

## Presstext

### «New-Jazz -Trio Morgenthaler-Röllin-Ruben»



*Photo: Doris Hüsler*

**Robert Morgenthaler** tromb, efx (Switzerland)

**Urs Röllin** g, efx (Switzerland)

**Tanel Ruben** dr (Estonia)

The music of the new jazz trio Morgenthaler-Röllin-Ruben is a highly explosive, interactive blend of avant-garde jazz and groove. These three excellent musicians from Switzerland and Estonia have developed a fascinating musical language together. Energetic rhythms merge with intricate metres, melodious compositions are paired with wild improvisation. Independent, engaging and rousing music in the 'here and now' - Ranging from the rocking through to balladic, the three virtuoso instrumentalists unerringly guide every attentive ear through exciting soundscapes, touching the heart, gut and soul and making time stand still. The Swiss duo Morgenthaler/Röllin has played together for more than twenty years and are showered with positive reviews as an 'innovative duo at the musical frontier'. Estonian drummer Tanel Ruben, named Jazz Musician of the Year in 2008, joined the duo in 2018 to form a power trio that seems to understand each other blindly. 'Tanel Ruben has become one of Estonia's most influential and famous jazz drummers, known as an extremely active and versatile musician.'

## Morgenthaler-Röllin-Ruben 'Alarmstufe Rot'

*The trio's second CD, entitled 'Alarmstufe Rot', will be released on 12 December 2025 on the legendary Swiss label UNIT RECORDS and will be presented live from mid-January 2026. The CD launch will take place on 6 May 2026 at the Schaffhausen Jazz Festival.*

### Press release for the CD 'Alarmstufe Rot':

Swiss trombonist Robert Morgenthaler and his long-time partner from Schaffhausen, guitarist Urs Röllin have been performing for 20 years. Here they join forces together with drummer Tanel Ruben from Estonia. Together they form what is undoubtedly one of the most consistent working bands on the Swiss jazz scene. Following their debut album 'Mister Z', the three have recorded their second album, in which they roam with open minds through nine lively tracks and manage to convey their enjoyment direct to listeners craving an alternative to music consumption nowadays almost wholly dominated by playlists. Following 'Hello Mr. Z', which was dedicated to Frank Zappa, they now present 'Alarmstufe Rot', a carefully produced work that showcases their band sound even more powerfully. After many concerts in Switzerland and abroad, the music has now become mature and, thanks to its playfulness and blindly trusting interplay, seems to come from a single source: light-footed and cheeky. What is anything but banal in terms of form, with many breaks and twists that keep listeners entertained, is effortlessly held together by a common thread. No pigeonholing, just free-flowing creativity, moving between different musical worlds. This challenges our listening behaviour without overwhelming it and makes us curious about what is to come. Their musical experience makes the music unique and they always develop their unmistakable band sound in the here and now.

Morgenthaler, Röllin and Ruben deliberately push their instruments to their musical and physical limits, creating a highly intense soundscape that opens up in all directions. This is something that can only be achieved with an unorthodox line-up like this one: no bass, but instead built around trombone and guitar – two tenor instruments. 'The challenge was,' explains Morgenthaler, 'to conceive the pieces in such a way that no one misses a bass, that the guitar or trombone take on this task.' The drums act as a link and groove keeper.

This requires a great deal of basic trust. And that undoubtedly exists between Robert Morgenthaler and Urs Röllin, who have been moving almost synchronously in the broad field of congenial improvisation for a good twenty years. The fact that Tanel Ruben, whom the Swiss musicians met at Jazzahead in Bremen, was able to grow into this familiar male friendship relatively effortlessly was because Morgenthaler and Röllin instinctively saw him as a 'blood brother.' The exchange of cultures played into their hands every second, says the trombonist, 'because that's exactly what our music is all about.' Familiarity serves as a safety net, and growing confidence leads the triumvirate into new, unfamiliar territory.

The individual pieces form the basis for the subsequent improvisation, which is delicate and disciplined, but in every respect free as a bird. In the words of Robert Morgenthaler, 'We use various playing concepts: from noise to sound, from free pulse to groove, from silence to fullness.' The trombonist emphasises that each band member is free to choose whether they simply want to 'rock out' or layer a dreamy soundscape.

What does that sound like? Like non-stop surprises, mischievous ideas, unusual alliances, extreme fun – and a new beginning in the familiar. All making contemporary jazz comprehensible and lovable.

Produced by Urs Röllin and Robert Morgenthaler

Executive production: Unit Records Switzerland

Recorded: Recorded at SoundValley Studio, Schaffhausen, Switzerland

Mixed and Mastered by David Bollinger

Design: Ralph Schraivogel

## Short biographies:

**Robert Morgenthaler: trombone, effects, composition** ([www.robertmorgenthaler.ch](http://www.robertmorgenthaler.ch))

- Various radio, TV and CD productions.
- Morgenthaler has played with Carla Bley, Victor Lewis, Steve Swallow, Bob Stewart, Bill Coleman, Lee Konitz, Kenny Wheeler, Joe Haider, Mel Lewis, Robin Eubanks, Michel Godard, Günter Schuller, Jean-Paul Bourelly, Günter 'Baby' Sommer, Yves Robert, etc.
- 1974 Robert Morgenthaler Quartet, Swiss Jazz Quintet performances in Europe and the USA
- Performances with Joe Haider Sextet, Joe Haider-Mel Lewis Orchestra, François Lindemann Quintet
- 1994 Founding of 'Roots of Communication' (with Jean-Jacques Pedretti and Lucas Niggli).
- At the 2000 World Exhibition in Hanover in the Swiss Pavilion (Klangkörper) by architect Peter Zumthor, soloist in the music conceived by Daniel Ott.
- 2001 Performances with German writer and Nobel Prize winner Günter Grass with the project 'Novemberland'.
- 2002 Composition commission for the opening of Expo.02 in Murten with 'Roots of Communication' and Erika Stucky.
- Tours in Europe, Africa and the USA with Erika Stucky. With the musical theatre 'Hôtel de Rive' Performances in Germany, Turkey, England, Canada, Russia, etc.
- With Urs Röllin at Unart 2.0, in a duo, in a trio with Tanel Ruben (Estonia)
- Since 2013 with the Neue Musik - Ensemble 5 in Europe and Japan

**Urs Röllin: guitar, effects, composition** ([www.ursroellin.ch](http://www.ursroellin.ch))

Studied at the Lucerne Jazz School and GIT Los Angeles with Christy Doran, Harry Pepl, Joe Diorio, Scott Henderson, Les Wise and others.

- 1990–2025 Lecturer at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, jazz guitar/pedagogy
- Founder and organiser: Schaffhausen Jazz Festival 'Werkschau des Schweizer Jazz' (Swiss Jazz Exhibition) 1990–2025
- 1991–95 'Dead Zone' (free rock) international touring (Jan Schlegel, Bruno Amstad, Oliver Schmied, among others, at Steirischer Herbst in Graz, Schaffhausen Jazz Festival, etc.
- In 1998, he founded the quartet 'unart 4.0' (Ewald Hüegle, Dieter Ulrich, Robert Morgenthaler).
- In autumn 1999, artistic director of the orchestra project with Lawrence D. 'Butch' Morris and Koch/Schütz/Studer on the occasion of the IBK (International Lake Constance Conference) Artist Encounter 99.
- 2000 Orchestra project for Schaffhausen 500 (composition commission).
- 2001 Orchestra project for Expo 01 (composition commission)
- 2006 Monthly studio concert series with many musicians, including Irène Schweizer, Barry Guy, Hämi Hämmerli, Kornelia Bruggmann, Peter Schärli, Christian Weber, Martin Birnstil, Lionel Friedli, etc.
- 2006 Founding of the duo with Robert Morgenthaler and various other projects
- 2018 Trio Morgenthaler-Röllin-Ruben with Robert Morgenthaler and Tanel Ruben

• Discography:

'unart 4.0': UTR 4133 - 3 Suites, UTR 4204 - New Suites

'Morgenthaler/Röllin': UTR 4214 - Freak Wave/Short Cuts, UTR 4277 - Off Road. With

'Morgenthaler/Röllin/Ruben': Between The Lines - Mister Z, UTR 5274 Alarmstufe Rot.

**Tanel Ruben drums** ([www.tanelruben.com](http://www.tanelruben.com))

In April 2008, Tanel was awarded the title of Estonia's jazz musician of the year – the Elion Jazz Award, which is issued by Elion, a telecommunications company, and Jazzkaar, the international jazz festival. This is the most prestigious jazz-related acknowledgement in Estonia.

Cooperation has brought Tanel together with many different musicians from Europe, Israel, Russia and the United States. Just to name a few of them: David Liebman, Avishai Cohen, Anders Jormin, Brian Melvin, Jaak Sooäär, Yasuhito Mori, Kristian Blak, and many others.

Tanel Ruben & Victoria: A Sentimental Call (2003) was the first album with Tanel himself being both the producer and the composer.

Hinkus feat. Maarja: Look Around (2005) was the second album again produced and composed by Tanel. Funk, jazz and soul would be the most accurate stylistic hints to characterise the music on this album. Maarja, or Maarja-Liis Ilus, is Estonia's most renowned pop star of all time and has also been one of the artists of Universal Music.

Tanel Ruben: Collected Riches/Kogutud rikkus (2008) is the third album with Tanel as composer, producer and drummer. The album's title already indicates a wider selection of music and a broad approach to life. Whereas Tanel has also always been interested in electronic music, it can be said that one can hear a fusion of acoustic and electronic music, the mainstream and the non-mainstream, jazz and non-jazz on all albums produced by him.

Tanel Ruben Quintet: Nõiutud veerandtunnid/Enchanted Hours (2011)

Rütmiallikal "Rütmiallikal" 2013

Drum Prana "Drum Prana".2014

Tanel Ruben&Victoria "Million Years"(2016)

Tanel has recorded more than 50 CDs and albums.

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