

NIKOLAJ HESS GLOBAL MOTION

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At 41, Danish pianist Nikolaj Hess still spreads his many talents liberally. After graduating from the conservatory, his projects have been so diverse and so many, that it would leave lesser musicians gasping for breath. He is in demand as a sideman, composer, bandleader and producer. He has played free jazz in Holland, backed Wynton Marsalis and Roy Hargrove, toured with Lee Konitz and Benny Golson, accompanied vocalists – Caroline Henderson and Etta Cameron are a couple of them. He spent some time in Africa, where he played with Fela Kuti and his son Femi Kuti. Diversity? You bet! However, he is one of those rare musicians with the ability to blend in without losing sight of his own personality.

In 1990 Hess was elected “Best European Jazz Pianist Under 25” at a contest in Rome, and in 1987 he won first prize in a leading Danish newspaper’s music contest. He has performed on a long list of recordings as leader, co-leader and sideman, composed and arranged for solo piano, combos, large string ensembles, big bands and choirs as well as creating soundtracks for Danish movies and TV shows.

Some time ago, Nikolaj Hess travelled to New York. The idea was to learn and develop. However, he soon began playing all over the Big Apple as a member of an exclusive network of superb American musicians including bassist Christian McBride and sax-players Ben Street and Chris Cheek. And so, he divides his time between New York and Copenhagen, combining two worlds and kindling his career in both countries.

Saxophonist Marc Mommaas and Nikolaj Hess began working together in 1998. They have played numerous concerts in Denmark, Netherlands, USA and Spain, and recorded several CDs together. The latest is Nikolaj Hess, GLOBAL MOTION+. Mommaas and Hess have taken turns leading GLOBAL MOTION and released three CDs for American Sunnyside Records. Hess has been intensely busy for quite a while writing material for the band and developing and perfecting it at rehearsals and concerts – a long and exciting process, giving the band the opportunity to crystallize the music and their performance of it.

The CD gives a good idea of where Nikolaj Hess is at right now – as a member of a tight group playing exclusively his compositions. The music is simple and abstract, African and American – and certainly Scandinavian. His inspiration comes from the energy and groove on the New York scene and the beautiful melodies and harmonies - and not least the simplicity and lucidity - in Scandinavian jazz and folk music. It also comes from the classical music that Hess grew up with, and last but not least, African music and its amazingly nuanced, organic and multi-textural rhythmic feeling and structure.

African Trees / Færø / Bartok / Bridge / Lost In The Bush In A Broken Down Volkswagen In Nigeria / Global Slow Motion / The Village / C Sketch / Butterfly Chapters / Hakuna.

Nikolaj Hess (piano), Marc Mommaas (sax), John Hebert (bass), Tony Moreno (drums), Ben Monder (guitar), Jeff Ballard (percussion).



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The line-up includes of many of the musicians with whom Hess has worked over the years. Saxophonist Marc Mommaas (b. 1969) grew up in Amsterdam, but soon made New York his base. He often tours Europe, USA and Canada with various constellations. He has recorded quite a few CDs, and he and Hess also work together in duo and trio formats.

Bassist John Hebert was born in New Orleans. After moving to New York he came in to great demand for concert and session work. He has played with John Abercrombie, Maria Schneider, Kenny Garrett, Kenny Wheeler, Andrew Hill, Greg Osby, Gary Thomas, Brian Blade, Billy Hart, Uri Caine and many others. John Hebert is known as an intuitive bassist with a rich sound and flexibility. He tours a lot, and he has accumulated a large and respected discography.

Drummer Tony Moreno has toured all over and in very many and different constellations, and he appears on a large number of recordings. He teaches at New York University Jazz Program and at New York's City College. He has worked with Mal Waldron, Bill Frisell, Sonny Fortune, Elvin Jones, Dave Liebman, Paul Bley, Sam Rivers, Jaki Byard, Cico Freeman, The Lounge Lizards, Ravi Coltrane and many others.

Guitarist Ben Monder has worked around the New York area for more than 25 years with among others Jack McDuff, Marc Johnson, Lee Konitz, George Garzone, Tim Berne and Kenny Wheeler. He is a regular member of Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra and Paul Motian Octet as well as several other projects, but continues to perform original music internationally with his own quartet and trio. He appears on more than 100 CDs as a sideman and on four as a leader.

Jeff Ballard is the percussionist on GLOBAL MOTION+, but most audiences know him as the highly respected drummer in Brad Mehldau's famous trio. At 25 he was playing with Ray Charles, a gig that lasted for three years until he made the move to New York, where he found like-minded musicians who not only draw their inspiration from the tradition, but also seek their own interpretation of it and freedom of expression in music: Kurt Rosenwinkel, Mark Turner, Avishai Cohen and many others. Jeff Ballard played and has toured with Eddie Harris, Bobby Hutcherson, Lou Donaldson, Mike Stern and Danilo Perez. He joined Chick Corea in 1999, and continues to play in his various projects while also drumming with Mehldau.


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