

# The Blue Hour Sessions

Where the Great American Songbook Meets the Hush of Twilight

In the rich, 100-year-old history of jazz, there are those pieces that embrace you from the very first note — as if they've always been there.

On *The Blue Hour Sessions*, Rembrandt Frerichs' 18th album as a bandleader, he dives into exactly those pieces that are closest to his heart. But don't be fooled — what might sound familiar at first becomes richer, more layered, and more personal with each repeated listen. Even though the repertoire consists of songs the listener might recognize — standards from the Great American Songbook — the interpretations on this album, as we've come to expect from the Rembrandt Trio, are anything but predictable.



These recordings were born from a mood rather than a concept. The inspiration came from *The Blue Hour* — that magical moment between day and night when the world seems to pause for a while. The term *Blue Hour* comes from photography and refers to shades of blue and soft light. Figuratively, it's a time of reflection for many. Rembrandt and his trio aimed to capture exactly that feeling: music that expresses subtlety, that doesn't shout but whispers. Standards you might know, but on this recording sound as if they are only just now revealing themselves.

The sessions began at the Steinway D concert grand piano that Rembrandt plays at the Muziekcentrum van de Omroep in Hilversum — an instrument that, in Rembrandt's hands, sings with a personal clarity.

Rembrandt: "Because of the recording technique and microphone placement, the sound of the piano seemed to lift off the keys — it felt both spacious and tangible. As if the music on this album doesn't just translate the so-called blue hour musically, but almost allows us to touch it."

The recording — by audiophile master engineer Jared Sacks — is a work of art in itself. Using ultra-high-end DSD technology, every detail has been captured: the breath between phrases, the pedal's resonance, the wooden tones of the double bass, and Vinsent's much-



praised silky-smooth percussion. This is not a studio production — this is a live moment, captured on record.

Together with bassist Jos Machtel and drummer Vinsent Planjer, Rembrandt takes the time on this album to truly listen, to let the music breathe, and to discover new meanings within these standards. In their hands, Detour Ahead, Goodbye, or Smile are no longer just interpretations — they become personal stories, told by musicians with experience. Sometimes with the subtlest hint of irony — always with love.

## Pure DSD Recording in DSD 256fs by Jared Sacks

For “The Blue Hour Sessions”, I set out with a clear goal: to maintain the purity of the DSD signal path throughout the entire recording process. This meant selecting a venue that would complement the music naturally, without the need for post-production enhancements. It also required careful microphone placement to accurately capture the soundstage.

To ensure drummer Vinsent could play freely without compromising dynamics, we constructed temporary acoustic walls around him. For Rembrandt on the piano, I used an additional pair of Heijnis MPM91 microphones placed above the strings to create a more intimate sound, while a set of Schoeps MK21s in front of the instrument captured the overall timbre and essential overtones.

To capture Jos on the bass, I employed two microphones: an AKG 414 for the general tone and a Schoeps MK41 to highlight the attack, ensuring clarity within the acoustics of the room. We also laid velvet cloth across the studio floor to help tame the natural reverb and avoid an overly live sound.

All recordings were made using custom-built Rens Heijnis battery-powered microphone preamps, with direct 75V power to the microphones and Van den Hul 3T microphone cables. The entire session was captured in DSD 256fs using the Merging Horus recording system.

Each piece was recorded in three takes, from which we selected the best performance. I then used ‘DSD Render’ to clean up the track heads and tails, preparing the files for mastering.



Mastering engineer Tom Caulfield received the edited tracks along with dB reference values for each piece. Working in HQPlayer, Tom was able to make subtle balance adjustments while preserving the integrity of the native DSD signal—ensuring the final product remained truly “Pure DSD.” — Jared Sacks

## Post Production by Tom Caulfield

To achieve the ultimate in pure DSD processing—without any analog or PCM conversions—I used a workflow that involved DSD-domain mixing and convolution (for EQ, reverberation, and other refinements). HQPlayer Pro made this possible.

For “The Blue Hour Sessions”, I post-processed the original DSD256 eight-channel microphone recordings entirely in DSD. First, I produced a translation of the producer/engineer supplied channel balance levels into HQPlayer Pro DSD mixing format, then, I input them—along with the eight edited DSD256 tracking files—into HQPlayer Pro, assigning each to its correct output channel.



This setup allowed me to create a first-generation stereo mix that remained completely in the DSD domain. I then repeated the DSD mixing process for each additional deliverable bitrate, ensuring that every resolution offered the same fidelity and sonic intent—pure and untouched by conversion. — Tom Caulfield

## About the Artist

Rembrandt Frerichs is a Dutch pianist, composer and improviser whose work bridges jazz, classical and Middle Eastern traditions. As leader of the Rembrandt Trio, he is known for deeply atmospheric and concept-driven jazz albums. Frerichs has performed on stages like North Sea Jazz, Jazz Middelheim, and Carnegie Hall. He’s a pioneer in historically informed jazz performance and a frequent collaborator with artists like Kayhan Kalhor, Paolo Fresu and Hossein Alizadeh. The Blue Hour Sessions is his 18th album and a poetic, free exploration of jazz standards captured at twilight.

