

SNORRE KIRK

TOP DOG

CD, LP og digital

(LP will be released in spring 2023)



Cd:

STUCD 22132



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Lp:

STULP 22131



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10 years ago, back in 2012, drummer, composer, and bandleader, Snorre Kirk released his first album under his own name, *BLUES MODERNISM*. At the time, jazz listeners would have been forgiven for assuming that a drummer's debut release would simply showcase himself on his instrument – in the “obvious,” flashy sense. But this was no ordinary debut and no ordinary drummer. Snorre Kirk was, and is, *different*. His inspiration is unmistakably rooted in the birthplace of jazz – specifically, from a golden age, decades ago (we can basically count in half-centuries now). It was cool, swinging music, drawing from the sounds that legends like Duke Ellington created, and it allowed plenty of space for the drummer's carefully-chosen cohorts. *BLUES MODERNISM* was also named “Album of the Year” in *Jazz Special*, the Danish music magazine.

10 years later, after a full decade of Snorre's celebrated recording career, it seems like a good time to reflect. How has he developed as an artist? How has his music changed, and stayed the same? These are big yet simple questions with multiple answers. In a way, not much has changed. Snorre Kirk has remained completely true to himself – steadfast in his dedication to classic jazz swing and the classic jazz sound.

On his new album, *TOP DOG*, we get a new element and a slight instrumentation change compared to Snorre's previous work. Ellington's influence is still present, but another great composer, arranger, and musician has now been brought into the fold as a historical beacon of bandleading and overall musical advisor: the one and only Count Basie.

One easy parallel to draw between Snorre's new sound on *TOP DOG* and the Basie band is that Kirk has now added a guitarist. A quick jazz history refresher: 85 years ago, in 1937, Basie discovered guitarist Freddie Green, who would become an indispensable part of his bands for the next 50 years. Green delivered an omnipresent rhythmic pulse, he rarely ever played solos, and was an integral part of what would become known as “The All-American Rhythm Section.” 50 years later, we witness something similar on *TOP DOG* – guitarist Mads Kjølby filling Green's shoes. Kjølby has performed and recorded in all kinds of projects at home in Denmark and around the world, and despite his diverse background, when he puts on his Freddie Green hat, you'd never think he played anything other than acoustic rhythm guitar – he's just that good.

Bassist Anders Fjeldsted has accompanied Kirk since 2019 and pianist Magnus Hjorth has been with him since the very beginning, leaving his fine fingerprints on all of the drummer's releases. Make no mistake – Hjorth, Kjølby, Fjeldsted, and Kirk make up what today can rightly be called “The All-Scandinavian Rhythm Section.”

American tenor saxophonist Stephen Riley is the main man in front of the rhythm team, as has been the case on the last two Kirk releases, and is joined on *TOP DOG* by his Danish saxophone contemporary, Michael Blicher. Neither of them leans into the saxophone sound adopted and explored by their generation, but both seem more inspired by the old masters, without being consumed by looking back in time.

On *TOP DOG*, we get 10 new tunes, all written by Snorre. The album opens with *Working the Night Shift*, a lovely and relaxed 12-bar blues, which listeners may scratch their heads and wonder if they've heard before because of its natural familiarity, but it's 100% Snorre Kirk!

That feeling (and sound) of something pleasantly-recognizable-yet-new holds throughout all of *TOP DOG*. There's no sense of cheap imitation or copying, but rather inspired commitment and reverence for marrying something old and wonderful with something fresh and intriguing. Among the softer selections, listeners will enjoy *On Late Nights*, a ballad that keeps its tempo down the whole way through and features an intoxicating, whispering saxophone role; and *Yesteryear*, a lovely melancholic tune, where the woodwind part is particularly breathy and tantalizing. Stephen Riley, who also shows his chops on the wildly up-tempo track *Showtime*, takes a break on the album's outsider, *Bossa 22 Edit 2*, where the other musicians take us into an authentic Brazilian zone. And then, for the lovers of programming symmetry, the album closes with another glorious 12-bar blues, entitled *Boogie Rider*, where listeners can almost hear Count Basie in the band, even though it's Snorre Kirk who – as drummer, composer, and leader – makes past, present, and future ascend into a higher unity.

Working the Night Shift / Top Dog / On Late Nights / Bring Me Home / Showtime / Meditations In Blue / Swing Point / Easy Roller / Yesteryear / Boogie Rider

Stephen Riley, Michael Blicher (sax), Magnus Hjorth (p), Mads Kjølby (g), Anders Fjeldsted (b), Snorre Kirk (d)

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