

Rudy Smith Quartet

GLASS WORLD

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Stunt Records

“Rudy Smith has created a marriage between the most important Afro Caribbean invention in the world of musical instruments, the steelpan, with the most important Afro American musical contribution, jazz. More than that, he has developed a solo style of steelpan playing, which is completely his own. His technique is dazzling. But it is not a matter of mere virtuosity. Rudy Smith’s playing bears the same mark of astonishing inventiveness that created the steelpan.” (Krister Malm)

The pan family was invented in the middle of the 20th century. Despite their short history, they have ancient roots in West African music: the ballophone, the kora and the sanza. Relatives in European music are the vibraphone, the marimba and the xylophone. Originally made from oil barrels, the steelpan was invented in Trinidad during the Second World War. From 1944 to the early 1960’s, steelpans underwent a process involving various tunings, experiments with materials, and new types of pans ranging from soprano to bass. In Trinidad, pans have been closely associated with the carnival season.

For 35 years, unknown to most Danes, a musical legend has resided in Denmark: steelpan player and pianist Rudy Smith (b.1943). He is acknowledged as the man, who in the mid-1960’s transformed the steelpan to a jazz instrument and became the role model for soloists on the instrument like Othello Molineaux and Anise Hadeed. His virtuosic and original playing, which draws on inspiration from Milt Jackson, Bach and John Coltrane, may be heard on several releases in his own name. A genuine jazz musician, Smith has created his own unique style and sound. He has toured most of the world either with his quartet, as a soloist, a steel band arranger, or as a pan tuner and pan maker. In 2006 and 2008 he performed at New York’s Lincoln Center in a program with many of the greatest acts in calypso and steel band music. Since 1983 he has led his own quartet playing alto pan with Ole Matthiessen on piano, Ole Streenberg on drums and – since 1996 – Henrik Dyrbye on bass.

Rudy Smith (steel pan), Ole Matthiessen (piano), Henrik Dyrbye (bass), Ole Streenberg (drums), Jesper Løvdal (tenor sax), Bjarne Roupe (guitar)

Stand By / Blues For Rasta Prasta / One For Bent / Body And Soul / Old Lady Walk One Mile And A Half / Spanish Sparrow / Coming Home / Glassworld / Waiting For The New One.

STUCD 17082 – Rudy Smith Quartet – GLASS WORLD – CD + Digital.

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Streenberg has been the drummer in bands led by Dexter Gordon, Kenny Drew, Carsten Meinert, Bent Jædig, Tomas Franck, the jazz/rock group Secret Oyster, and has accompanied many visiting American jazz musicians. Dyrbye has played with Streenberg since their teens – a unique rhythm group unit with 60 years of experience. Matthiessen has played with Streenberg in various constellations since they were members of the Carsten Meinert quartet in 1967. Since 2007, he has released four Stunt CDs with his own music. Streenberg plays drums on the latest, “Flashbacks & Dedications” (Stunt STUCD 16042).

Two guests join the quartet on some tracks. Bjarne Roupé is a Swedish guitarist, living in Denmark. Hear his own quartet on “Light And Dark” (Stunt STUCD 13102). Tenor saxophonist Jesper Løvdal has been active on the Danish jazz scene for 30 years, as well as being chairman of the Jazz Danmark organization.

Ole Matthiessen wrote six of the nine compositions on the cd, Rudy Smith Blues for Rasta Prasta. Old Lady Walk One Mile and a Half is a calypso evergreen, which is featured here as a jazz tune. Last, but not least a version of the great ballad Body and Soul.

A Danish saxophonist once said that the sound of steel drums made the fillings pop out of your teeth. Something similar was once said of vibraphonist Lionel Hampton’s first recordings. Rudy Smith and Lionel Hampton have long ago put these prejudices to shame.

Let the last statement be the words of a true giant of Danish jazz: “I have been a secret fan of Rudy’s for many years – from the moment I first heard him, I have been raving about his incredible musicianship, his impeccable taste and soulful phrasing. He and Toots Thielemans, who both make you forget the insurmountable technical difficulties inherent in their respective instruments, belong to my personal gallery of heroes along with Louis, Duke, Bird, Stuff, Stan, Dizzy and a few that you probably never heard of.” Svend Asmussen



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Sundance Music ApS Gothersgade 107 1123 Copenhagen K Denmark
T: +45 3333 8720 www.sundance.dk sundance@sundance.dk