. Although the showroom was closed to customers, life went on as usual outside. Cars and pedestrians passed by; anyone could follow the recording session through the showroom windows – the bell-ringing from a nearby church is faintly heard once on the finished recording.

Søren Kristiansen fell in love with the sound of one of the unique Fazioli grand pianos. The first time he touched the keys, he felt it. Heavy but light, sensitive with almost scary potential for dynamics and a very special timbre of wood. Unaggressive, with a large core of sound - and above all else, with an amazing, clean sound.

But this is not the only exceptional circumstance in a recording that can truly be categorized as smack in the middle of “studio” and “live”. However, the biggest surprise is that on this recording a pianist known for his irresistible swing music explores a musical world best described as minimalism. Normally we would say that Søren Kristianen was inspired by people like Art Tatum, Nat King Cole and Oscar Peterson, but we should add Ran Blake and Paul Bley – and Chopin, Carl Nielsen as well.

45-year old Søren Kristiansen took classical lessons when a child, but he is a self-taught jazz pianist. For years, his extroverted, swinging talent has been a sought-after commodity, mainly with swing-orientated colleagues, with whom he has recorded a long list

of albums, and has performed prolifically at clubs all over Denmark. A humble man, Kristiansen has but release in his own name, VERY EARLY... VERY LATE from 2000 – also on Stunt.

For a number of years, Søren Kristiansen has worked - almost secretly - with a different and more reflective side of his musical talent. For this, his first solo release, he has chosen a repertoire of popular standards, extracting from them unknown facets, as if peeling layers to the innermost essence of the songs – so very little and so very much. The music draws a portrait of an artist unwilling to accept the limitations in the superlatives most often bestowed on him: swinging and virtuosic. His own three contributions on WITH A SONG IN MY HEART are fine examples of ‘the new Søren Kristiansen’. Archipelago is Kristiansen’s musical portrayal of the body of water surrounding the group of islands around Fyn, the birthplace of Carl Nielsen – which is heard in the rich melodic material. However it is also a peaceful place. The ferry ride to the island of Ærø, where Kristiansen was born, puts him in a special frame of mind far from the restless, urbane buzz normally associated with jazz.

And in the same vein: Til te med Art (Tea with Art [Tatum]) concerns itself with expanded harmonies, not a show of rhythmic prowess. He saves the latter for Jeepers Creepers, and indeed the demonstration is so complete, that we may assume that Tatum almost choked on his tea.

Finally, in The Missing Link Blues, Søren Kristiansen shows that the musical waters encompassed by Nat King Cole and Oscar Peterson – which a Danish critic once claimed is a water in which Kristiansen swims with outstanding ease (indeed, it was put forth that he IS the Missing Link) – hold more than we think; for instance an austere, cogent logic which is rare in Cole and Peterson.

Enjoy!

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