

Thomas Clausen Trio

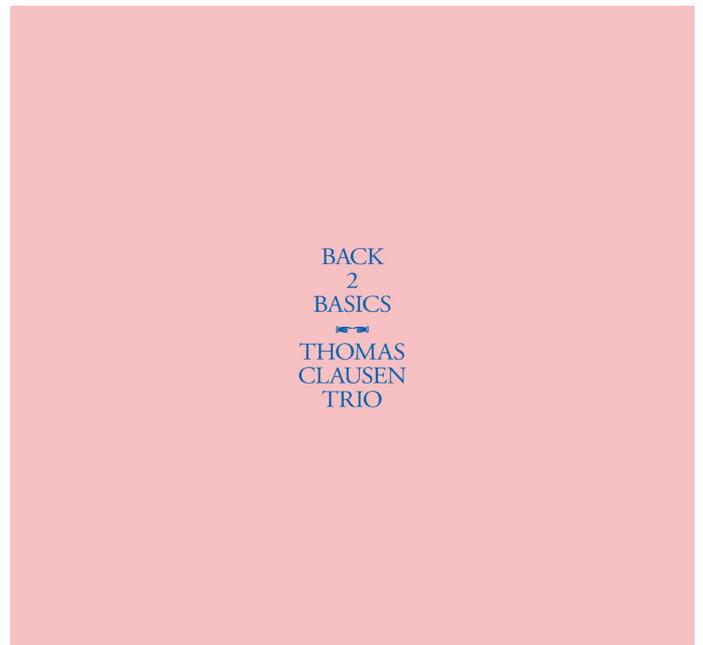
BACK2BASICS

Full album release on CD, Vinyl and Digital
18th of June

Stunt Records

The now 72-year-old pianist Thomas Clausen is not a new character in the story of Danish jazz. He's been a key contributor and participant in its development since his arrival on the scene in the early 1970s as a fresh-faced 20-something. In the decades since, he has been a member of a number of important bands, and has spread his wings as a composer – working with everything from big bands to choirs, as well as chamber and theater music.

At this point in his long and winding career, it's more of a challenge to come up with a genre or musical medium to which he *hasn't* yet applied his agile fingers. He's played bebop with the likes of Dexter Gordon and Johnny Griffin. He checked out and soaked up Bill Evans, European modernism, and the fusion wave – all in major ways. He's gone head-to-head with vibraphonist Gary Burton in masterful melodic interplay. He's conducted and recorded with his Brazilian Quartet... and so much more. Clausen has been all over the map in projects large and small, as a respected leader and a leading-sideman.



Thomas Clausen's Trio is a living, evolving entity in Danish jazz. In its first iteration with Niels Henning Ørsted Petersen and Aage Tanggaard in the 1980s, the young pianist established himself as a true Great Dane. Since then, most of the leading Danish rhythm-section players have done time in one or more of his ever-changing trios. In 2006, he formed his fourth (and current) trio with bassist Thomas Fønnesbæk and drummer Karsten Bagge.

It was the same year that the trio would release *BACK TO BASICS* – an album that celebrates the legacy of the classic acoustic jazz piano trio with a repertoire of jazz standards, appropriately enough. The recording was and remains critically acclaimed, still as intense and fresh today as it was upon its release all those years ago.

Now, 15 years later, Clausen gives us *BACK 2 BASICS* – with the same swinging crew whose collective identity has become even more luminous,



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clarified, and mature as they survived and thrived through the performances in the interim.

We're reintroduced to bassist Thomas Fonnesbæk, who is a true technical virtuoso while also being as unmovably solid as a mountain, and drummer Karsten Bagge, who plays with a subtle virtuosity himself, enhancing his bandmates with his trademark responsive elegance and discreet swing without ever distracting from the group's mission. Once again, Thomas Clausen proves that he is a master at turning well-known tunes upside down and inside out, reaching an emotional range from meandering melancholy to extroverted swing.

Clausen doesn't waste time or emotional energy worrying himself on whether music is *modern* or *old-fashioned*. In his own words, he is "more interested in quality – whether it sounds good and whether it swings. I can sit with some Debussy and go over to Ellington... a good chord from one of them or Bill Evans. There's no distance between them. I create my own synthesis." And now more than ever, with a continuously-developing left hand and crave to swing.

This recording was made during a period of pandemic closures, when Copenhagen Radio Jazz and the Ben Webster Foundation opened the MillFactory Studios for a series of small concerts,

without a live audience, though with unrestrained enthusiasm. "We recorded on the big Steinway D which has enormously long bass strings, and so much fullness in the high register that you don't have to play a lot of notes. One can feel each and every tone sing. The music was recorded as if it was a *real* concert, with the songs in the specific order I had planned and the same order that they're presented on the album."

Thomas Clausen, Thomas Fonnesbæk, and Karsten Bagge are at home creating nothing less than fine trio art on both a basic and distinguished level. Piano, bass, drums, and some good standards from the old songbook... realized and reimagined by three musicians who are able to listen to each other and explore with an exquisitely developed intuitive interplay. That's what BACK 2 BASICS is all about. Lucky listeners are transported into the still-reverberating moments of improvisatory creation thanks to great microphones and machines that do justice to the sounds and personalities of the musicians and their instruments.

These are all *first takes* – where spontaneity was prioritized over perfection on a recording that adhered to a set of dogmatic rules and where intimacy and closeness have been appropriately captured. In other words, Thomas Clausen's trio once again returns to their foundation - BACK 2 BASICS!

Thomas Clausen (piano), Thomas Fonnesbæk (bass), Karsten Bagge (drums)

How Deep Is the Ocean?/Walkin'/Nature Boy/Bloodcount/It Could Happen to You/Edelweiss/Invitation/Vem Kan Segla Förutan Vind/You Must Believe In Spring/You And The Night And The Music

CD: STUCD 21042, LP: STULP 21041, Thomas Clausen Trio, Back2Basics, Stunt Records, Sundance Music ApS.



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