



CHRISTOF LAUER

“I believe that Christof has become, quite candidly and without sounding pathetic, the best saxophonist in Europe today. Every time I hear him I am totally fascinated. He has in the mean time reached a level of skill that is almost spooky.” Volker Kriegel, 2002

Christof Lauer was born on 25th May, 1953 in the German town of Melsungen/Hessen. He started piano lessons at the age of six and, later, learnt the cello. He studied cello at Dr Hoch's Conservatory in Frankfurt. In 1971 he changed to tenor saxophone and within a year had begun jazz and saxophone studies at the Music High School in Graz in Austria under Professor Dieter Glawischnig. He undertook his first tours with his own quartet and was also a member, during his student years, of bands in Vienna and Munich.

Within a year of his return to Frankfurt in 1978 he was a member of the legendary jazz ensemble of the radio station, Hessischer Rundfunk, under the direction of Albert Mangelsdorff and joined the group “Voices” with Heinz Sauer, Ralf Hübner, Bob Degen and Thomas Heidepriem. At the age of 26 he was already regarded as one of the most important jazz musicians in Germany. In the following years he was almost permanently on the road, taught jazz classes at Dr Hoch's Conservatory and received in 1986 the jazz prize of Südwestfunk, the South West German radio.

1990 saw the release of the first album in his own name: *Christof Lauer* (with Joachim Kühn, Palle Danielsson and Peter Erskine). This was followed in the next years by two more albums as leader: *Bluebells*, 1992, with Wolfgang Puschnig, Bob Stewart and Thomas Alkier and *Evidence*, 1996, with Anthony Cox und Daniel Humair. His debut recording *Christof Lauer* was immediately awarded with the prestigious German record critics' annual prize.

Lauer was invited to be a soloist in the NDR Big Band in 1993, which was in the process of making a transition from traditional to modern avant-garde big band. In 1994 he became a member of the United Jazz + Rock Ensemble and in 1996 a permanent member of Albert Mangelsdorff's quintet.

His fruitful collaboration with the ACT label began in 1999 with *Fragile Network* (ACT 9266-2). His fourth album as leader (with Michel Godard, Mark Ducret, Anthony Cox and Gene Jackson) underlines Lauer's quality as a unique rich composer and arranger as well as an excellent soloist. It brought him once again the annual prize of the German critics. “Lauer has for long been his own man and as “Fragile Network” once again shows, one of the best European saxophonists.”(Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)

In that year he was invited by the well-known Turkish ney player Kudsi Erguner to take part in a world music project which brought together classical music of the Ottoman Empire with western improvisation and jazz rhythms. The CD *Ottomania* (ACT 9006-2) strikingly documented this special musical encounter.

Another important encounter also took place in the same year 1999. Christof Lauer made the acquaintance of the outstanding pianist Jens Thomas and this soon evolved into an intense musical collaboration and friendship. Their collaboration was first demonstrated by the first duo album *Shadows In The Rain* (ACT 9297-2), which reinterpreted the music of pop star Sting in a most original manner. On four of the tracks they were accompanied by the Cikada String Quartet, for whom none other than Colin Towns wrote the arrangements. The album won the quarterly German jazz critics' prize and the annual prize of French magazine “Jazzman” (CHOC de l'année). Following this Lauer and Thomas had the chance to take part in a number of prestigious tours in Europe and Asia and played, inter alia, at the Paris Jazz Festival.

After the success of their debut as duo, the two musicians set up a second chamber music project together, this time based on original compositions. **Pure Joy** (ACT 9415-2) released in April 2003. "Simple, compact compositions such as rarely exist in jazz" is how Lauer described the rationale for a tight interactive performance free of the stylised jazz conventions. "Stunning, melodies almost too good to be true, performed by two musicians who are amongst the best and most high profile currently to be heard on the European jazz scene," wrote German magazine Jazzpodium and Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung swooned: "Christof Lauer and Jens Thomas have hijacked for the jazz universe a beauty and wildness which are without boundaries. One can only imagine what surprises these amazing musicians have in store for the future."

With *Heaven* (ACT 9420-2) Christof Lauer has delivered just such a surprise for the end of 2003: church music, which was in fact for Lauer, the son of a pastor, the first form of music of any type that he experienced as a child. He has had the desire to record sacred music in a church, and not before time. His friendship with Norwegian Geir Lysne has at last led to the long-planned project: together with Norwegian Brass the recordings for **Heaven** were made in the Vålerengen Kirk in Oslo, a choice of unexpected reworkings of classic Christmas songs and religious music, for which Geir Lysne is responsible as arranger and musical director and including two very special guests from Norway, Sondre Brantland and Rebekka Bakken.

Lauer found a new outlet in the collaboration with pianist Eric Watson. The American pianist, currently living in Paris, and Lauer had known each other for a long time. In April 2003 they were on tour together in France playing a quartet repertoire that Watson had especially composed for Lauer as a guest star with his own regular trio - comprising bassist Mark Dresser and drummer Ed Thigpen: These pieces, recorded in Summer 2003, were titled **Road Movies** (ACT 9429-2) and were released in September 2004.

One thing is for sure: Very few musicians can offer as much intensity as Christof Lauer, as the recordings with his new trio aptly demonstrate on **Blues in Mind** (ACT 9446-2), which will be released in January 2007. The flexibility of the fascinatingly matched partners and the scope of the compositions enable Lauer to express all aspects of his art. German Lauer, Frenchman Michel Godard (tuba & serpent) and British drummer & pianist Gary Husband all contribute compositions to this CD of exclusively original material – pieces that open up a great variety of worlds. Each track offers new colours and tonal hues, held together by the authority of the three players.

In the past 30 years Christof Lauer has appeared in all manner of various formations with an incredible continuity – on all continents of the earth and international festival from Montreux to Istanbul and from Havana to Beijing, both with his own bands or as sideman. The variety and creative energy of Lauer's encounters and projects time and again reflects his deepest held conviction: "Jazz is communication..."

THE ACT COMPANY

Ehrengutstr. 28, D-80469 München, Germany
Phone +49 89 72 94 92-0, Fax +49 89 72 94 92-11
e-mail: info@actmusic.com
Visit our website at <http://www.actmusic.com>