



Halbheer, Doran, Andersen, by Sergio Cabanillas

Marc Halbheer (drums), Christy Doran (guitar) and Arild Andersen (bass) have witnessed some of the most memorable moments of European jazz history, from Vienna Art Orchestra to OM and the birth and blossom of the iconic label ECM. We could have a pleasant chat with them in their last [and successful](#) visit to Bogui jazz club in Madrid.



Marc Halbheer, Arild Andersen
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CARLOS LARA: How did this trio begin?

MARC HALBHEER: I have a quintet, and I asked Arild to join us for the future while we were checking tour dates for the five

of us, but only the three of us were available for this week. So we decided to make this tour as a trio.

Sergio Cabanillas: Shall this trio continue in the future as a different project?

Marc Halbheer: Well, the plan is to play with the quintet in the fall and then we'll see how the trio will go on.

Christy Doran: Surely other players won't be available (laughs)...

Marc Halbheer: ...exactly (laughs). The next time we'll check the dates and the same thing will happen. It's always difficult to find the dates when everybody is free.

Carlos Lara: The set you're playing are all Marc's originals or everybody contributes?

Arild Andersen: No, all of us are bringing some music for this tour. I think we have two or three songs each. It's a blend of material from all of us.



Marc Halbheer

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Sergio Cabanillas: How did you come to the decision of creating Textit Music?

Marc Halbheer: I recorded a CD with all friends from Los Angeles in 2009. It was really straight ahead West Coast *bop* style. No record label is really interested in putting out this kind of music, but I wanted this recording to be released, so I just created my label, that's how it started. Then we did another CD, and then I started writing my own music and published the third CD.

Sergio Cabanillas: It looks like the record market situation invited you to start your label.

Marc Halbheer: Today, unless you work with really a big label like Blue Note or ECM Records, where Arild has recorded many times... small labels can't really do anything for you anymore, because they have no money. You have to pay them to do the artwork...

Sergio Cabanillas: You have to pay for production, artwork, even manufacturing the CDs...

Mark Halbheer: ...so I decided to do it by myself.



Marc Halbheer

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Enrique Farelo: There was an ECM Records compilation about OM in 2006. Did the members of the band make the song selection or was it ECM's choice?

Christy Doran: No, we were able to choose the tunes. *Cerberus*, the last record, musically I think it was the best, so it was clear that a lot of music from there was chosen.

Enrique Farelo: Do you think that OM became an influence for other bands like Soft Machine or Weather Report?

Christy Doran: No, I think it was the other way around. OM was influenced a lot by two different musical jazz directions. We always had a saxophone, Urs Leimgruber, in the band, and he was more interested in the free jazz kind of style like Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler... and Coltrane, of course. I was more interested in the McLaughlin stuff, not the Mahavishnu but more like Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*... and of course I like the first Weather Report with Airtó Moreira, Miroslav Vitous... the first album. That was kind of open, it wasn't so 'rockish' like later on, when Pastorius joined the band. We were heavily influenced by that.



Christy Doran

Enrique Farelo: In 2009 you get back together in the show at Willisau Festival and you recorded that for Intakt Records. Do you think it was the next natural step or a complete change in the philosophy and a transformation of the band?

Christy Doran: We didn't play together as a quartet for twenty five years. In that time, Urs Leimgruber, the saxophone player, went totally into free improvised music, he does nothing else. We others found it hard to play something else with him, so at that time we had to either stop, give it up or go a little bit his way. It's funny how when these four people get together it sounds like OM, even if it's improvised, that's my feeling. It has a special sound, I don't know why exactly, but it's just like that.

Carlos Lara: Do you feel closer to Jimi Hendrix or John Abercrombie?

Christy Doran: It's a tough question (laughs), I have no answer to that. I wouldn't say that I'm very much influenced by Abercrombie, whereas I still play compositions by Jimi Hendrix. We're going to record with Erika Stucky, Jamaladeen Tacuma and Fredy Studer a new CD next November. There are two gigs already booked, we're working hard, so... Jimi Hendrix is still closer.



Christy Doran

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Sergio Cabanillas: Listening to New Bag, I would clearly say so. It's the first time I've heard someone throat singing in jazz rock, it's shocking to me!

Christy Doran: Yes, but that's only one group of mine! Bunter Hund, the other band, doesn't sound like that. Last year came out a CD with Yang Jing (*No.9*, Leo Records, 2013), the Chinese pipa player... and it doesn't sound like Hendrix at all (laughs).

Enrique Farelo: After so many decades working for ECM, what's your experience with Manfred Eicher?

Arild Andersen: I met him very early in ECM, when it started, and we became good friends, so we've just been working together all these forty years now. It's been going OK (laughs).

Enrique Farelo: What ECM musicians do you feel musically

closer to?

Arild Andersen: Everybody has been on ECM. It all started with Jan Garbarek, Jon Christensen and Terje Rypdal, that was the start of my time with ECM. I still play some times with Jon Christensen. I don't see Garbarek too much, and Terje now and then. Pat Metheny was there, Ralph Towner was there... it's almost like a family.

Sergio Cabanillas: How about Vassilis Tsabropoulos?

Arild Andersen: I haven't seen him in a long time; I think he's doing more classical music than jazz these days. It's about ten years since we had that trio now. That was a nice trio for a couple of years. I played a couple of gigs in Athens after that. Then I started my trio with Tommy Smith and Paolo Vinaccia which I'm working with now. That has been my main issue the last eight years.



Arild Andersen

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Carlos Lara: How do you approach composing for theater or performance? What's the difference with jazz in that process?

Arild Andersen: I didn't write much for theater, I wrote for a couple of films. The one that came out on ECM called *Electra* (ECM, 2005); that was made for theater. The director was very much into jazz, and I wrote it as for a jazz quartet or quintet, but we had a Greek choir singing in old Greek. The music had to be distributed sound wise so you could hear the talking on top of the music. When the records came out, I remixed it to have trumpet and a lot of percussion added which otherwise would have gone in the way of the human voice, so they could come out more. In general, when I compose, I have to know who is going to play it, I don't compose music just to compose music. It's for a special project and I know who is going to play it. Then I write as little as possible, and I hope they pick up the idea. They will play it in their style and they will use the sketches I make and make them sound as close as possible to themselves.

Sergio Cabanillas: So you write for musicians, not for the music itself?

Arild Andersen: Yes, I think of musicians when I write some music. Afterwards, those same songs can be used in different sets, so I took some of my compositions and brought them to this trio. I know they can be used in general, but when I sit down and write, I like to know who is going to play it. That's the main difference, I think, in writing for jazz or theater or film.

Enrique Farello: How important is it Norwegian folk music in your compositions?

Arild Andersen: I started to listen closer to this in the late eighties and I had a commission to put together improvised music and folk music. If you can catch the simplicity of Norwegian folk music in your own compositions and use it as a tool to improvise on, I think that makes the music very strong.



Arild Andersen

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Sergio Cabanillas: It's a powerful tool, isn't it?

Arild Andersen: Yes. The simplicity and believing in the musicians who will play it, their strength and their personality, it brings it forward. That's the most important thing for me.

Sergio Cabanillas: I saw you play at the Bull's Head in 2010 with John Etheridge and John Marshall. There was a CD of that trio called *In House*. Is that project still going on?

Arild Andersen: It was recorded live at Pizza Express. We didn't play in two years; Etheridge and Marshall are cool, but it's not an active working trio.

Carlos Lara: What did you learn from the Zappa band drummers Ralph Humphrey and Ed Man?

Marc Halbheer: I studied with them the polyrhythmic relations and how rhythm really works. They were the grand masters of these and I was really interested in learning about it. I listened a lot to Frank Zappa when I was a teenager.

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