

# Snorre Kirk Quartet with Stephen Riley

## GOING UP

Released on LP, CD  
and Digital

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On drummer and composer Snorre Kirk's sixth album with his own group and tunes, there's something wonderfully familiar about the music. It is an echo of something that once was – something that no longer exists in the same way it once did. Hearing this music for the first time is nostalgic, yet without any regretful sadness or homesickness. And when the band plays live, whether in Bremen or Copenhagen or Kansas City (where they have performed for audiences who had no idea what they were in for), the reaction from the crowd is always the same joyful roar.

The 39-year-old drummer introduced himself to the Jazz World as a composer and bandleader in 2012 with the critically acclaimed debut album *BLUES MODERNISM*, which took home *JazzSpecial Magazine's* award for Album of the Year and received two nominations for that year's Danish Music Awards (Danish Grammys). His next releases *EUROPA* (2015), *DRUMMER & COMPOSER* (2017), and *BEAT* (2018) paved the way for an international breakthrough and have brought Kirk to some of the biggest and most famous jazz festivals in Europe and Asia. The autumn of 2019 saw the release of Snorre Kirk's fifth album, entitled *TANGERINE RHAPSHODY*, also featuring the US-saxophonist Stephen Riley.

*GOING UP* presents listeners with singable melodies and beautiful arrangements, ornately detailed yet devoid of distraction. Tenor saxophonists Stephen Riley and Jan Harbeck are supported by an elegant, swinging rhythm section with Magnus Hjorth's funky piano, Anders Fjeldsted's solid bass playing, and Snorre's own tasteful and practical drumming. It's an update on the spirit and style of yesteryear, and the band's pleasant and inoffensive vibe rewards us with a warm sense of wisdom. Appreciation for tradition and commitment to the craft are themes that flow steadily and gently from each of the handpicked musicians. They channel and sustain something from the past without falling into the trap of worshipping it blindly.

Stephen Riley made a name for himself after joining both Harry Connick's and Ray Charles' bands at the age of 17. Since then, he has worked with Jazz greats from Wynton Marsalis to Norah Jones. He has become a popular musician, even at these latitudes. In Denmark listeners have heard him with drummer Thomas Blackman and bassist Lennart

Ginman, the New Jungle Orchestra, and on his numerous, excellent SteepleChase releases.

Stephen Riley was made for this music. When you hear him in the context of this group, the mutual joy, pride, and burning desire to swing is unmistakable. He plays each and every solo as if it might be his last. Like Harbeck, Riley is the type of musician with an approach that might sound a little old-fashioned at first, but if you're able to resist the initial seductive surf of sound and listen closer, the energy behind his rich and full-bodied tone and wonderfully heavy phrasing fits the tunes and arrangements here like a well-worn leather glove.

There is so much light in Riley's warm and sub-tonally soft sound that is uniquely and totally his own – Paul Gonsalves, Lester Young, and Ben Webster have all left their marks, but Riley sounds like himself. He has ended up with his own aesthetic. 22 years ago, he found an old tenor saxophone that had exactly the sound he was looking for, together setting out on an endless adventure, further evidence that there's truth to the old adage that Jazz is "a journey, not a destination."

Snorre has chosen his path with music that will never disappear completely. It survives and every so often comes into focus, re-envigorated by fresh talent and appreciative ears. Kirk's sound conjures references while avoiding competitive comparison, with a measured but bright enthusiasm and calm control. He never let's go of the reins completely but is clearly at peace with the teammates he selected and their shared mission.

Kirk and his band manage to simultaneously keep one eye looking in the rearview mirror and the other on the road ahead, creating a coherent, charming cocktail of equal parts soul and swing. It's music with a sure, confident sense of direction. The band shines with an appetite for life so fiercely fresh that it is almost religious, airily unassuming with lively, passionate breath behind every note. There's ample room for the individual musicians to find and develop themselves while contributing and exploring in tandem. Loose and relaxed but never lazy, Snorre Kirk and his band spread their infectious passion for a timeless brand of Jazz that was born long ago but will never die.

*Stephen Riley (ts), Magnus Hjorth (p), Anders Fjeldsted (b), Snorre Kirk (dr) + Jan Harbeck (ts).*

Right On Time / Streamline / Going Up / Dive / Bright & Early / Highway Scene / Call To Prayer / Blues Arabesque / The Grind.

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