

E.S.T.

Esbjörn Svensson Trio

The Esbjörn Svensson Trio is phenomenal: A jazztrio, which sees itself as a popband that plays jazz, which broke with the tradition of leader and sidemen in favour of equality within its members, which not only plays jazz-venues but also venues usually reserved for rockbands, which uses light effects and fog-machines in their live shows, which gets an whole audience to sing-a-long with jazz-standards as eg. Thelonius Monk's "Bemsha Swing", is a trio that goes beyond the scope of the usual classic jazztrio. In their homecountry Sweden, their music can be found in the pop-charts and their videos playing on MTV Scandinavia. With their unique soundscape, combining jazz with drum 'n' bass, electronic elements, funk rhythm, and pop and rock as well as European Classical music, E.S.T. won an audience spanning from the classic jazz-fans to the youngest HipHop fans. Critics and audiences world-wide agree: E.S.T. is definitely one of the most innovative jazzbands of today.

Openness, curiosity, and a little bit of chance are all a part of Esbjörn Svensson's artistic foundation: "I play piano because we didn't have any other instrument in the house. Actually, I would have rather played drums. For instance, as a kid, I put together a set out of old odds and ends, and tried to sound like "Sweet" on "Ballroom Blitz". But then Magnus Öström came with his drums, and I decided to stay with the piano. Magnus and I grew up together, and have played together from the beginning. When Magnus was given his first drum set, he brought it over to my house, and we started playing. We had no idea how to play, but it was a lot of fun. Since we didn't have a teacher, and no one was telling us how to play, you know, 'you must do it this way or that way', we were able to gradually develop our music in a very unique, individualistic way."

Today Esbjörn Svensson reaches into the piano, and plucks the strings, searching for the sound of a guitar. He cautiously experiments with percussive accents, and dives into the depths of the orchestral-inspired forms. Attentive to the necessary considerations of musical balance, he integrates electronic elements into his musical vision, creating an optimal mixture of textures. He supplements his ideas with new harmonic ideas, surprising melodic variations, and catchy motifs. Because his music is the kind of art that doesn't rely on the safety of a particular style, it is all the more effective.

Esbjörn Svensson was born in 1964 in Västerås, Sweden. His mother played classical piano, his father loved Ellington, and Svensson listened to the latest pop hits on the radio. In high school, Esbjörn played in his first bands, along with taking piano lessons for three years. There followed four years of musical studies at the University in Stockholm where Svensson developed the necessary technical craft to fully articulate his intuitive self-taught concepts. Thus, Svensson's carefree, youthful musical exuberance could mature into a creative self-awareness. Along with such Swedish players as Jan Johansson, Svensson counts Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett as major influences. Svensson is able to take their respective distinctive stylistic characteristics and meld them into his own musical vision.

From the mid-eighties on, Svensson established himself as an inspiring sideman in the Swedish and Danish jazz scenes. He formed his own trio in 1990, but it wasn't until 1993 that he got the necessary lift to get a CD off the ground. It was in 1993 that he met Dan Berglund on a gig they were both working. Svensson was fascinated by the structural strength and creative diversity of his playing and was able to entice Berglund into joining the trio. The same year, the Esbjörn Svensson Trio recorded their debut album, "When Everyone Has Gone" (Dragon); in 1995, the live recording "Mr. & Mrs. Handkerchief"

(Prophone), which has been released in the rest of Europe six years later under the title "E.S.T. Live '95".

By the mid nineties the trio had made a name for themselves in Sweden and got a recording-deal with the pop-oriented label Superstudio Gul / Diesel Music. The first album for this label, released the same year, was "EST Plays Monk", which quickly sold over 10.000 copies in Sweden. And the talented newcomer started to collect prizes: in 1995 and 1996 he was awarded Swedish Jazzmusician of the Year and 1998 Songwriter of the Year, and the 1997 release "Winter in Venice" - consisting mainly of original material - was awarded the Swedish Grammy.

Playing with musicians as Aley Riel, Mads Vinding, Victoria Tolstoy (White Russian, Blue Note 1997), and above all, Nils Landgren, Svensson has become known throughout Europe; he played a decisive role in making the Nils Landgren Funk Unit concert at the 1998 Montreux Jazz Festival the highlight of the festival.

The 1999 release of "From Gagarin's Point of View" set a milestone in the career of E.S.T.. Connecting with the German label ACT and live appearances at festivals as JazzBaltica and Montreux marked the long due international break-through.

A year later the CD "Good Morning Susie Soho" was released and earned the trio the title "Trio of the Year" by Jazzwise, UK. E.S.T. toured on the "RISING STARS" Jazz Circuit and played all major festivals throughout Europe. The same time Sony Columbia USA released the first CD "Somewhere Else Before" in the US.

The latest album is "Strange Place For Snow" with which E.S.T. has been on a 9-month world tour in 2002. Downbeat announced the band as "One of the hottest jazz acts in Europe today". And their three weeks in the USA and Canada brought them to Jazz and Avantgarde Venues in New York, Chicago, Washington, Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles as well as to the big festivals in Boston, Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. The french actress, screen writer (8 Women) and director Marina de Van choose the album as soundtrack for her movie Dans ma Peau.

By the end of 2002 E.S.T. can not only look back on fantastic live-shows and sold out concert halls, but also received a number of awards as "Jahrespreis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik" (from the German Phonoacademy), the "German Jazz Award", "Choc de l'année" (Jazzman, France). And already in the January of 2003 E.S.T. also received the "Victoire du Jazz" - the French Grammy - as best international act and also the "Revelation of the Festival" award, a special award from Midem.