



Helge Lien Trio

Badgers And Other Beings



Explorers of the Norwegian jazz habitat: New creations from the piano trio with the magic sound

Who would have thought the Norwegian brushwood could be such a rich source of inspiration. Helge Lien and his trio seem to be able to draw ever new ideas from it, at least for new album titles. Almost six years after their international break through "Hello Troll" they are now looking out for "Badgers and other Beings".

It's a rare lucky chance to come across one of these shy animals, just like this album is a moment to cherish and enjoy every second of. In the last 13 years pianist Helge Lien and his musical companions Frode Berg on double bass and Knut Aalefjær on drums developed their very own, distinctively nordic, jazz trio sound, brought to perfection on their latest, highly acclaimed release "Natsukashii". Being regularly compared to the late Swedish jazz legend Esbjörn Svenson and his group E.S.T., the judgement of a Norwegian critic actually does them more justice, filing their music between Bill Evans' lyrical playing, Brad Mehldau's strong strophic expression and Keith Jarrett's inventive story telling. On the new record, Per Oddar Johansen takes over from Knut Aalefjær on drums, adding new verve and many new musical options.

The ten new compositions compiled on "Badgers and other Beings" take off where "Natsukashii" landed, exploring new ways each for the reflexive, experimental side and the playful, groove orientated side of the Helge Lien Trio. Juggling with rhythmic and melodic elements from folk and world music in songs like "Calypso" and "Folkemost", the band surprises the listener with new ways to translate these into a contemporary form. Lien, Berg and Johansen are not afraid of melodies or a catchy groove, but their excellent skills and deep musicality saves them from ever becoming just pleasant. In fact, songs like "Hvalen" and "Badger's Lullaby" show them virtuously and carefully searching for sounds and atmospheres, only loosely holding on to song structure and measurements. On an inspirational level, it was memories, change and the many beings everyone of us turns into within his lifetime, that gave Helge Lien the ideas for his songs.

In order for them to be able to make even the finest nuances noticeable the trio booked in at the legendary Rainbow Studios in Oslo, where they achieved a world class, transparent production. All instruments sound beautifully balanced, very natural and sit perfectly in the virtual space of the stereo spread.

All this makes "Badgers and other Beings" an unmissable experience for both jazz fans and audiophiles. But beware if you feel like getting the old animal sound record from the shelf after listening to the album - real badgers don't sound as nice as the Helge Lien Trio.