

Malene Mortensen

Can't Help It

Stunt Records



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STUCD 14162



Packages tied with stings, wild geese with the moon on their wings, snowflakes that stay on your nose... These are some of the simple pleasures described in Rogers' and Hammerstein's "My Favorite Things", one of the well-chosen songs on Malene Mortensen's new album, CAN'T HELP IT, a selection of tunes focusing on everyday challenges, small joys and simple pleasures.

Eleven years have passed since Malene Mortensen released her first album at the age of 21. From the very start she worked with great musicians like Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, Alex Riel and Niels Lan Doky. Including Xmas and live releases, CAN'T HELP IT is Malene's ninth album, and the first to be recorded outside of Scandinavia. Recorded in New York in March 2014 with an elite American trio, the album started at a jam session at the Montmartre jazz club in Copenhagen in the summer of 2013, when Malene found herself on stage with the young American pianist Christian Sands. The two of them found common ground in his virtuosity and swinging approach and her voice, musicality and huge improvisational abilities. The chance meeting during the Copenhagen Jazz Festival developed, and later that year Malene visited New York to co-write with the piano star in Christian McBride's famous trio. Tunes flowed, lyrics materialized, and they continued communicating across the Atlantic on choices of standards and arrangements for the planned recording session. Malene and Christian chose a powerful line-up with the young bassist Burniss Earl Travis II from Texas – who records and performs with vocalist Gretchen Parlato, trumpeter Jeremy Pelt and pianist Jacky Terrasson as well as touring with the Robert Glasper Experiment. They decided on the seasoned drum-

mer Terreon Gully, who has played with Dianne Reeves for several years and also accompanied Abbey Lincoln and Lizz Wright among others. They spent a few concentrated days recording CAN'T HELP IT at Systems 3 Studio in Brooklyn. A fine conglomeration of old and new, ranging from Fats Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose" and other American standards to Malene Mortensen/Christian Sands originals, a song by Paul Banks and a Stevie Wonder tune. The post-recording and mixing was done by Flemming Rasmussen at Sweet Silence Studio in Elsinore, and the finished product confirms, that it was very fortunate indeed that Malene chose to visit Montmartre that summer evening... Malene's vocals soar and the trio is full of vitality on an album balancing lovely ballads and funkier selections. Malene's vocal expression develops constantly. The days when she was a promising young talent are long gone; her voice has many colors, her phrasing grows ever more challenging, and her timbre expands with each new release. Malene is an artist of international stature; she has passed the stage of youthful weltsmerz. Today she can encompass and express all the positive things as well – which isn't always as easy as it sounds. Over the past ten years - while taking her Master and Soloist degrees from The Rhythmic Conservatory in Copenhagen – Malene Mortensen has performed on jazz stages in virtually every European country, the Middle East, USA, Australia and large parts of Asia with her own trio, as vocalist with big bands or featured guest in various setups – most recently on tour with Kid Creole & The Coconuts. Now we - and the rest of the world – may look forward to hearing live performances of the songs from CAN'T HELP IT - hopefully joined by Christian Sands.

Malene Mortensen (voc, g), Christian Sands (p, keys), Burniss Earl Travis II (b), Terreon Gully (d) + Paul Banks (g).

Honeysuckle Rose / Alone Together-Sweet Solitude/ Alfie / I Can't Help It / Every Day/The Rest Of Mine / The Heat And Flames / Beneath The Endless Blue / My Favorite Things/Summer Haze.

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