



Oddgeir Berg Trio Before Dawn



Signals from the Submarine-Studio

It is almost, as if these musicians don't want to be seen. At least in the past, the members of the Oddgeir Berg Trio have remained in the background, acting as instrumentalists for renowned Scandinavian colleagues such as Dylan Mondegreen or Kenneth Ishak. Until recently, they didn't even have personal websites. With the release of *Before Dawn*, however, things are about to change. The Oddgeir Berg trio have realised their own vision for 100% and their album instantly ranks as an excitingly different entry into the long list of piano trios. And despite their decades of combined experience, it sounds every bit as fresh and hungry as you'd expect from a debut.

The sound of *Before Dawn* was sculpted at a very special place, the Bonker Studio in Oslo. Run by two of the trio's members, Oddgeir Berg (piano) and Karl-Joakim Wisløff (bass), Bonker is much more than just an excellent recording venue. Berg has referred to it as his 'playground', although a different comparison might seem more apt: A barely 30 square meters small space without windows and secured by a heavy metal door, entering into the tiny main room feels like boarding a submarine. It has given the studio a reputation as one of the most unique recording venues, a sanctuary far away from the worries of everyday life and the pressure of expectations. All that counts here is the music.

Thanks to this otherworldly, yet focused ambiance, *Before Dawn* doesn't so much feel timeless as 'outside of time'. It therefore makes perfect sense, when Berg quotes legends such as Keith Jarrett and McCoy Tyner, Herbie Hancock and EST as influences and inspirations. After all, it is precisely the link between the past and the present, the tension between tradition and progression, which turn the album into such an exciting proposition, Mesmerising fusion elements are broken up by classic improvisation sections and propelled forward by drummer Klaus Robert Blomvik's simmering breakbeats and pulsating walking bass patterns. Although a touch of the 'Nordic jazz sound' can undeniably be felt, there is a lot more hiding underneath these dreamy arrangements than just sentimental ballads.

You can instantly tell from the urgency of the music that Oddgeir Berg has clearly had to live his passion for jazz in private for far too long. Although he still highly rates his successful work in folk rock, *Before Dawn* definitely feels like a cry for freedom and you can hear the pent-up energy everywhere. Berg, Wisløff and Blomvik may not enjoy standing in the limelight. With material like this, though, they may soon have to get used to it.