

Tobias SJÖGREN

"Who?" — that's the reaction one will most likely get, as yet, when mentioning Swedish **guitarist, composer and producer Tobias Sjögren**. Not much longer, we may add. For in spite of his youth, the man from Göteborg is a very likely candidate for **the next northern star to rise**.

Born in 1970, Sjögren's been playing classical guitar since age 12; in the course of his teenage years he "moved on to the territory of jazz, or somewhere near", as he himself puts it. In 1990 he took up studies at the School Of Music in his hometown, only to find out that he was soon way too busy *making* music to take care of studying the subject in a thorough manner.

Thus went by six years of "loose schooling" – most elegantly tagged – during which he not only managed to conclude his curriculum successfully (Master Of Fine Arts, 1996) but to also publish his **first own album** ("*Hymn*", 1994), followed by an improvised-music approach to the works of Swedish poet Gunnar Ekelöf ("*Ord På Golvet*", 1995).

Only two years later, that's a good year after finishing Music School, his newly founded band "**NORTHERN VOICES**" (featuring saxophone and clarinet prodigy **Christian Vuust** with whom Sjögren works closely up to this date) releases its first album "*The Thule Spirit*" (Virgin, 1997) – a project picking up traditional music of Greenland, putting it into contemporary musical context, nominated for a Grammy soon after release. With NORTHERN VOICES Sjögren has toured successfully throughout northern and western Europe, most notably England and Germany.

Besides own endeavours like the aforementioned, Tobias Sjögren was and is much wanted for employment of his musical services by colleagues also, be that as a side-man (a.o. with EUROPEAN VOICES, featuring Marilyn Mazur, Nils Petter Molvaer, u.a.), as producer in the realms of pop, or as a composer of ballet scores (e.g. "*Meget Kraftigt Glemt*", a Thomas Eisenhardt coreography of 1996), soundtracks (as for a huge lightshow event by Kent Flood in 2000) and the like.

His many assignments though, own or other, do not keep Sjögren from dedicating to each of the projects he's involved in the measure of commitment necessary for the best possible outcome; his career shows, albeit still short, a definite inclination towards working on long-term ventures. Quite obviously, the man likes to let music grow to full ripeness.

So it wasn't until 2002 that the NORTHERN VOICES' release number two ("*Shaman*") came out, to be followed later the same year by **Sjögren's second solo-album** – the one at hand – simply entitled "*Tobias Sjögren*". One may feel invited to muse whether the naming hints at the artist's viewing this production as an inventory of his musical personality or the item by which he introduces himself to a larger audience; it's probably a bit of both in there.

Tobias Sjögren presents himself not only as **an outstanding guitar player**, but also as a **first-rate composer with a distinct knack for atmosphere**. His music inspires images in the listener's head almost immediately. Whether he conjures up the '*The Moon out of the Clouds*' [5, "Månen ur Molnen"], longingly wallows '*In Expectation*' [2, "I Förväntan"] or sets out to explore 'Swedish Forests' [4, 'Svenska Skogar'], Sjögren makes imagination fly between **tranquility and opulence, filigrane acoustic structures and slow-motion electric eruptions**. He utilizes improvisation and predefinition, the "reality" of musicians playing together in the studio and the "virtuality" of heavy-calibre modern-day computerized equipment in pre- and post-production of the music, "authentic" first-take-passages and dubs upon dubs upon dubs. All this he lets flow together and side by side, makes it contrast here and blend there, ultimately weaving it all into a musical tapestry of otherworldly beauty.

Rather a **coherent suite** than a daisy-chain of unrelated tracks, **Tobias Sjögren** could well have named this album "Epos", too; because that's what it sounds like. All things considered it may even go unpunished to compare it to the phenomenon of the 'aurora borealis', the northern light: Alternatingly shining in different colours, embedded into velveteen darkness, closer to heaven than to earth, full of magic or, yeah, even majestic moments. This is how it comes across.

So, speaking of regal qualities, we may be well looking at **the new Prince Of The North**(ern Jazz) here. The sound is fit for a crowning, that much is for sure.

(extensive comments of the artist about the tracks available on request.)

Tobias SJÖGREN – "Tobias Sjögren" qrm 101-2

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