

Strønen/Stenson/Ljungkvist/Eilertsen Parish

Fredrik Ljungkvist: clarinet, tenor saxophone; **Bobo Stenson:** piano; **Mats Eilertsen:** double-bass; **Thomas Strønen:** drums

ECM 1870

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Parish is a fascinating band initiated by Norwegian drummer Thomas Strønen. Half-Swedish, half-Norwegian, it brings master pianist Bobo Stenson into the orbit of the younger generation of Scandinavian players, with striking results. While being thoroughly contemporary in its sensitivity to sound, “Parish” also implies connections to the intellectually-alert improvised chamber jazz of Paul Bley and Jimmy Giuffre and, by extension, to the roots of music on ECM. Much of the material is improvised in the moment, with free ballads abounding, and graceful and compelling ‘abstract’ playing, of ‘Webernesque’ acuity and transparency. Thomas Strønen also writes elegant themes that steer the players toward the free.

The group was formed in 2001, a debut album, “Rica”, recorded live at the Oslo Jazz Festival that year, was issued by Dutch label Challenge. Since then, however, the unit has found a clearer sense of own identity.

In Parish, Bobo Stenson emphasises probing, searching single-note lines. The clarinet of Fredrik Ljungkvist has an astringent beauty (see the four Suites for Trio), while his tenor sax tends toward bluesy expressivity (see especially “In Motion”). There is at least a hint of Scott LaFaro in Eilertsen’s approach to the bass, while Strønen’s drums are fleet and resourceful throughout, fanning the sense of spontaneous counterpoint that is one of Parish’s strengths, and giving an easy streamlined flow to the group sound.

Thomas Strønen (born 1972) was founder-leader of the (now-defunct) Norwegian/British band Food, whose line-up originally included prolific trumpeter Arve Henriksen and bassist Mats Eilertsen, as well as British saxophonist Iain Ballamy. Strønen has also worked with Tomasz Stanko, the Cikada String quartet and singer Silje Nergaard, and recorded a well-received album with Supersilent-keyboardist Ståle Storløkken. The drummer also has his own electronic solo project, Pohlitz.

Bassist Mats Eilertsen (born 1975) is known to ECM listeners for his sterling bass work with Jacob Young group on “Evening Falls”, and for his European touring with the Young group. He has also played in concert with Trygve Seim, Pat Metheny, Kenny Wheeler, Susanne Abbuehl, Christian Wallumrød, Nils Petter Molvær and many others. He and Strønen have played together in very many contexts – from Eilertsen’s own Turanga album (also with Ljungkvist, plus Dutch cellist Ernst Reijseger) to the Maria Kannegaard Trio.

Fredrik Ljungkvist (born 1969) is regarded as the most outstanding sax and clarinet player of his generation in Sweden. He has worked with all the major Swedish players including Anders Jormin, Raymond Strid and Mats Gustafsson, and with international musicians including Marc Ducret, John Taylor, Axel Dörner and Ken Vandermark – he is a member of Vandermark’s Territory Band which has toured on both sides of the Atlantic to considerable acclaim.

Bobo Stenson (born 1944) has long since defined the meaning of modern jazz piano in Sweden. Early in his playing career he worked with a line of visiting Americans, from Sonny Rollins to Gary Burton to Dexter Gordon, and had a particularly creative association with Don Cherry, beginning in the 1960s and lasting until the end of the great trumpeter's life (he appears on Cherry's final leader date, "Dona Nostra"). Stenson made his first ECM recordings in 1971: Garbarek's "Sart" and his own trio album "Underwear", with Arild Andersen and Jon Christensen. In the mid 70s, the Jan Garbarek-Bobo Stenson Quartet was one of the hottest bands on the European festival circuit and left behind two albums widely regarded as classics: "Witchi-Tai-To" and "Dansere". In recent years a priority has been his own trio, with albums including "Reflections", "War Orphans", "Serenity" (all with Anders Jormin and Jon Christensen), and "Goodbye" (with Paul Motian on drums). For ten years from 1988-1997, Stenson worked extensively with Charles Lloyd (albums: "Fish Out Of Water", "Notes from Big Sur", "The Call", "All My Relations", "Canto") and was also a member of Tomasz Stanko's quartet and sextet (albums: "Matka Joanna", "Leosia", "Litania"). Further ECM recordings with Bobo Stenson are in preparation.

Parish appears at the Manchester Jazz Festival in late July; a European tour in September is currently being set up. Details will appear in due course on the web site at www.ecmrecords.com.