

Copenhagen Jazz Festival Revisits History While Embracing Youth

The Copenhagen Jazz Festival is a varied extravaganza that leans away from the summer festival blockbusters and makes sure to demonstrate diversity. That was particularly the case this year for its 31st edition, which ran July 3–12.

The city's must-visit list includes the Jazz Cup, home of an impressive music store, jazz club and also headquarters of the Danish magazine *Jazz Special*. On a Saturday afternoon during the festival, one could catch the nimble and thoughtful pianist Peter Rosenthal's trio and then venture over to the dreamily lavish Frederiksborg Garden, where We Three—saxophonist David Liebman, bassist Steve Swallow and drummer Adam Nussbaum—dished up lyricism and feistier energies in a garden party-like setting as a peacock strolled the grounds.

Fascinating and cool young Danish singer Maria Laurette Friis presented her distinctive indie-pop in the hip, renovated old fishing vessel MS Stubnitz—retooled as a floating cultural center with an experimental



music bent. But Friis' greater artistic coup was a tribute to Billie Holiday's final album, *Lady In Satin*. Via Friis, Lady Day's innate melancholic sublimity was given a surprisingly bewitching fresh twist—something akin to an indie shoegazer approach.

A different flavor of introspective Scandinavian musical demeanor marks the special touch of seasoned Danish trumpeter Jens Winther, who played outdoors by a lake in Ørstedsparken—one of several tranquil parks dotting this uncommonly beautiful and green city.

Among official festival headliners, Chick Corea showed up for a solo concert early in the festival's schedule, and a Nina Simone tribute included Dianne Reeves and Angelique Kidjo. In the delightfully bizarre context of the famed, kitsch-flecked Tivoli Gardens, Yusef Lateef's Universal Quartet combined regular ally Adam Rudolph on percussion alongside Danish percussionist Kreston Osgood and dazzling trumpeter Kasper Tranberg.

Towards festival's end, Dee Dee Bridgewater performed her easier-does-it charts with the fine Tivoli Big Band and Orchestra, outdoors in the Gardens, disseminating musical goodness into many corners of the sprawling compound.

But the most culturally and indigenously significant concert this year, if not the greatest musical success, involved a certain historic Danish-American connection. Danish trumpeter Palle Mikkelborg, who wrote the moody and memorable work *AURA* for Miles Davis 25 years ago (released as a two-disc album by Columbia in 1989), was commissioned to revisit the extended composition with a fresh conceptual attitude. The result, realized by a large and multi-limbed ensemble, was a strangely uneven but ultimately intriguing suite. Many of the meeker passages were laid out in the first half, including a goofy disco take on "What's New," which brought to mind Herb Alpert more than late-era Davis. But the writing got tougher, more complex and more evocative as the program progressed and the sundry facets of the chamber ensemble-meets-big band group were put to good use.

In that more muscular and enigmatic finale, we could, in fact, easily imagine Davis' sonic voice doing its artistic bidding. —Josef Woodard