

Album Reviews and comments

“Loved it! Played it on my inflight show on KLM. Its a great concept brilliantly executed.”

Max Reinhardt, director of KLM Global Beat show, March 2018

“A fusiony, grant-getting on-paper concept project – that’s how it might appear from the title. But not so; this is magnificent, played by musicians who really know what they’re doing, music with a real focus.

In the opener Mats Edén’s viola d’amore on the left of the stereo bows slow winding phrases, Jyotsna Srikanth’s fiddle on the right answers in keening, Carnatic style while in the centre Pär Moberg’s soft soprano sax and deep low sax enter. The viola d’amore picks up tempo into Edén’s wild, double-stopped halling *Vildhonung (Wild Honey)*, the d’amore’s deep pitch and ringing sympathetic strings giving it a rich density of sound, as Dan Svensson’s big single-headed hand-drums boom and splashing, jingling metals clash. The Carnatic fiddle takes an ecstatic raga break, before all return to the halling.

It makes so much sense, and so does the whole album. There are high, cascading wordless vocals from Svensson, shifting, edgy fiddle drones, solkattu vocal raga mnemonics, traditional Swedish dance tunes meeting the shapes and twists of raga as if they were made for one another.

The quartet was put together by multi-percussionist and vocalist Svensson (of ensembles often praised in *fR* reviews, including Alla Fagra, Tarabband, Yölariis, and with Emilia Amper), and saxist and flautist Moberg, whose brilliant soprano sax soars over or sits right in the middle of the dance tunes, tracking, harmonising or counterpointing with the fiddles or, in Srikanth’s composition *Folk Dreams*, deeper saxes multitasking with percussive honk and velvety depth-plumbing lines, switching in *Slängpolska Efter Munkberg* to breathy wooden whistles and harmonica. I saw him in masterly duet with Norwegian accordeonist Jo Asgeir Lie at the first Vaka festival in Iceland, but generally Moberg is not as famous outside Sweden, or even perhaps in it, as he deserves.

To make this perfectly-balanced quartet they invited UK-resident Bangalore-born virtuoso of the Carnatic violin Srikanth, and on viola d’amore Edén, a musician and composer who’s been hugely influential in Sweden’s folk music for decades in Groupa and much else. All three Swedes have clearly long absorbed a lot of Indian music, and Srikanth’s facility with Swedish tunes is flawless and spirited. There are no cultural collisions, just empathy, mastery and sense of shared direction.

It’s powerful, subtle, glorious and, indeed, culturally significant.

Andrew Cronshaw, *fROOTS* magazine, March 2018

"My show is called Diaspora because I love music where cultures migrate and mingle. Upon seeing the email announcement for "Nordic Raga" my first reaction was 'I gotta hear this'.

The musicianship on Nordic Raga is first rate. The quartet blend their respective traditions together with subtlety and finesse. Our broadcasts reach an area of the US settled by many Norwegians and Swedes who keep their traditions alive. They could easily dance to 'Finnskogspols' and 'Vals efter Ola Lans'. And listeners less familiar with Nordic will find the music 'Nordic Raga' engaging and intriguing."

Terry O', American Radio journalist, March 2018

“London based south Indian violinist Jyotsna Srikanth and Swedish violin player Mats Edén are significant names in their respective traditions. And here, with saxophonist Pär Moberg and percussionist Dan Svensson, they’ve made an impressive quartet that really does create something new and inspirational from these distinct sources.

The opening track, Vildhonung, neatly lays out their ingredients, giving them each a chance to blend and improvise. Shrikanth’s Indian violin solo at the opening of Finnskogspols is gorgeous, although I’m less keen on the vocals from Svensson.

Elsewhere though, they rarely put a foot wrong, with virtuoso sax on Balkan Waltz, a percussion workout on Polska från Eda, and the celebratory Vals efter Ola Lans. This is something new and refreshing”

Simon Broughton, London Evening Standard, February 2018

"Nordic Raga succeeds on several levels. There is a clear respect between the musicians, so that the cross-cultural exchange never feels forced or jarring. One might even think of Shakti, and that seminal group’s meeting of jazz improvisation with Indian traditions. But most of all, Srikanth, Edén, Svensson, and Moberg create a new blend of sound and ideas that amounts to great music."

Lee Blackstone of Rootsworld, January 2018.

Full review at <http://rootsworld.com/reviews/nordicraga-18.shtml>

“En laddad och välregisserad musikkrock”

“En av de fräckaste konserter jag hamnat på under de senaste åren var ett sällsamt möte. Dan Svensson och Pär Moberg sammanstrålade på Inkonst med den indiska violinisten Jyotsna Srikanth. Ljuv, het och sällan hörd musik uppstod i den välregisserade krocken mellan svensk folkmusik och sydindiskt klassiskt tonspråk.

Att överföra energin från en konsert till platta går knappt. Men det finns en stark laddning även på det nya albumet och dessutom är Mats Edén nu med som extra kvalitetshöjare.

De fyra har arrangerat alla låtar ihop här och samspelet hålls också mycket demokratiskt och dynamiskt. De båda fiolerna och Mobergs olika blåsinstrument delar på melodierna och stämmorna och alla får plats att improvisera.

Jyotsna Srikanth är skolad i den karnatiska musiktraditionen, med dess glidningar, speciella vibrato och kvarts- och mikrotoner.

Och hon presenterar sig tidigt redan i första spåret, en tagning av Edéns och Groupas sprittande 80-talare "Vildhonung". Den extremt virtuosa violinisten släpper loss en tonslinga som direkt signalerar att vi nu befinner oss på ny mark.

Jyotsna Srikanth lilar rapp polska ihop med de andra med förbluffande elegans. Men albumets läckraste stunder kommer när hon mitt inne i en traditionell svensk låt improviserar utifrån sina indiska skalor.

Hon kunde gärna sträckt ut ännu mer än hon gör.

På Inkonst 2014 fick vi bland annat ett knippe indiska ragor. På plattan dominerar det svenska stort. Men listigt nog är spelupplägget ofta "indiskt": I början av många låtar, innan de går igång på allvar, spelas en inledning där gruppen introducerar tonerna, känner på melodislingorna och sätter stämningen.

Medan en musiker improviserar lägger också gärna någon kollega vilande borduntoner, à la den indiska tanpura.

De tre svenskarna får dessutom mässa indiska rytm-mönster i Jyotsna Srikanths "Folk dreams". Pär Moberg, Mats Edén och Dan Svensson med sin sångröst och sin

slagverksarsenal matchar för övrigt den indiska världsstjärnan rätt igenom albumet, skickligt och obesvärat."

English translation:

"An energetic and well-directed musical collision"

"One of the coolest concerts I've come across in recent years was a rare meeting. At the venue Inkonst, Dan Svensson and Pär Moberg converged with the Indian violinist Jyotsna Srikanth. Lovely, hot and seldom heard music arose in the well-directed collision between Swedish folk music and south Indian classic tonality.

Transferring the energy from a concert to an album is hardly possible. But there is a strong intensity also on the new album, and now, Mats Edén is also there as an additional quality enhancer.

The four have arranged all the songs together, and the interaction is also kept very democratic and dynamic. The two violins and Moberg's different wind instruments share the melodies and the second voices, and all are given space to improvise.

Jyotsna Srikanth is educated in the Carnatic music tradition, with its slides, special vibrato, and quarter and micro tones.

And she presents herself early in the first track, a version of Edén's and Groupa's sprawling 80's hit "Vildhonung". The extremely virtuoso violinist releases a splash of notes that signals immediately that we are now on new ground.

Jyotsna Srikanth plays crisp Swedish polskas with the others with amazing elegance. But the most delicious moments of the album come when she improvises inside a traditional Swedish song, based on her Indian scales. She could very well have done this even more.

At Inkonst 2014 we also received a bundle of Indian ragas. On the album, the Swedish stuff dominates big time. But cunningly, the layout is often "Indian": at the beginning of many songs, before it really starts off, an introduction is played, where the group introduces the scales, touches upon the melodies, and sets the mood.

While a musician improvises, a colleague often accompanies with a rubato drone, in the style of the Indian tanpura.

The three Swedes also get to chant Indian rhythm patterns in Jyotsna Srikanth's "Folk Dreams". Pär Moberg, Mats Edén and Dan Svensson, with his voice and arsenal of percussion instruments, match the Indian world star right through the album, skillfully and effortlessly. "

Alexander Agrell, Sydsvenskan, February 2018