

PRESS RELEASE

Malene Mortensen & Christian Sands

Malene & Christian

- Released on LP, CD and in digital distribution

The story of MALENE & CHRISTIAN begins in 2014, when Danish vocalist and songwriter Malene Mortensen (b. 1982) first crossed paths with American pianist Christian Sands (b. 1989). Sands, then one of jazz's fastest-rising stars, was invited by the legendary Jazzhus Montmartre in Copenhagen to perform with bassist Thomas Fonnesbæk and the late drummer Alex Riel. Mortensen, already an established artist with an international following and a discography featuring collaborations with Alex Riel, NHØP, Niels Lan Doky, Chris Potter, Mike Stern, and Avishai Cohen, soon joined forces with Sands in New York. Their 2015 recording CAN'T HELP IT captured the spark of that meeting.

Nearly a decade later, in 2024, Stunt Records and Mortensen reached out to Sands once more. By then, he had become an acclaimed bandleader, composer, and arranger, performing with the likes of Christian McBride, who once gave him the enduring advice: *"Be yourself. Don't adapt your music to what you think people want to hear."*

Reunited in Copenhagen in 2025, Mortensen and Sands created MALENE & CHRISTIAN—a new album blending original compositions and lyrics with fresh interpretations of standards. Sands not only performs but also produces and arranges, shaping a project that feels both intimate and expansive.



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Mortensen reflects:

"Lyrics are decisive for me. What do they say, and can I relate to them? Can I find the emotions inside and express them in my own way?"

That emotional honesty is rooted in shared personal experience. Both artists entered the project in the wake of breakups—Sands processing his on an acclaimed 2024 release, *EMBRACING DAWN* (Jazzwise praised it as *"a voyage of recovery from loss, separation, and sadness"*), and Mortensen navigating a rupture close to home.

"It can tear your life apart," she says. "But the music is also about the crises we all face, and the fact that there's something on the other side. The light returns. Music can take people who are in crisis by the hand."

Her original song *Weight & Sea* captures that duality:

"Behind the clouds and the stormy weather / there's always a clear blue sky ... but I can't fly, and I cannot see the sky."

The core quartet—Mortensen (vocals), Sands (piano), Thomas Ovesen (bass), and Rasmus Kihlberg (drums)—built the music through an

open, organic process, refining it across three concerts before entering the studio. Sands notes the unique Scandinavian jazz tradition, particularly the “*big, warm sound*” of Danish bassists, praising Ovesen’s foundation and harmonic imagination. Kihlberg, a Swedish drummer celebrated for his melodic sensibility and collaborations with Viktoria Tolstoy and Sylvia Vrethammar, adds both structure and lyricism.

The album also embraces a wider circle of international voices, including American arranger

Yuma Sung alongside string players Villads Littauer Bendixen and Lara Biancalana, American trumpeter Benny Benack III, Cuban/Danish Percussionist Eliel Lazo, Hungarian/Danish Tenor saxophonist Gabor Bolla (Hungary/Denmark), and Danish harmonica virtuoso Mathias Heise.

Together, they create a musical universe that balances strength and vulnerability, tradition and renewal—an album that is both a reunion and a new beginning.

*WEIGHT AND SEA / FOREVER / GO AWAY LITTLE BOY / I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TIME IT WAS /
LIFE IS OKAY / LAST NIGHT I HAD THE STRANGEST DREAM / TRANSIENT DREAMS /
REACHING FOR THE SUN / IF YOU WANT THE RAINBOW.*

Malene Mortensen (vocal), Christian Sands (piano), Thomas Ovesen (bass), Rasmus Kihlberg (drums).
Guests: Villads Littauer Bendixen (violins), Lara Biancalana (cello), Mathias Heise (Harmonica), Benny Benack III (trumpet), Gabor Bolla (tenorsax), Eliel Lazo (perc).

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STUNT RECORDS

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