



Dag Arnesen Trio *Pentagon Tapes*

«Pentagon Tapes»? Stay calm! The title makes no reference to secret surveillance or lethal covert operations inside the most secretive building on the planet.

This Pentagon is the Pentagon room in the abundantly fine art-supplied Reksten Collections Building in Bergen, Norway. Blessed with nice acoustics and equipped with a Steinway Grand, the Pentagon room became the recording studio where pianist Dag Arnesen, bassist Ole Marius Sandberg and drummer Ivar Thormodsæter laid down the tracks for this album in September 2016.

For Dag Arnesen (b. 1950), «Pentagon Tapes» represents a welcome return to playing jazz within the modern, American-originated idiom that he has mastered so well ever since his breakthrough on the Norwegian jazz scene in the mid-70s. Not that he ever completely abandoned it, but for several years, his highly successful «Norwegian Song» concept kept him very busy interpreting folk songs and the folk-inspired music of Edvard Grieg, Geirr Tveitt and a few other composers into his own musical language. Combining a classical education with a jazzman's heart for this music turned out very well for Arnesen and his «Norwegian Song»-book, having a big band-chapter in the writing, is not yet closed.

But then neither is Arnesen's «jazz-book». The lyric/melodic ballad-playing, the elegantly swinging up-tempo passages and the driving expressiveness in which he has excelled for almost four decades never fully left his composer's mind (or his pianist's fingers). On this album, it is proved by the fact that his two lovely ballads «Sunday Morning Mist» and «Yellow Feather» were both written during the «Norwegian Song» period. Until now, only a handful of people have had the chance to hear these timeless-sounding gems, and it feels pretty safe to say that

«Pentagon Tapes» undoubtedly will serve as a reminder of Arnesen's composing capacity. Not only because of the two ballads, but also thanks to the charming waltz «Morris», dedicated to Arnesen's resident house cat. Dag has a habit of writing songs to *all* his cats – and the more muscle-flexing «Svendsen ordner alt» («Svendsen fixes everything»). That one is named after and dedicated to the carpenter who for years has kept the Arnesen Residence in shape (no habit here, though), and who continues to do so up to this day.

As one of the most prominent Norwegian jazz musicians over the last 40 years, Dag Arnesen has led his own groups, served as a sideman for a few worthy colleagues and played a number of dates with international stars, among them Carla Bley, Joe Henderson, Elvin Jones, Jerry Bergonzi, Woody Shaw and Philip Catherine. He has also worked extensively with larger ensembles, and is currently the co-leader of the excellent Bergen Big Band. His current trio with Ole Marius Sandberg and Ivar Thormodsæter, both belonging to the generation succeeding his own, was established for the recording of his folk/classic 2015-album, «Grieg, Tveitt & I». Here, the band switch effortlessly to the jazzier «Pentagon Tapes» and handle Arnesen's quite demanding arrangements of standards like Cole Porter's «What Is This Thing Called Love» and Dave Brubeck's «In Your Own Sweet Way» with skills and sensitivity equal to that displayed on their debut recording.

That much said, there is no denying that a folk-inspired melody has snuck into «Pentagon Tapes» too. «Bonden i bryllupsgarden» («The Peasant at the Wedding Farm») is two different, linked-together arrangements/expansions of an old folk song. The trio further makes

the Elvis Presley-hit «Love Me Tender» their own. Arnesen, never a Presley-fan, speaks highly of that melody – and they certainly breathe new life into older Arnesen-compositions like «Grynte» and «I remember this» («this» referring to Keith Jarrett’s inspiring work from the 70s.) For a proper ending, Arnesen chose the popular Norwegian children’s song «Lille Måltrost» («Little Song Thrush») by the much-loved team of composer Finn Ludt and poet/singer Alf Prøysen. Okay, we may miss the beautiful lyrics, but the way the trio gently lands the melody makes the song stand out as an instrumental in its own right.

And it still provides «Pentagon Tapes» with the slightly melancholy aftertaste that the lyrics would have conveyed.

Terje Mosnes, November 2016

Ole Marius Sandberg is a busy freelance musician that has played on more than 30 albums and two under his own name with his own band, with a third coming soon. He is a versatile bass player that easily crosses genres like jazz, big band, singer/songwriter or more pop oriented music or in theater settings.

Ivar Thormodsæter is an energetic drummer that has played with many very famous pop and rock bands and musicians in Norway like **Maria Mena, Susanne Sundfør, Vidar Busk, Kurt Nilsen, Noora Nor** ao. and he is playing and touring these days with the Norwegian rap-king Vinnie and the world famous **Madcon**. Ivar is adding stamina and energy to the new **Dag Arnesen Trio**.

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