

Bio information: **I.P.A.**

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FILE UNDER: **JAZZ**

**Scandinavian Supergroup I.P.A. Unleashes Unfettered Lyricism on  
*BASHING MUSHROOMS*  
A Rigorously Beautiful Sojourn Into Conscious and Subconscious Realms**

After a dozen years as one of Europe's most acclaimed jazz ensembles, **I.P.A.** is still discovering mesmerizing new sonic territory. Born out of a deep dive into the music of pioneering trumpeter/composer Don Cherry, the group has firmly established its own sound and identity, and *Bashing Mushrooms* reveals a striking new side of the quintet. A sumptuous aural feast marked by extended, circuitous melodies and spacious, finely etched textures, it is the group's fifth album and second release for Cuneiform.

Featuring Oslo's **Atle Nymo** on **tenor saxophone and bass clarinet**, Norwegian-born, Austin, Texas-based **bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten**, Trondheim **drummer Håkon Mjåset Johansen**, **Swedish trumpet player Magnus Broo** and Stockholm **vibraphonist Mattias Ståhl**, I.P.A. has never sounded so poised and self-possessed. While the title might suggest psychedelic journeys, *Bashing Mushrooms* is a work of riveting clarity, with all of the thoughtful interaction and knife-edge balance between improvisation and composition that has long distinguished the group.

"The melodies are quite clear," Nymo says. "We feel we're a jazz band now. Maybe we spent some time trying to figure out what direction to go, with more improvisational or freer material. On this session the tunes might be loose in some areas, but are mostly quite structured. We started as a Don Cherry project and our sound still traces back to that, but we've developed and changed, and there are a lot of different inputs coming through as well."

The album opens with Nymo's kinetic, almost woozy theme "Kudeta," a piece that builds off an edgy, telegraphic vibraphone riff. With its gentle gleam and soft edge, Broo's trumpet offers a winning contrast to the shimmering vibes, while Nymo's tenor solo evokes a man pondering profound questions. Broo's lullaby-like "Bamse" (which means teddy bear in Swedish and is dedicated to the trumpeter's older brother), amplifies the tranquil mood with a lovely, lulling sing-song theme.

Broo is also responsible for the title track, an antic steeplechase with a bopping opening line delivered by the band in unison. Before long the horns diverge and the trumpet takes the lead, dancing over Johansen's clattery tactile drum work. Just as it seems the center can't hold, the quintet swoops back into formation, restoring uneasy order. In an effective bit of programming, Nymo's mysterious "Horus Øye" follows, an atmospheric sojourn that suggests a moonlit view of the Nile. A very different aqueous feel pervades "Fem Skator" (Five Mantas), a Broo piece that swoop and glides into a furious trumpet/drum duet that features some wondrously slippery brush work.

One of the album's most immediately arresting tunes is Ståhl's buoyant anthem for Swedish teenager climate activist Greta Thunberg "Go Greta", a tune as forthright and spunky as its titular inspiration. On the vibraphonist's "Barnen" the horns ooze over the gently churning rhythm section as the composer hovers above the action, strategically dropping in from above. Pluming the tenor's lower register, Nymo's burry solo offers a master class in gathering force without pushing the tempo. The album closes with his ballad "Farmor," a tender, oddly shaped melody that seems to expand and contract, eventually subsiding with a sigh. It's an immensely satisfying conclusion to an album that captures a masterly ensemble at the peak of their expressive powers.

I.P.A.'s origins go back to 2007 when Nymo, Flaten and Johansen released their electrifying interpretation of Don Cherry's 1966 album *Complete Communion*. When Broo joined forces with the triumvirate the following year, I.P.A. was born. The quartet introduced itself on Norway's Bolage label with two critically hailed albums, 2009's *Lorena* and 2011's *It's A Delicate Thing*. By 2014's *Bubble*, which came out on the top-shelf Swedish indie Moserobie, vibes master Mattias Ståhl had expanded the band to a quintet and All About Jazz proclaimed the ensemble "one of the best kept secrets in the fertile Nordic musical scenery." With I.P.A.'s 2016 Cuneiform debut *I Just Did Say Something* the quintet raised its profile in North America, earning widespread praise and due respect. "Adding Mattias really opens up the possibilities," Nymo says. "He's a fantastic player, and helped us expand the colors and how we interact within the band."

Born in Valnesfjord near Fauske, Norway, Atle Nymo has been a standout on the Norwegian jazz scene since the turn of the century. In 2001 he earned the Young Nordic Jazz Comet award with the band Motif, and went on to collaborate with artists such as John Taylor, Palle Danielsson, Bugge Wesseltoft, Chick Corea and Pat Metheny. In addition to I.P.A. he also performs in the sprawling Norwegian collective Ensemble Denada, the rock-tinged quartet Chrome Hill with guitarist Asbjørn Lerheim, double bassist Roger Arntzen and drummer Torstein Lofthus (which debuted with 2018's *The Explorer*) and the Atle Nymo Trio with bassist Mats Eilertsen and rising drummer Michaela Antalová.

The senior member of the band, Magnus Broo was born in Småland, Sweden, and was already a well-established international figure when he joined I.P.A. A graduate of North Texas State University, he first gained widespread notice as a founding member of Atomic, the acclaimed Scandinavian quintet that has released more than a dozen albums over the past two decades, most recently 2018's *Pet Variations*. He's also released a series of critically hailed quartet sessions under his own name, while also recording widely with Swedish saxophonist Fredrik Nordström and Chicago saxophonist Ken Vandermark.

Hailing from Oppdal, Norway, Ingebrigt Håker Flaten spent his formative years in the mid '90s studying at Trondheim Music Conservatory. Before the end of the decade he had performed widely with The Source, the Maria Kannegaard Trio, the Paul Bley-inspired trio Close Erase, and the Coltrane-inspired quartet Element. Settled in Oslo by 1996, he became one of the busiest bassists on the scene, performing and recording prolifically with Petter Wettre in The Trio, Jazzmob, Bugge Wesseltoft's Sharing, School Days, The Scorch Trio (with Raoul Björkenheim and Paal Nilssen-Love), and The Thing (a trio with Nilssen-Love and Mats Gustafsson). Before joining I.P.A. he had worked extensively with Broo in the all-star band Atomic. Since moving to Austin, Texas in 2009, Flaten has honed an expanding network of improvisers, relationships manifested in his band The Young Mothers with drummers Stefan Gonzalez and Frank Rosaly, trumpeter/poet/rapper Jawaad Taylor, saxophonist Jason Jackson, and guitarist Jonathan Horne.

Drummer Håkon Mjåset Johansen was born and raised in Trondheim, Norway, where he gained early attention playing with the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra featuring Chick Corea at Moldejazz in 2000. He's earned a series of awards and distinctions, including the coveted Kongsberg Jazz Award in 2013. As essential member of several high profile ensembles, he's toured and recorded with Come Shine, Urban Connection, Svein Olav Herstad Trio, Excess Luggage, Maryland, and most visibly, Motif.

The band's latest addition, vibraphonist Mattias Ståhl, was born in Oskarshamn, Sweden and lives in Stockholm. His quartet Ståhls Blå released two critically hailed albums featuring his original compositions and earned Ståhl the Swedish Radio Award 2002 as newcomer of the year. A busy sideman, he's performed and recorded with the award-winning Fredrik Nordström Quintet, Klaus Holm Kollektiv, Emil Svanängen (aka Loney Dear), Cecilia Persson Quintet, Martin Küchen's Angles, and legendary bassist/composer Georg Riedel.

While all committed to an array of bands and projects, the five musicians in I.P.A. have found kindred exploratory spirits in the band. They'll undoubtedly take the music in new direction in the coming years, but with Bashing Mushrooms the quintet has found a sweet spot where the confidence that comes with maturity meets the boldness informed by experience.

"We all had this calm, relaxed feeling during the session, and that helped it go in that loose direction," Nymo says. "Even though there are high energy parts there's sort of a calmness to it. We have been playing for a lot of years, and even though it's new material it's a continuation of what we've been doing. Playing so much in the past together is really paying off, and I think you can hear how this music came together in a natural way."

**For more information on I.P.A.:**

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