

JESPER THILO WITH STRINGS REMEMBERING THOSE WHO WERE



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It has always been the (secret) ambition of most jazz saxophonists to play with strings. Standing on your own in front of a string section is an enormous challenge – usually in a romantic vein. Charlie Parker did it, Stan Getz did it, and naturally Ben Webster did it. Finally Denmark's most popular jazz musician has accepted the challenge. It was a long time coming, but the result is extraordinary. Ole Kock Hansen's arrangements are the perfect foundation for Thilo's mature and balanced performance.

This is different. Very different. If you expect the straightforward, high class swing music that has made Jesper Thilo a household name for decades, REMEMBERING THOSE WHO WERE will come as a surprise. We all think we know the concept of sax and strings inside out – something moody “for lovers”. But no: this release is different, and it would be a good idea to leave your preconceived opinions behind and allow yourself to surrender to this music. REMEMBERING THOSE WHO WERE sets new standards in a sensuous sax and strings summit featuring a mature musician who knows his métier, in collaboration with an extremely competent jazz trio and strings - in arrangements written with just the right modern edge.

- The idea was mine, but at least half the credit goes to Ole Kock Hansen, who wrote the arrangements for me, says Thilo. I produced it, and together we reached a result that makes me very proud. This is the concept that I want to present to people, and hopefully they will enjoy being surprised – listening to music, that they didn't even realize they liked. I dug into a lot of strings and sax recordings from the sixties, when it was really big. But I wanted a modern sound of today instead of Nelson Riddle's or Mantovani's sound. What interests me is music, not clichés. I gave Ole a free rein with the arrangements. He is also a fine composer, and I wanted to include a couple of his originals in addition to the lovely standards.

The title REMEMBERING THOSE WHO WERE, is an unsentimental tribute to all the great Danish and American musicians Thilo has had the pleasure of playing with since his youth: Ben Webster, Eddie Lockjaw

Davis, Harry Sweets Edison, J.C. Higginbotham, Arvid Meyer, Kenny Drew, NHØP, Benny Carter, Johnny Griffin, etc. etc... You name them – Thilo has played with them.

Over the years it has been said of Thilo, that he was somewhat the copyist, and it is true that his enormous technical facility enables him to more or less emulate whomever he chooses. He himself has never felt inhibited by this gift. He feels that a good copy often surpasses a mediocre original. However, the large audiences who follow Thilo at home and abroad will know that he found his own sound a long time ago. Naturally he is still influenced by those who were, but being an exceptional musician, he has incorporated these influences into his own unique expression.

Perhaps this ambitious project was Thilo's way of challenging himself. He alone knows if he found the challenge he was looking for, but there is no doubt that this CD will be a surprise to anyone who thought they knew all there was to know about Denmark's most popular jazz musician. Those who are not quite as familiar with the 67-year old saxophonist and his extraordinary career will be pleasantly surprised at his instrumental dexterity and his enormous interpretive powers.

Jesper Thilo was born in Copenhagen in 1941. He comes from a musical family, graduated from the Royal Conservatory where he studied the clarinet, and at the age of nineteen joined Arvid Meyer's orchestra, with whom he toured all over Scandinavia backing Benny Carter, Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins and many others from the starriest firmament of jazz. Under his early years, he was the leading Danish sax-player in orchestras under the leadership of Thad Jones, Ernie Wilkins, Palle Mikkelborg and Niels Jørgen Steen. In 1977 he was the first recipient of the Ben Webster Award. For 24 years he worked with the Danish Radio Big Band, and has led his own quartets since 1990. He is a great entertainer on stage and the author of a cheerful and anecdotal autobiography. A tall pile of releases documents his musical development through the years.

*Donna Lee / When Sunny Gets Blue / Ghost Of A Chance / Dindi / Cherokee / I Remember
Clifford / Moonlight Serenade / Divertimento / Remembering Those Who Were.*

**Jesper Thilo (ts, ss, cl), Olivier Antunes (p), Bo Stief (b), Frands Rifbjerg (d),
Ole Koch Hansen (arr, con, p) and 15 strings.**



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