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DarLife

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All About Bobby

Jazz Saxophonist grooves Dar



American jazz saxophonist sensation Bobby Ricketts was recently in Dar es Salaam. He performed at Movenpick Royal Palm Hotel on Friday April 17th 2009.

Show tickets sold out within hours of release and the show was a huge success. Aside from this, Bobby came down to Dar es Salaam to conduct The Band Doctor Seminar at the Tanzania House of Talent. This was aimed at giving the young upcoming performers basic experience and confidence.

Dar Life caught up with the saxophonist to learn more about this project, his music, as well as to know more about the man behind the electrifying machine.

Dar Life: What are two things that people would be surprised to know about you?

Bobby Ricketts: I would hope there were more than two things people would be surprised to know about me! Although, I really couldn't put a finger on anything in particular: I'm in touch with a very diverse cross-

section of people, and as a result my interests and activities are very diverse - but none of it strikes me as anything out of the ordinary, it's all part of my life... I prefer to relate to people on a personal level and am very low key about what I do and the level at which I do it. If I'm at a private gathering and meet new people, one of the last things I mention - if mentioned at all - is that I'm a musician. Sometimes it surprises people that I can leave that part of me behind, but to my closest friends I'm just Bobby. Very proud to be able to call myself an artist, but there are so many more facets to life. Besides that, I'm fortunate to meet a lot of people who do amazing things, so a healthy portion of modesty and humbleness is never misplaced.

Dar Life: You left the US - which most think is the best environment for a budding artist - to settle in Denmark. Why the move? What happens in Copenhagen?

Bobby Ricketts: I'm in the US several times a year, so it doesn't really feel as if I've left (smile)... that said, in terms of being 'global', Europe has a reasonably central placement between the US, Asia and Africa - the places where my work brings me for the time being. This makes Europe a convenient location. My move to Denmark was not a career move, but based more on my natural curiosity for other countries and cultures. In terms of the international scene, Copenhagen is very much on the map, and I've had an opportunity to play with some top international names. In terms of the wide range of professional skills I've had the opportunity to develop while based in Copenhagen, it was probably a pretty good career move as it turns out, and being in Europe contra the US hasn't prohibited me from having the career I wished for. Copenhagen - although very small to someone who has





grown
up in a major US urban center - is environmentally clean, relatively safe, the infrastructure runs like clockwork most of the time, and there are loads of highly skilled, talented people within music, design, the arts and culture. Sounds quite amazing, apart from the fact that it's an expensive place to live, and the weather isn't really that fantastic.

Dar Life: How do you describe your music to people?

Bobby Ricketts: I prefer to describe it as my own personal, eclectic cocktail of urban African American rhythms, thick jazzy harmonies, ambient, and melodic themes with world influences - and people usually say, "cool, but who else does it sound like?" But that's the point... when I get things right, my music sounds like me.

Dar Life: Who are your musical influences?

Bobby Ricketts: I probably have a few hundred strong musical influences that color my creativity... my tastes are diverse, and so is my musical background. I like jazz, classical, pop, hip hop, RnB, house, electronica, 'world' music, as well as music from several other genres - but it all depends on who's playing or singing. If it moves me emotionally, I'm into it - doesn't matter what it's called.

As far as my saxophone playing is concerned, I was originally influenced by all the great jazz masters of the saxophone. Although now I'd say my inspiration comes from elsewhere, and not necessarily music.

Dar Life: What projects have you been involved in while in Dar es Salaam?

Bobby Ricketts: Up until now, my activities in Dar have been centered mainly on my own performances. Also, I was introduced to Tanzania House of Talent on my first trip to TZ, and really enjoy helping the musicians and vocalists there develop their talent and love for music - I have a seminar concept called "The Band Doctor with Bobby Ricketts" and THT has been "band doctored" a couple of times now. I've also spent time in Dar just hanging out, being inspired by the vibe around me while writing and recording music for my next album.

Dar Life: Who have you really enjoyed working with, and is there anyone out there you haven't worked with yet that you would like to?

Bobby Ricketts: Most recently, I had the chance to tour in the US for 6 weeks, working with Atlanta-based musicians, some of the best in the country... Mo Pleasure, Ricardo Jordan, Sean Michael Ray and Rick Watford. You may not recognize their names, but these guys have performed regularly with bands and artists such as Earth, Wind & Fire, Janet Jackson, Roberta Flack, Rachelle Ferrell, Maxwell, George Duke, and many, many others... We have plans to continue working together when

schedules permit. There are many artists I'd like to collaborate with - whether they're established or not. There's loads of talent out there that's just waiting to float to the top, and as I travel about doing my thing, I try to keep my mind and ears open...

Dar Life: How do you keep yourself motivated to go on and keep turning it into something better?

Bobby Ricketts: The motivation part is easy... if you've ever tried to execute anything perfectly even just for 3 seconds - no matter what it is, you're going to want to do it again - and for 5 seconds the next time around... and so on... that's when the hard work comes in. Considering my shows last anywhere from 60 minutes up to 2 hours, my work is cut out for me, for a very, very long time. Music is the integration of mind, body and spirit... and when you hit that certain something in the sweet spot - a note, a cool riff, or a burst of energy with a full band - it's completely, utterly, totally addictive...

Bobby Ricketts was born in January 30, 1959 and grew up in Massachusetts in the United States. Now based in Copenhagen, Denmark, he has made appearances on various Danish television shows. Through numerous artistic collaborations, his reputation has spread throughout Scandinavia, Europe, Japan and the US. He has toured in Europe, Japan, and the United States. In March 2008, Bobby Ricketts released the hugely successful album "Skin To Skin".

Jan Kristensen