

GROOVE FACTOR / FILTHY McNASTY

(Stunt Records, STUCD 07132)



Everyone knows what groove is. Even if we can't define it, we know what it feels like: it hits you in the stomach somewhere around solar plexus and spreads to the rest of your body, resulting in an over-all good feeling – if you're hip. And no, I'm not speaking of a new, exotic drug; I'm speaking of music, rhythm – but most of all about having a good time.

It's hard to say where it all began, but I'm sure we all agree that organ combos started some time in the 1950s, and soon became popular in clubs and bars in black neighborhoods all over the USA. Although an organ combo filled the room with a lot of music, the proprietor did not necessarily have to pay a whole band. There was no bassist: the organ player took care of the bass with his feet. The combo may have been fronted by a tenor sax or guitar, and the drummer was an important part of the group. Those were the days when Jimmy Smith tamed the Hammond organ with a bluesy, funky soul/jazz sound full of groove and heavy on rhythm. It was dance music. The repertoire was never a major issue: jazz, pop, funk, blues – whatever – the choice of tunes was (and is still) of lesser consequence. What really matters is that it swings – that it's funky. The secret ingredient is spelled c-o-m-m-u-n-i-c-a-t-i-o-n.

The tradition is far from dead. Organ combos are still vitally alive. The earthy, solid swing, the grooves and extroverted approach still make them extremely popular. And this brings me to my destination: GROOVE FACTOR, a predominantly Swedish organ combo, who carry the torch and the tradition in the most excellent fashion.

Ever since the '70s when Ulf Wakenius played with the Swedish jazz/rock group Mwendo Dawa and organist Pierre Swärd played

with Georg Wadenius (Wakenius was part of the band for a short spell), they have performed together from time to time in small groups. At last the collaboration has been documented. As tradition dictates, FILTHY McNASTY is full of music addressed directly to the body. Paired with Jonas Johansen's drums, Pierre Swärd's crunchy, super-swinging B3 organ (with a solid pedal bass) creates a rock steady foundation for tour de forces by alto saxophonist Håkon Broström and guitarist Ulf Wakenius. However, all four musicians play up a storm as tight unit. Their repertoire includes blues, standards, a ballad, and a couple of originals. The music is wonderful, groovy, uncomplicated – played by four men who know each other and the idiom. Grab your partner....

Ulf Wakenius is probably the best-known Swedish jazz musician today. He is an extremely popular sideman with musicians seeking someone with technique, feeling and deep swing. Ulf Wakenius has played with Oscar Peterson for ages; he was a steady member of Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen's groups since the '80s, and band member with Ray Brown and tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker. GROOVE FACTOR shows Wakenius in his most outgoing mood – down to earth. The mood suits him.

For 25 years, Pierre Swärd has been one of Europe's foremost Hammond organists. He has played with many of Sweden's most prominent musicians, and for years he and his always swinging organ have been first call on numerous recordings. However, he has always lead his own organ groups on the side. It is obvious that he loves the idiom. His playing is vibrant with ideas – it doesn't get much better than this.

Håkan Broström's alto has the exact right bite. Since the late '70s he has frequented the largest stages: Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner, Dave Liebman, Chris Potter, Joe Lovano, Philip Catherine, Toots Thielemans and Putte Wickman. On a permanent basis, his playmates include Peps Persson, Tim Hagans, Nils Landgren, Viktoria Tolstoy, Adam Nussbaum, Palle Danielsson, I could go on and on....

Jonas Johansen's versatility, reliability and dedication place him among Denmark's most popular drummers. His unpredictable and vital drumming enhances an endless list of projects. For years he held the difficult seat in the Danish Radio Big Band, performing with the greatest names in contemporary jazz. He has been Elaine Elias' regular drummer in Europe, recorded in his own name (with the likes of Steve Swallow), been a regular member of Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen's band (with Ulf Wakenius)....

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For more pressmaterial & information:

Phone +45 33 33 87 20 **Email** sundance@sundance.dk



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