

Arild Andersen /Paolo Vinaccia/Tommy Smith Live at Belleville

Arild Andersen: double-bass, live electronics; **Tommy Smith:** tenor saxophone; **Paolo Vinaccia:** drums

ECM 2078

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The first release from Arild Andersen's new trio, featuring saxophonist Tommy Smith and drummer Paolo Vinaccia in a performance recorded live at Oslo's Belleville Club and the Drammen Theatre. One of the most comprehensive and exciting recordings of Andersen's long creative career, it allies compositional intelligence to top flight improvising with powerful results.

The major work on the disc is Andersen's "Independency", a piece written in 2005 to mark the centenary of Norway's liberation from the union with Sweden, presented as an epic voyage of continually changing musical emphasis, from guided free playing to post-bop group interaction, beautiful balladry and evocative sound-painting.

The stripped-down sax/bass/drums format will make long-time Andersen listeners recall his historic collaborations with Jan Garbarek/Edward Vesala ("Triptykon") or Sam Rivers/Barry Altschul ("Hues", on Impulse); "Live At Belleville" is also in this tradition. Scottish tenorist Smith makes a magisterial showing. Reviewing a live performance of "Independency" in the *Birmingham Post*, Peter Bacon wrote. "As a demonstration of what the saxophone is capable of, this was something of a master-class. Smith's mastery of whole areas above the instrument's normal range - and then to draw such sweet notes from that stratosphere - simply takes the breath away." Smith's versatility is emphasized also in a yearning and freely expressive version of Duke Ellington's "Prelude To A Kiss". Throughout, the interaction between the trio is exemplary. Apart from driving the trio forward with his muscular basslines and locking in with Paolo Vinaccia's detailed drums, Andersen also expands the band's sonic palette with discreet electronics, building layers of strings with digital loops, and creating arrangements in the moment.

Andersen is of course an ECM musician of the first hour. Born in Oslo in 1945, he joined Jan Garbarek's group in 1967 and in 1970 recorded "Afric Pepperbird" with the group that included Terje Rypdal and Jon Christensen – the 'big four' as they are still called in the Far North. In the same period he worked with Scandinavian residents Don Cherry and George Russell, and backed a long line of visiting Americans – from Sonny Rollins to Chick Corea. After a New York sojourn in the early 1970s that found him working with Sam Rivers, Paul Bley, Steve Kuhn and Sheila Jordan, he returned to Norway and began leading his own bands. He has recorded 18 albums as a leader or co-leader for ECM, along the way making listeners aware of young talents including Jon Balke, Tore Brunborg, Nils Petter Molvaer and Vasillis Tsabropoulos, all of whom first came to international attention with Andersen bands.

Over the last 20 years Andersen has also explored the junctions of Norwegian folk and improvised music – whether using traditional tunes as a basis for jazz improvising, or directly collaborating with folk musicians, such as singer Kirsten Braten Berg. His commissioned works include "Hyperborean" (recorded 1996) with the Cikada String Quartet and Bendik

Hofseth, and “Electra” (recorded 2005) written for Sophocles’ drama and premiered in Athens in the context of the Olympic Games. In addition to his own projects, Andersen has been playing recently in the new Andy Sheppard Sextet; an ECM recording is in preparation.

Saxophonist Tommy Smith, born in Edinburgh in 1967, immediately made his mark on the Scottish jazz scene with his first album “Giant Strides”, recorded when he was just sixteen, in 1983. That same year he won a scholarship to attend the Berklee College of Music in Boston. There, he formed the group Forward Motion, and also joined Gary Burton’s band, with which he appeared on the ECM album “Whiz Kids” in 1986. He has since released more than twenty albums under his own name for Hep Records, GFM, Blue Note Records, Linn Records and his own Spartacus label. Smith has worked in small groups and big bands, recording and touring with major jazz musicians including Joe Lovano, David Liebman, Benny Golson, Joe Locke, Gary Burton, Chick Corea, Tommy Flanagan, John Scofield, John Patitucci, Miroslav Vitous, Jack DeJohnette, Jon Christensen, Kenny Wheeler, and more. He has composed for and performed with classical orchestras and ensembles including the Orchestra of St. John’s Square, the Scottish Ensemble, the Edinburgh Youth Orchestra and the Paragon Ensemble. He has also recorded and performed with classical pianist Murray McLachlan, and Scottish traditional musicians including Gaelic singer Karen Matheson and accordionist/keyboards player Donald Shaw from the band Capercaillie.

Tommy Smith’s work with the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra includes programmes of Oliver Nelson, Basie, Ellington, Mingus, Benny Goodman, Gil Evans, Kenton, Monk more. The SNJO has also premiered Smith’s own compositions including “Beauty and the Beast” for David Liebman and “Torah” for Joe Lovano.

Paolo Vinaccia, born 1954 in Italy, and based in Norway since 1979, is a drummer, percussionist and composer who has played on more than 100 jazz albums including recordings with Terje Rypdal, Ketil Bjørnstad, Bendik Hofseth, Bugge Wesseltoft, Mike Mainieri and many others. His ECM appearances include Terje Rypdal’s “Skywards” and “Vossabrygg” and Arild Andersen’s “Hyperborean” and “Electra”. Amongst Vinaccia’s composing credits is the score for the movie “The Beautiful Country”, directed by Hans Peter Moland in 2004.

Release of “Live At Belleville” is supported by a tour of the trio with concerts in Sweden, Scotland, England and Germany. Dates confirmed are Uppsala Jazz Festival (November 1), London Purcell Room (November 22), Lichfield Arts Centre (November 28), Neuwied Marktkirche (November 29), Edinburgh, The Lot (December 3), Aberdeen, Blue Lamp (December 4), Glasgow RSAMD (December 6), Lanark, Grayfriars Parish Church (December 7), Berlin, Kleist-Haus (December 10).