

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Blake Tartare "More Like Us" (Stunt Records)
CD Release - Spring 2006



Produced by Michael Blake
Mixed by Teddy Kumpel and Scott Harding

Michael Blake - tenor and soprano saxophones,
clarinet, bass clarinet, flute
Soren Kjaergaard - piano, wurlitzer and effects
Jonas Westergaard - acoustic bass
Kresten Osgood - drums

Special Guests: Maria Laurette-Friis - vocals
Jane Scarpantoni - cello
Steven Bernstein - slide trumpet
Teddy Kumpel - guitar and baritone guitar
Jeppe Kjellberg - guitar

Jazz - the musical embodiment of freedom and individualism - is getting a good dose of fresh air these days. In an era when a saturated market often leaves fans lost in a myriad of choices, the visionary NYC based saxophonist Michael Blake and his Danish quartet are contributing their own perspective on things. And it's a very positive view - uncompromising yet accessible - Blake's band is rocking the international jazz world. By utilizing both graceful lyricism and expressive free-jazz, they strive to play social music that defies categorization. Blake Tartare has developed a great rapport, building a repertoire that focuses on Blake's heartfelt compositions, free-jazz diversions and most importantly - a group sensibility of their own making.

"More Like Us" is perhaps Blake's greatest recording to date. This group is one of the few true "bands" playing contemporary jazz (improvised music, spontaneous composition or whatever you want to call it!) today. Josephine Ochej's review of their Vancouver Jazz Festival appearance gushes, "*Indeed, you can see these guys LIVE to play, and you can absolutely tell they've been playing together for years now. You get the sense there is nothing else and they want nothing else. They're in it body and soul and never for under 100 per cent.*"

The arrangements were written by Blake in advance of the recording session but most of the music was new to the Danes and "More Like Us" contains a number of firsts for Blake. This is the first recording Michael has done with a vocalist. The Danish singer-songwriter Maria Laurette-Friis blends beautifully with Michael's horn on *Hush* and *Maria*. She also contributes the quirky original *To Whom It May Concern*. John Lurie's bouncy *Happy Old Yoy* - an incredibly catchy tune that Blake and guest star Steven Bernstein recorded numerous times with the Lounge Lizards - has never been released until now. The biggest surprise here may be Michael's vocal debut on the bad boy reggae classic *Johnny Too Bad*. Teddy Kumpel (who mixed their debut album) returns to bring us more of his fine guitar work. Jane Scarpantoni - another former Lizard - weaves the engaging *Hush* into something lush and Jeppe Kjellberg grabs a brief but poignant moment to shine on *Happy Old Yoy*.

The Story

Founded in 2000, *Blake Tartare* began playing around Copenhagen's historic Christiania enclave. In 2002 they struck out on their first tour in Italy and Denmark. The following year Tartare performed for a week at the Copenhagen Jazz Festival. In 2004 they toured the Canadian Jazz Festival circuit with the help of grants provided by The Canada Council for the Arts and The Danish Jazz Federation. Following that the boys played in Copenhagen where they recorded live for Danish National Radio. Upon hearing that recording Soren Friis at Stunt Records sought to release the groups first self-produced CD for the public. After recording "More Like Us" they tore it up at the Berlin Jazz Festival and toured Italy again. This past summer *Blake Tartare* performed at the Aarhus Jazz Festival, Rome Jazz Festival and other reputable jazz parties.

Press

Blake Tartare has garnered a tremendous amount of positive press in Europe, Canada and the United States. Here are some highlights of that coverage:

"When the three Danish musicians he had befriended and with which he had formed an ad hoc group arrived in New York City on a grant shortly after the terrorist attacks, he (Blake) wasn't to eager to get to work. But the trio had no such hesitation, and immediately began working. "They drew me out and I wrote a bunch of new music and they were there to play it," Blake said. Before they returned to Denmark Blake Tartare cut an album. The experience not only energized the saxophonist but altered his whole outlook. "It's been great to have Blake Tartare as an outlet, that band's taught me to just let things happen on stage or in the studio, with a lot more improvising," he said. "What was free to me 10 years ago now seems constrained; I was a control freak."
Peter Margasak, Downbeat Magazine, March 2005

"I LOVE this band; their commitment to play their hearts out and their asses off is without reproach. They're hardcore, and so *there* every step of the way. As well as being a stunning player, Blake is a terrific composer of emotionally-charged music; he's got a serious gift for establishing mood, uninhibited grooves and for suspending tension through wildfire and slow-burn tempos alike - and maintaining it set long. The combination of the Copenhagen Connection's play-with-wild-abandon, raw-edged young talent, Blake's more-seasoned, yet able to unleash a torrent of gut-felt passion playing and his moving compositions is astonishingly magnetic. Still don't believe me? How about Tim Berne and Mark Feldman near the side of the stage digging it? Or how about that after the hour flew by, many in the crowd rose to their feet instantly (at a free show!) while the rest roared their approval and then further indicated their enthralment at the edge of the stage mobbing the hometown boy and the CD table."
Josephine Ochej - 2004 Vancouver International Jazz Festival - All About Jazz

"There's something lusty in the horn lines of the Brooklyn saxophonist, and if a Danish rhythm section can't bring it to the fore, who can? Don't buy into the "raw" aspect of the moniker, they are well seasoned."
Jim Macnie previews a NY show in The Village Voice, October 2003

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