

HAXHOLM SCHMIDT MORAS

On May the 29th, the album "Moras" with Haxholm Schmidt Moras was released via Gateway Music. The eight tracks on the album will exclusively present new original composed modern jazz, in a strong international constellation, with saxophonist Seamus Blake (US), pianist John Escreet (UK / US) and Danish musicians Morten Haxholm (bass) and Rasmus Schmidt (drums).

The music is based on original composed modern jazz, with a focus on swing, energy and interaction - a playground where ideas are shared and processed, until they become uncompromising unique stories.

The repertoire moves from hard-swinging power jazz, melancholic ballads and insistent groove tracks. The music can be described as a melodic, modern sound, with references as Seamus Blake's own bands, Mark Turner, Chris Potter, Kurt Rosenwinkel etc.

About the band "Haxholm Schmidt Moras"

"Moras" is a band co-lead by drummer Rasmus Schmidt and Morten Haxholm, each contributing songs for their repertoire. The cooperation between Schmidt and Haxholm goes back to 2007 where they met at the Conservatory in Odense (Denmark). Along with the two Polish musicians Tomasz Dabrowski and Marek Kadziela they formed the band Off-Quartet, and with that band they have toured extensively in Poland, Ukraine, Germany, released a live DVD / CD 2009 (live in Kiev) and CD in 2010 (via the Polish jazz magazine: "Jazz Forum")

Additionally, they have formed the rhythm section in numerous constellations and in many different genres, from pop/rock over latin to modern jazz.

About the album:

For a long time Schmidt and Haxholm has had a desire to record an album together in their own name. And like so many other aspiring jazz musicians, they both had the same dream to go to New York and record with some of their favorite musicians. One of these musicians was saxophonist Seamus Blake, who for a long time, had been on their wish list of favorite musicians they wanted to play / record with. They had also both heard the pianist John Escreet, in particular with David Binneys group. And they were both very excited about his piano playing and would like to hear the two stellar musicians bid on their own music.

They contacted the two musicians, booked Michaels Brorby's studio in Brooklyn, and on April the 16th 2014, the recording 'Moras' was done in just under five hours. An intense and very creative session, where especially the organic interplay between the four musicians was a very positive surprise. Therefore the music appears very fresh with an immediate intensity with quite a few "first takes" and the rest is "second takes".

About the name: "Moras"

The name comes both from a double meaning and a word play - the contraction of Morten and Rasmus is one part. The other part comes from the old Danish meaning of Moras: "Messy or entangled". It does of course not mean that we think the music is a mess, but just that ideas can come from many different directions: always a fresh take on the music. It can sometimes be messy. A thrift store or a pawn shop can be messy, but in good pawn shops it can be messy in a way where there are infinitely many exciting things to look at! And often it is not the things you see first that is the most exciting.

About the songs:

The recording starts out hard with the 2 intense opening numbers "Prometheus" and "Brazen", after which the album takes a more melancholic and lyrical character with the ballad 'Umber'. With the song "Deepsea Explorer" it picks up the pace again for a kind of modern hard-bop with Coltrane references. Then the next 3 songs build up the last half of the recording; starting with the thoughtful 'Cognitive Dissonance', on with the tricky 'Miyagi' and peaks with the waltz 'Subtle Drift'. The album ends with the melancholic and slightly dreamy ballad: 'Happy ever after is so once upon a time'.

About the tracks:

Prometheus

Named after the Greek god of fire - a play on words, since in jazz lingo you can call an energetic solo "burning". 3 good solos burn through the album's shortest song.

Brazen

..can be translated into brave, bold or made of bronze, but it is mainly "bold" we consider in this context. Firstly, because of the fast and difficult theme, and secondly because there are only four chords in the solo section. It requires some courage and ingenuity to keep a development going in the few chords. In this version we work very rhythmically through the chords, and create a quite few harmonic substitutions. One of our favorite places on the album, is the rhythmic "cat after the mouse" chase that takes place through both solos. Musical communication and interaction at a high level.

Umber

Umber is a natural brown or red-brown color. Morten has painted much when he was younger, so the English names of the different colors brings back memories, about being immersed in the relaxing and creative process of painting pictures. That is probably also at the same time our most important task as musicians; to convey musical pictures and stories to the listener.

Deepsea Explorer

The title is a wordplay on the song, that the form is build on, namely the Coltrane song 'Satellite'. The tricky theme switches between a halving of 6/4, 5/4, 4/4 and 3/4 eventually goes to walk in 4/4. Again the Americans impresses with effortless mastery over a highly advanced solo form - that also includes reminiscents of another Coltrane classic: Giant Steps.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is a term from the world of psychology and it refers to concept of liking two very contradictory things. An inner contradiction. The title as such has no direct relationship to the song, we just thought that it was an interesting concept. Seamus impresses again with a saxsolo that is almost compositional - a musical tale - which elegantly turns back into the theme.

Miyagi

Named after the charismatic older karate teacher from the old Karate Kid movies. The groove in the song is built on a fun grouping of the eight notes in 5/4 (1 + 3 + 3 + 3) - almost as difficult as catching flies with chopsticks.

Subtle Drift

The songs drifts quietly from one tonality to another, you let yourself move from a place in the music to another. Again, we played around with the concept of "time" (tempo, subdivisions and groupings) : the drums are deliberately pushing the feel of the beat, and thereby creating tension between bass, piano & drums : tension & release - push and pull !

Happy ever after is so once upon a time

The album ends with a melancholic and dreamy ballad, that with a simple and strong melody serves as a solid vehicle for Seamus' and John's further development and exploration of the music.

Line Up:

Seamus Blake – Sax
John Escreet – Piano
Rasmus Schmidt – Drums
Morten Haxholm – Doublebass