ARTVARK SAXOPHONE QUARTET

Away with chairs! Away with music stands! Artvark moves! Artvark stands for innovative original compositions, strong individual soloists and the adventurous groove of four saxophones. The quartet meanders through musical traditions, sometimes on the intersection of classical and jazz, while always soulful and with blues, and sways across the stage according to an improvised choreography. Artvark thrills, Artvark stinks, growls and sizzles. Rolf Delfos (alto sax), Bart Wirtz (alto sax), Mete Erker (tenor sax) and Peter Broekhuizen (baritone sax) blend their different backgrounds to form a unanimous, creative and unique sound; the sound of Artvark!

Artvark is known for playing at famous Dutch jazz venues such as LantarenVenster Rotterdam and Bimhuis Amsterdam, and also at larger concert venues like De Doelen Rotterdam and TivoliVredenburg Utrecht. The group appeared several times on national television on diverse shows that host the best live classical, jazz and world music. Artvark performed at major international festivals such as North Sea Jazz Festival, Cairo Jazz Festival, Bohemia Jazz Festival Prague, Jazz Bruges in Belgium, Bray Jazz Festival and Steve Reich Festival in Ireland and toured in Ireland, Turkey, Germany, Poland, Egypt, the UK and several times South Africa. The quartet has engaged in special and remarkable collaborations, such as with jazz legend Peter Erskine, Senegalese master drummer Doudou N'Diaye Rose, the Danish indierock band Efterklang and the famous minimal music composer Philip Glass. They recorded the album 'Sly Meets Callas' featuring the classical soprano Claron McFadden (USA) and played at numerous prestigious festivals, like 'Grachtenfestival Amsterdam', 'Rotterdamse Opera Dagen' and toured the theatres extensively. The fifth record 'Blue Stories' was the prelude to a big theatre tour of the project 'Polder Beast' with Dutch actor John Buijsman, and the blues as the central theme.

During 2014/2015 Artvark celebrated it's tenth anniversary with a number of great events at diverse locations: from the prestigious concert hall of Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ in Amsterdam with contemporary classical music ensemble ASKO|SCHÖNBERG, flamenco guitar player Eric Vaarzon Morel, to jazz club DJS in Dordrecht playing the soundtrack of a movie by Lenny Oosterwijk and a project with dancers at the summer festival 'Parade'.

In 2016 and 2017 Artvark toured with Dutch/Cameroonian jazz singer Ntjam Rosie, which brought the release of the CD/DVD 'Homelands'. With dance group 'De Stilte' Artvark created an exciting musical theatre performance for children based on the work of Dutch master painter Hieronymus Bosch: 'Bosch in Bed'. In 2016 the Cello Biennale commissioned Artvark to make a new show with Claron McFadden called 'Poe', featuring German improviser Jörg Brinkmann on cello. Later that year the renowned classical Apollo Saxophone Quartet (UK) invited Artvark to be headliner at the Saxophone Day in Manchester which hosted giants like Bob Mintzer, Chris Potter and Claude Delangle. In 2017/2018 the quartet created a cutting edge multimedia project with producer BinkBeats and breakdance collective 155 called 'Pulse', using electronics.

After several intense and fruitful collaborations over the past few years, in 2017 Artvark released a new album as a quartet: 'Trance'. Not as eclectic as always, but one big acoustic story in one breath. In 2018 their collaboration with Apollo resulted in the project 'Two quartets Collide & Merge', with the composition of eight brand new pieces for eight saxophones and written by all eight musicians. The album was recorded in Manchester, mixed in the Netherlands and released in the spring of 2019. A joint tour in the UK and the Netherlands is scheduled in 2019/2020. Next we see a very special collaboration with Philip Glass resulting in 'Einstein on the Beach', which was performed at 'Oude Kerk Amsterdam', with the master himself behind the newly restored Vater-Müller organ! During this concert, Artvark also played their own arrangement of Sweelinck's 'Psalm 149' from 1610. On top of this, Artvark is diving deep into the World of Groove with the mighty collective Drums United led by Lucas van Merwijk: four saxes, four percussionists, four continents, a true festival concert that was also the closing act of 'Theaterfestival Boulevard' in Den Bosch. In 2019 Artvark was touring South Africa (TRANCE), Egypt (Drums United), the UK (Apollo) and Germany/Poland (TRANCE). In 2020 a theatre tour with Drums United is scheduled, in addition to concerts with Apollo and possibly a new album as a quartet.

Artvark aspires to connect worlds and cross borders, both in themselves and their music. They tirelessly look for more, keep digging and rooting through the mud, looking for that one truffle.

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ARTVARK on SOUNDCLOUD / ARTVARK on YOUTUBE

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PRESS QUOTES

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"We know the Artvark saxophonists as fearless and innovative musicians. In collaboration with Apollo, the eight instruments are moving together like a flock of birds. Unpredictable in their directions, but you know they will always fly in formation." - Jazzflits / Hans Invernizzi on Apollo & Artvark

"Genial interplay and gorgeous orchestration is the result of their union."
- LondonJazz News / Rob Adams CD review Apollo & Artvark

"Bright and sparkling performance with melancholic and serene melodies, the lyricism radiating pure emotion. Everything falls into place in this seven-piece suite. A state-of-the-art craftsmanship."
- Jazzenzo Erno Elsinga on Trance

"Tragic and light-footed compositions, unrivalled pioneers in music." - HMC Dagbladen John Oomkes on Trance

"Artvark's music is alternately meditative and exciting and has a very visual character. It never gets boring, because at the right time the alto sax players snatch you from the upcoming hibernation. It's that playfulness, ever remaining musical, that is the characteristic of this musical ensemble. The music of Artvark sounds fresh and new every time." – Jazzenzo Cyriel Pluimakers on Trance

"Four saxes together have more sound possibilities than you would think and in addition this quartet is playing with a lot of fantasy and the improvisations are perky without becoming freaky."
- NRC on Homelands with Ntjam Rosie

"The smooth flow of rhythmic arrangements embedded in the African and European music traditions are moody and playful: a fertile ground for Rosie's passionate lyrics ... Together they form a lively entity with multiple dimensions due to the stirring saxophone solos of the quartet." - Jazzenzo on Homelands

"Artvark wins respect for their insane perfection and propulsion. It is extraordinary how well they interpret the African feel for rhythm and melody with their horns." - Jazz Zine on Homelands

"Artvark combines stunning precise play with groove, guts and strong solos, well-thought-out catchy pieces, played with passion. Totally hip." - Volkskrant

"They say music knows no boundaries and, we add, jazz knows even fewer. Dutch act Artvark does not simply play but performs their music. Literally from the first step, this saxophone-only band was different from all others. The band snapped and tapped on stage, turning their movements and sound into a dance. If it can be said for jazz players: they rocked the house." - The Daily News Egypt

"The group uses a wide variety of styles, even modern dance is there." - Kwadratuur Belgium

"With 'Whosa Mwatana' Peter Broekhuizen did celebrate on the baritone sax a wonderful folksong by Abdullah Ibrahim. A fine reminiscence and homage to the many Apartheid refugees from South Africa." - Freistil 31 Germany

"Smartly dressed anarchy, lots of subdued emotion and a high-spirited shuffle. Sometimes self-willed, but above all breathtakingly beautiful. Breath and soul. Breathe in and breathe out." - Jazzmozaiek Belgium

"The horns from Artvark deliver colourful warm patterns and on top of that, they make up exciting musical stories" - Het Parool

"Excellent combination, striking harmonies and shamelessly beautiful sound." - Volkskrant on BusyBusyBusy

"All saxophone lovers should buy this CD. Every piece of this truly masterful CD is a prime example of the finest ensemble playing: 5 stars out of 5." – Forte on 'Sly Meets Callas' with soprano Claron McFadden

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BIOGRAPHIES

Rolf Delfos is a teacher at the Academy of Music of The Hague and Zwolle. Since the eighties he has been performing with THE HOUDINI'S, during which time he recorded more than 15 CD's with this jazz sextet, and played at the famous Rudy van Gelder Studio in New York. During his career Delfos has recorded more than 100 records with artists such as GINO VANNELLI, AZYMUTH and DR LONNIE SMITH, and he is active part in several of his own bands, like THE JAZZINVADERS, DELMONTIS and the hugely groove-based big band LICKS AND BRAINS, for which he is also the chief composer and arranger. In 2019, together with Oscar de Jong ('Kraak en Smaak') and Bart Wirtz, he launched the EP 'Electric Minds' with guest soloist ERIC VLOEIMANS: a daring combination of big band with sounds and samples. For SENA (the Dutch music rights organisation for artists) he created the programme 'Humble Heroes' and together with Bart Wirtz he hosts a radio programme Dutch Jazz for over 10 years. In 2014 he was granted the PETER SCHILPEROORT award and In 2017 he released his first piece of work as DELFOS: 'Road trip for the last 90 days of your life'. During these past years he regularly arranges music for ensembles in South Africa, such as the programme 'Sophiatown' for a small ensemble with compositions of South African composers during the 'Apartheid'. In 2019 he wrote 'Wholy Moly!', twelve etudes for saxophone based on improvisation techniques, that was published by the English publisher Astute Music.

Bart Wirtz was co-founder of the bands MONSIEUR DUBOIS, YOUNG SINATRAS and THE VERY NEXT and was peforming with these bands for years at home and abroad. He currently is a member of THE NEW ROTTERDAM JAZZ ORCHESTRA and his solo career gained momentum after his debut album 'Prologue' came out. Wirtz won several prizes like the Erasmus Jazz Prize, Leiden Jazz Award, Breda Jazz Price, two Edison nominations and the Edison for his album IDreamer. He recorded 'IDreamer' in New York with an all-American band starring NICHOLAS PAYTON. The track 'Evolution of the Innocent' was streamed more than 4.8 million times on Spotify. In 2014 Wirtz released the album 'Interview', a collaboration with trumpet player Sean Jones (USA). In 2017 he released his latest album 'Beneath the Surface' with a new band thus delivering an entirely brand new sound. This resulted in another Edison nomination and a tour at several great venues and festivals like The North Sea Jazz Festival. Wirtz is presenting radio programme 'Dutch Jazz' on Sublime FM and is member of producers' trio 'The Eminent' with whom he built his own studio and produced records of a/o. with singer NTJAM ROSIE. In 2020 two new releases in his own name are planned.

Mete Erker is a saxophonist who has a very personal approach to music. His play is characterized by a warm sound combined with raw energy. He played with international celebrities like DAVID LIEBMAN and WINSTON MANKUKU, and is solid part of the Dutch music scene for years, from the NEW COOL COLLECTIVE and CONNY JANSSEN DANST. He is also one of the driving forces behind the improvisation collective ESTAFEST, the METE ERKER TRIO and duo METE ERKER & JEROEN VAN VLIET. In 2015 Erker's project 'Near East Up North' premiered in the Amsterdam 'Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ': a suite written by MARTIN FONDSE, played by the renowned modern classical ensemble ASKO|SCHÖNBERG and the Turkish kemence virtuoso DERYA TÜRKAN. In 2016 Estafest recorded their third album at the Budapest Music Centre (BMC) released by BMC, one of the leading labels of European contemporary composed and improvised music. In 2017 three new albums were released: Fuchs, Erker & van Vliet: 'Linden', Estafest: 'Bayachrimae' and Mete Erker Trio: 'Live!'. In 2019 the latest album of duo ERKER & VAN VLIET was released: 'Pluis' where Erker is also featuring as composer.

Peter Broekhuizen graduated in 1990 at the Rotterdam Conservatory with Ferdinand Povel. His roots are in soul-jazz/funk: SUE CHALONER's Soultrain (UK, support act Ray Charles), LAURA VANE & THE VIPERTONES (UK/NL) and CANDY DULFER's Funky Stuff (Japan/Asia/USA/Europe), performing with VAN MORISSON and MAVIS STAPLES. He has performed latin/world music with Lucas van Merwijk's CUBOP CITY BIGBAND, with SALSA AQUÍ, RUMBATÁ (touring in Colombia) and tumba in The Antilles. He has also played impro jazz with the JAZZERALL drummer Arend Niks. Broekhuizen has now released four albums with his own soul-jazz band THE AURATONES with guest performances from trumpet player GERARD PRECENSER (UK) and Focus frontman THIJS VAN LEER. As band leader/arranger he was involved with the DUTCH FILM FESTIVAL (Gouden Kalf Gala) for years and wrote the arrangements for the VAN DEN ENDE musical 'SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER', which was playing for two years in the Utrecht Beatrix theatre. Peter has also played in bands of The NEW COOL COLLECTIVE, REMY VAN KESTEREN, ALAIN CLARK, MATT SIMONS, and The KIK. Together with Delfos he's currently playing in THE JAZZINVADERS and DELMONTIS. His latest project is the hard-bop band MESSENGERS REVISITED with whom he celebrates Art Blakey's music.