

RIEL & PASBORG DRUMFACES



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Two of Denmark's most important drummers in an intense collaboration. The relationship between drum legend Alex Riel and Stefan Pasborg – his junior by a couple of generations – has slowly shifted from teacher and student to colleagues. They have inspired each other for thirty years and spent hours and hours duo drumming. On their new joint effort, DRUMFACES, they pass on their fascination of drumming and its history with energy and love.

Alex Riel was born in Copenhagen in 1940. Since the 1960's he has been considered one of Europe's most important and influential drummers. As house drummer at Copenhagen's legendary jazz club Montmartre with pianists Kenny Drew or Tete Montoliu and bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, he accompanied Ben Webster, Dexter Gordon, Kenny Dorham, Johnny Griffin, Don Byas, Donald Byrd, Stuff Smith, Brew Moore, Yusef Lateef and numerous others. For years Alex Riel has been "first call" for visiting musicians for recording sessions and live performances. The list is almost endless: Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard, Jackie McLean, Archie Shepp, Dizzy Gillespie, Michel Petrucciani, Michael Brecker, Mike Stern, Gary Burton, John Scofield, David Sandborn... we could go on and on. In 1965-66 Riel toured as a regular member of Bill Evans Trio, and he has also led his own groups and trios, which are still active. He was also a cherished drummer in the legendary Danish rock group Savage Rose.

Stefan Pasborg has played drums most of his life and graduated in 2002 as a soloist from Copenhagen's Rhythmic Music Conservatory. His energetic and competent playing has placed him in the elite of young European drummers. He has performed and recorded with John Tchicai, Marc Ducret, Ellery Eskelin, Tomasz Stanko, Ray Anderson, Tim Berne, Palle Danielsson, Anders Jormin, Miroslav Vitous, Michael Formanek, Jesper Zeuthen, Lotte Anker, Peter Friis Mikkelsen and others, and also works with his own groups, Odessa 5 and Ibrahim Electric. He moves freely in the open space of jazz, alternating with equal ease within swing, bebop, rock and free improvisation.

When Stefan Pasborg thinks of Alex Riel, one word comes to mind: Gratitude! "For my third birthday, my godfather Alex gave me a wonderful gift: a Ludwig snare drum and an 18" Paiste 2002 cymbal. That gift changed my life! It was back in 1977, and the birthday gift showed me another side of the funny man", says Stefan in the album's liner notes. He continues, "When I was present at his concerts when I was a child, there was always a certain bond between us. I remember how he would sometimes smile at me after a drum solo, or after playing something especially hip – just to see

if I had noticed. I have so many images of a smiling Alex in my mind's eye. When Alex is on stage he projects so much positive energy and pleasure, and at a very early age I became aware of how much pleasure music can create for the performer and audience alike. And I wanted to project that happiness. Looking back now, 35 years later, I realize that drums have always been part of my life. I feel privileged to have known Alex throughout my childhood and teenage years, and it is a genuine gift to be close to him and play and perform with him in my adulthood.

Alex has known Stefan his whole life. He has watched him grow as a person and as a musician. Alex is not sure if he witnessed Stefan's first steps, but he is fairly certain that he heard his first stroke on a snare drum! Stefan was three and Alex was in his late 30's, and he was at once convinced of his talent. "I would have hated to see it go to waste, so I made him listen to all the drummers that I loved. He came to love them as well, and he became more and more dedicated, he practiced and developed his talent", Alex explains. And contrary to Stefan's mother, Alex was unconcerned when the young boy declared his ambition of becoming a professional drummer. "Stefan's enormous dedication, his natural talent, years of practice and performing have taken him to where he is now: renowned as one of the most competent and unique drummers around. He certainly deserves the recognition. Few can swing and groove like him, and his highly developed ability to feel at home in music without rules or limitations is admirable."

In 2006 Stefan was invited to perform at a drum festival in Lithuania. Stefan invited Alex along – and that is how these two great Danish drummers began their duo concerts. The title track, "Drumfaces" is a recording from that first public performance. Many more followed. Two magical concerts at Copenhagen's Royal Theatre in 2009 were very special, because many important musicians from their respective careers met in one band. "Byen vågner", originally recorded by Alex with Savage Rose, was recorded at one of these concerts. When Alex and Stefan finally decided to record a studio session, they chose to focus on the style and tradition which first brought them together: Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich. They chose tunes associated with this era, but two of Stefan's and Alex's originals and the classic tune Giant Steps fit in perfectly. When performing together, they keep each other on their toes. They don't sound alike, but they are deeply connected through their common sources of inspiration, their friendship and their history together. For both of them, making music together has been a pleasure, a privilege and an adventure, and they and Stunt alike are proud of the end product and of seeing Alex's and Stefan's names side by side on an album cover.

Bernie's Tune / Byen vågner / Big Noise From Winnetka / Lux / Giant Steps / Stalagmites / Lille Empum / Drumfaces.

Alex Riel & Stefan Pasborg, drums; Carsten Dahl (Fender Rhodes); Jeppe Tuxen, organ; Niclas Knudsen, guitar; Verner Pohjola, & Peter Wettre, saxophone; Thomas Fonnesbæk, bass; Thomas Vang, electric bass

Alex Riel/Stefan Pasborg, Drumfaces. STUCD 13122, Stunt Records/Sundance Music.



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