

## A dialogue that knows no boundaries

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*Harris, looking forward to conversing with Danes when he plays in Copenhagen*

Flicking through a beefy festival programme, the question tends to be not what would you like to see, but rather how do you figure out a reading system to even find something you would like to see?

During Copenhagen's Winter Jazz Festival (February 1-17), a plethora of Danish and international jazz acts will descend upon the bitterness of the city to rouse us out of our hibernation. If you run with the many Copenhageners who turn up every year to the city's main two jazz festivals, it might be hard to imagine how an over-abundance of

jazz could be a problem. But if your head's woolly with cold and you're having trouble deciding which act will be worth your while, allow us to introduce you to Afro-Cuban jazz maestro Kevin Harris. Hailing from Boston, for just one (late) night only, Harris will be playing a jam session at Jazzhus Montmartre, supported by locals Richard Andersson and Niclas Campagnol on bass and drums respectively.

Harris has played venues such as the Blue Note (both in New York and Milan), Boston's Scullers Jazz Club and the Berklee Performance Center, as well as a range of renowned festivals including Panama and Havana. Teaching is a key aspect of his musical life: Harris regularly gives piano lessons and trains jazz ensembles at the Berklee College of Music and has previously taught classes at the Boston Arts Academy.

Despite never having played to a Danish audience before, Harris says it's no secret that the Danish jazz scene is alive and active. "It is my understanding that Danish audiences have always enjoyed and appreciated jazz, and I look forward to 'conversing' with them through my music," he told InOut.

Harris will also be interacting with his two Danish counterparts and, although he will not have played with them before taking to the stage for their live jam session, Harris seems to take this in his stride.

"For me, playing with experienced musicians for the first time is similar to having a conversation with someone for the first time," he says. "I don't feel there is anything to be nervous about as the three of us are in the habit of communicating at a high level with our instruments. Improvisation is a powerful language and it allows us to make conversations happen: telling jokes, laughing, crying, asking questions.

“Interestingly, last week I played the Panama Jazz Festival with a bassist and drummer who I’ve known for more than six years and we had a blast. But regardless of the length of the relationship, good musicians bring about good dialogue.”

And it’s precisely the ‘call and response’ interaction between musicians that has endeared Harris to his chosen genre. Afro-Cuban jazz combines clave rhythms from the Afro-Cuban genre – like rumba and salsa – with the improvisation and harmonies of traditional jazz music. The style was popularised in the late 1940s when American jazz musician Dizzy Gillespie collaborated with Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo.

When Harris takes the stage at Copenhagen’s prime jazz venue on February 2, he will be playing a variety of compositions from his latest album, *Museum Vol. 1*, which is set for release two weeks later. Harris’s fourth album stretches the idea of collaboration by considering each song as an exhibit in a museum, with influences ranging from Salvador Dali’s paintings to Nina Simone’s lyrics.

While the Copenhagen performance will be based on Harris’s compositions, there will still be plenty of opportunity for the other members of the trio to shine. Andersson, a blind Danish bass player, studied at the Manhattan School of Music and was named Fyn’s jazz musician of the year in 2010. While Campagnol, a regular drummer on the Copenhagen Jazz Festival circuit, has accompanied renowned Danish jazz and rock singer Cæcilie Norby.

While visiting Denmark, Harris will also take part in a jam session with students at the Carl Nielsen Academy of Music in Odense. Later in the year he is scheduled to perform at the Washington DC Festival, and also the Cambridge River Festival where he is looking forward to joining Grammy Award winner Terri Lyne Carrington.