

Mariane Bitran – Makiko Hirabayashi Quartet feat. Bob Rockwell GREY TO BLUE

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It would be a cliché to say that the world gets smaller and smaller every day. Jazz has always been a forum in which players can meet without musical prejudice. It is also quite natural for five musicians from different countries to make Denmark their home. However, it is remarkable that they now find themselves in the same group. Flutist Mariane Bitran is French, pianist and keyboard player Makiko Hirabayashi is Japanese, tenor saxophonist Bob Rockwell is American, bassist Erik Olevik is Swedish and drummer Morten Lund is Danish.

The music composed by Mariane Bitran and Makiko Hirabayashi is an inspiring basis for ensemble playing and improvisation. The music is easy to listen to but original. Flute and tenor sax is not an everyday constellation, but then again, you don't hear a group consisting of five different nationalities every day either.

Mariane Bitran and Makiko Hirabayashi met in Copenhagen, and brought their own distinct cultural backgrounds in jazz and world music into this collaboration. The sound of Mariane's various flutes – including the percussive African flute, the Chinese wooden flute and the mysterious alto flute – provided the inspiration to write original music for an acoustic group. Their recipe for dynamic and interesting quartet music lies in the contrasting double bass and translucent flutes supplemented with textures and sounds from the piano and drums. Morten Lund's and Erik Olevik's imaginative and energetic playing lend this music a tension which opens the door to creative dialogue. The compositions are also inspired by Mariane's French roots and Makiko's Asian background, and by classical music and modern jazz. GREY TO BLUE provides the rare opportunity of hearing Bob Rockwell in a different, open and experimental setting, which profits from his experience, powerful playing, energy and dynamic sense.

Mariane Bitran received her musical education in Paris. Her professional career started in 1981, and since 1998 it has continued in Denmark (and France). Other collaborations include projects with Pernille Bervort, Simon Spang-Hanssen, Benita Haastруп,

the Togolese guitarist and composer Alain Dodji Apaloo and the Icelandic vocalist Nina Björk Eliason. Her French projects have included Mountain Quintet, Zoomtop Orchestra (with Richard Bona), Olivier Cahours 4tet, Paris Flute Orchestra and Flute Unlimited. Mariane Bitran has two previous releases out on STUNT Records, "A Place For You" and "All One".

Born in Japan in 1966, Makiko Hirabayashi began playing classical piano at the age of four. She has studied jazz at Berklee College of Music in Boston and is a graduate from The Rhythmic Conservatory in Copenhagen. She has performed and recorded with numerous orchestras in jazz and world music including Sisters and Morild. Her own

Makiko Hirabayashi Trio includes Klavs Hovman (b) and Marilyn Mazur (dr & perc). Their acclaimed debut recording was released on the German Enja label in 2006. In 1995 Sisters won three prizes at European Jazz Contest in Belgium: Best Arrangement, Most Popular Band and 3rd Prize – General Performance. Makiko has performed in most of Europe, in Japan with her own group Third Floor and in South Africa with Sisters.

Tenor saxophonist Bob Rockwell is going on 25 years as a 'Dane'. Following a tour with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, the then 38-year old American decided that the time was ripe for change of scene. Born in Minneapolis, Rockwell taught himself to play saxophone, but after a spell with local rock bands, he was smitten with the jazz bug. Via Las Vegas, he landed in New York in the late 70's, where he joined groups with Freddie Hubbard, Tito Puente, Billy Hart and Marc Johnson.

In Denmark, he soon became an integrated and popular part of the Danish scene. He has led his own groups, held a seat in the Danish Radio Big Band, been a member of the organ trio Organizers – plus a long list of other activities. He has toured most of Europe, Japan and USA in collaborations including with pianist Ben Sidron. He has released CD's on Steeple Chase. His two most recent, "Bob's Wilder" and "Bob's Ben" have been for STUNT Records.

The youngest member of the group is Erik Olevik from Hamburgsund in Sweden. He is a graduate of Copenhagen's Rhythmic Conservatory. His main activity has been with Karen Bach's Trio.

Morten Lund is a graduate from The Royal Conservatory in Copenhagen. Recent years have established him as one of the country's busiest drummers. He can be heard in many groups and appears on more than 60 CD's with top Scandinavian and European artists including Cecilie Norby, Chris Minh Doky, Ulf Wakenius, Jan Lundgren, Paolo Fresu, Stefano Bollani, Nguyen Le and Dhaffer Youssef. He has recorded two CD's for STUNT Records with Stefan Bollani's trio.



STUNT RECORDS

Sundance Music ApS Gothersgade 107 1123 Copenhagen K Denmark
T: +45 3333 8720 F: +45 3333 8730 www.sundance.dk sundance@sundance.dk