

Ole Kock Hansen & Thomas Fønnesbæk

FINE TOGETHER / / NORDIC MOODS

Stunt Records



Stunt Records CD
STUCD 15182



In Scandinavia we have light summer nights, high taxes, new Scandinavian cuisine and polar bears in the streets - well, perhaps not the latter. And in recent years we have had something else as well, which - at least in non-Scandinavian ears - binds us together: A Scandinavian sound in jazz.

However, this phenomenon - despite its prominence in international jazz debates - is ambiguous, because when listening to jazz associated with the folk idioms of each Scandinavian country, the differences are evident. Norwegian music conveys images of hills and mountains and dramatic fjords, Swedish music is always tinted with a touch of melancholia, the Atlantic roars through the music of Iceland, and Danish music often feels like a gleam of sunlight filtering through fresh green beech leaves. On this album the two musicians perform music from several Scandinavian countries, and those with knowledge of the geography, nature and cultures in the various countries, will hear the difference. But more than anything else, they play improvised music - jazz - of the finest kind.

Pianist, arranger and bandleader Ole Kock Hansen (b.1945) grew up on the west side of the island of Zealand close to his childhood friend Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (NHØP). They retained a life-long friendship and collaborated on countless projects. In the early 1960's he became a member of the Radio Jazz Group and subsequently the Danish Radio Big Band, with whom he worked for three

decades. He wrote for and was head conductor for the orchestra for long periods. He has played piano with a wide range of Danish jazz musicians and accompanied Ben Webster, Dexter Gordon, Thad Jones, Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh among many others. He won the Jazz Musician of the Year award in 1975 and the Ben Webster Prize in 1986.

Thomas Fønnesbæk (b.1977) began playing bass at the age of 12 and studied with Bo Stief and NHØP. From the late 1990's he became a very popular freelance bassist, recording and performing with a long list of Danish and international musicians and appearing on more than 100 albums. He is active in pianists Thomas Clausen's and Lars Jansson's trios, and most recently his duo work with vocalist Sinne Eeg [Eeg/Fønnesbæk - Stunt Records] has received great reviews. He is first call whenever Montmartre or other clubs need an accompanist for the best international artists.

Ole Kock Hansen and Thomas Fønnesbæk represent two generations in Danish jazz. Kock Hansen is a seasoned musician. He has worked extensively as an arranger and bandleader, and put his own indelible mark on Danish jazz music since the 1960's - not least as a pioneer in incorporating the Danish musical heritage in jazz. Fønnesbæk is much younger. He has become very well established through a brilliant technique and the manner in which he - in his own musical language - builds on the tradition that Kock Hansen's generation founded.



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Both musicians have a special connection to deceased bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, whom for many years made Danish jazz and Copenhagen's jazz club Montmartre world famous. Kock Hansen was his close collaborator for decades – especially in bringing forth a Danish folk tone in jazz. Fonnesbæk could not possibly get around him as one of his inspirational models. The selection of themes on this CD also lead to NHØP, as he was often called. Several pieces were composed by him and others are mainstays in the repertoire he and Kock Hansen played at their many concerts together.

But this album is not a tribute to NHØP. Although NHØP played a large role in Danish jazz and in the lives of both of the musicians, and thus in some way must affect what they play today, the influence is no different from what all musicians experience from colleagues with whom they have played or whose work they have heard during their professional life.

Ole Kock Hansen's playing has continued to develop since NHØP's death in 2005 – just listen to the art of his harmonization on this release – and Fonnesbæk has created his own grounded bass sound, darker than most others - including NHØP. And these two things should be your focus point when listening to this music: Kock Hansen's rich harmonizations and sparkling right hand in these often simple themes, and Fonnesbæk's dark, elastic tone congenially gluing the music rhythmically.

Some people evade jazz, because they feel that its element of improvisation makes it "complicated". But as in all other art forms, the beauty in simplicity becomes ever more evident to us when in the hands of interpreters who understand how far – or particularly how short – the distance can be between complexity and simplicity. These two musicians have a rich understanding of this.

And so, they demonstrate that Scandinavian music is so much more than the sound of tranquil, light summer nights.

Ole Kock Hansen, piano. Thomas Fonnesbæk, bas.

O, TYSTA ENSAMHET / SOFDU, UNGA ÁSTIN (Trad.) / DEN STØRSTE SORG I VERDEN HER ER DOG AT MISTE DEN, MAN HAR KÆR (Trad.) / JEG GIK MIG UD EN SOMMERDAG Trad. / NATTEN ER SÅ STILLE (C. E. F. Weise) / FINE TOGETHER (Lars Gullin) / THOSE WHO WERE (Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen) / BELL (Leo Mathisen) / NOCTURNE (Evert Taube) / MY LITTLE ANNA (Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen) / ALTID FREJDIG, NÅR DU GÅR (C.E.F. Weyse) / EN S JÖMAN ÄLSKAR HAVETS VÅG (Trad.) / SPRING WALTZ (Thomas Fonnesbæk) / UNCHARTED LAND (Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen) / BLUES FOR THE LION (Ole Kock Hansen) / AFSTED, AFSTED! I DANSKE HELTE (Trad.).

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