

US4

MY SCANDINAVIAN BLUES A TRIBUTE TO HORACE PARLAN

Stunt Records



Stunt Records CD
STUCD 16012



When the American pianist Horace Parlan (b.1931) came to Denmark in the early 1970's, he arrived in an open-minded country. Not only the music was scene unreserved and inviting, the atmosphere of the Danish society was respectful and welcoming to newcomers. Justice and stability were prominent values, and foreigners experienced open doors.

This was contrasted by the USA that Horace Parlan had left. The rat race in New York was grueling. Racial discrimination was nothing a black musician would miss.

Throughout the approximately forty years Horace Parlan has spent in Denmark, one can still wonder how this smiling, sweet man with the almost Buddhist patience and humor, can be the hard-swinging pianist who appeared on Blue Note records from the '60s, and who energized the first, legendary Charles Mingus band in 1957. His calm, reflective manner and his special aura attract people. Everyone flocked around him – Clark Terry, Yusef Lateef, Ernie Wilkins, Dexter Gordon, Ed Thigpen, Kenny Drew – every jazz musician, local or from “over there”.

Horace Parlan's story is a fairy tale. Against all odds, he overcame a polio disability that had paralyzed his whole right side - including the fingers of his right hand - by training with various piano teachers from the age of eight. When his interest for jazz awakened after practicing classical etudes,

he invented his own original technique, which made his playing rhythmically and harmonically unique.

Horace Parlan's story describes a trip that has taken him from Pittsburgh to the hottest jazz circles in New York to a small house in the Danish countryside surrounded by cackling hens and purring cats, and finally to a friendly retirement home where the personnel spoil the nearly blind and paralyzed 85-year old.

In Denmark, Parlan found a safe and comfortable haven with work and ample opportunity to live out his musical dreams. But most importantly, Horace's Scandinavian fairy tale gave him Norma. The love of his life, with whom he experienced good times in Copenhagen filled with success, lots of jazz, and a wealth of international musicians. And together he and Norma retreated from city life to enjoy a quieter life in the country.

This project is evidence of the admiration and warmth surrounding Parlan. The repertoire consists of his original compositions from as far back as 1960 to 1999, and performed by three of Denmark's finest musicians and one of Parlan's fellow Americans – and on two tracks augmented by Denmark's finest female vocalist Sinne Eeg, who is rapidly becoming an international star in her own name. Each of them were specifically chosen by Horace Parlan for this project.



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Europe's great tenor saxman Tomas Franck (b. 1958) is in a groovy blues mood. He is the epitome of a "born jazz musician". He does not play jazz music – he lives jazz. Born in Sweden, he has resided in Copenhagen the better part of his professional life.

Thomas Clausen (b. 1949) is one of the most important Danish pianists. His powerful and original playing and his artistic oeuvre embrace a myriad of genres. At the age of twenty, Thomas' professional career kick-started when he began accompanying Dexter Gordon and many other popular visiting artists including Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Ben Webster, Joe Henderson, Gary Burton, Lee Konitz and Dizzy Gillespie.

Bassist Jimmi Roger Pedersen (b. 1955) has a wonderful, rich bass sound, somewhere between Charlie Haden and Eberhard Weber. His technique and his musical presence have made him a popular sideman. For 15 years he toured with Horace Parlan, and he has backed many prominent artists including Benny Bailey, Al Grey and Lee Konitz.

American drummer Adam Nussbaum (b. 1955) drives the quartet as only he can. Throughout his career he has played with just about everybody!

"I am very satisfied with what the quartet has done with my old tunes from before I settled in Europe", says Parlan. "They are from my time with Blue Note... and many of them have never been performed live, only at studio sessions with the American groups, and it's really fun to hear them again after all these years. The more recent tunes have been vitalized as well. Yes, I am very satisfied. And grateful that the band was able to find the same feeling I myself like and have lived for. They are all amongst the greatest."

Parlan has a good basis for comparison, because he has played with the greatest: Dexter, Mingus, Booker Erwin, Turrentine, Griffin, "Lockjaw" Davis, Clark Terry, Rollins, Thad Jones, Chet Baker, Archie Shepp and many more.

The quality of this recording crowns Parlan's fairy tale with a jewel. Parlan himself chose all 11 tunes from his back catalogue, and every one is in his special, reflective blues mode. The title came naturally: MY SCANDINAVIAN BLUES.

Just when Norma and Horace were getting ready to enjoy a quiet old age, bad financial advice turned their economy from stable to disastrous, and when they moved to an old age home, their savings were practically gone. Now a widower, Parlan decided to use his last money well: in a manner that might benefit the music scene and especially young musicians. This is the background for MY SCANDINAVIAN BLUES. Horace Parlan's last savings have financed the project. It is his hope that the project may generate a profit to lend a helping hand to keep jazz swinging.

Parlan has bequeathed his rights to the Ben Webster Foundation, which annually awards a monetary prize to a musician of importance to Danish Jazz. "I want to give something back and contribute to helping the music continue. So musicians can play, can survive and not lose faith. My music belongs to the musicians. Today, their circumstances are harder than when I came here", says Horace Parlan.

The project grew with Volker Schöwerling, who matched Horace's compositions with images. The German photographer became fascinated by Horace's story and created six short music videos.

*Tomas Franck (tenor sax), Thomas Clausen (piano), Jimmi Roger Pedersen (bass),
Adam Nussbaum (drums) + Sinne Eeg (vocal)**

Producer: Horace Parlan

DVD: Volker Schöwerling

All music by Horace Parlan / lyrics on Norma & Little Ester by Susie Scaigg

CD: Us Three (1960) / Heading South (1962) / Norma (1972) / In The Spur Of The Moment (1961) / One For Wilton (1980) / Arrival (1991) / Broken Promises (ca. 1991) / Little Esther* (ca.1988) / Opus 16A (ca. 1987) / Wadin' (1960) / Party Time (1999).*

DVD: Heading South / Us Three / Arrival / One For Wilton / Broken Promises. OBS en mangler !!!

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