

Jazzwise (UK)

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ACT

RE PRINT

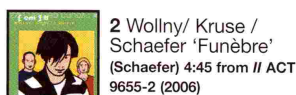
ACT: 15 MAGIC YEARS

The rise of the ACT label has been one of the rare success stories in an otherwise troubled industry. It is down to the energy and vision of Siegfried "Siggi" Loch, who has built an exiting, wide ranging catalogue since the label was started in 1992. In more recent times it has been one of the most important labels documenting the rise of European jazz, where it is home to exciting, fresh voices such as EST, Viktoria Tolstoy, Michael Wollny's trio, Nils Landgren, Nguyễn Lê, Lars Danielsson, Solveig Slettahjell and a host of other young stars revitalising the current jazz scene. These are the stories behind the tracks on this month's stunning covermount CD.



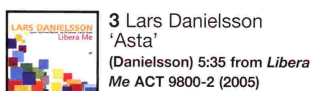
1 John Lee Hooker
'Della Mae'
(Hooker) 3:15 from *Lost Blues Tapes ACT 6000-2* (1965)

As a teenager Siggi Loch became a jazz fan after seeing Sidney Dechet live in concert. At the age of 19 he got his first job in the record industry with the desire to become a record producer and to start his own label. From 1963 to 1965 Loch produced among others the legendary recordings of The American Folk Blues Festival and after starting ACT in 1992 he was able to release some of these amazing archive recordings. A personal highlight of this time was his recording with John Lee Hooker and Buddy Guy (his first recordings ever) in 1965.



2 Wollny/ Kruse / Schaefer 'Funèbre'
(Schaefer) 4:45 from *ACT 9655-2* (2006)

ACT's declared aim is to discover and support new talent. One of the most successful ventures has been the launch of the critically acclaimed Young German Jazz series in particular the unique talent of Michael Wollny who recorded for ACT with his trio [em], as well as in a duo setting with 74-year-old saxophone colossus Heinz Sauer. Wollny's first solo album is due in April 2007. "The pianist and his Berlin-based band nodded to hip hop and drum 'n' bass while fizzing with the energy of experimental rock. This is the future sound of jazz." (*The Observer*)



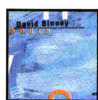
3 Lars Danielsson
'Asta'
(Danielsson) 5:35 from *Libera Me ACT 9800-2* (2005)

Sweden has been a focus of the ACT recording activities after Siggi Loch discovered Nils Landgren at the Jazz Baltica Festival in 1994. He has been in close touch with that scene ever since and master double bass and cello virtuoso Lars Danielsson became a sideman on many ACT recordings. For his solo debut, Danielsson was able to realise one of the most complex projects on the label featuring Nils-Petter Molvaer, Jon Christensen, Dave Liebman and the Danish Radio Symphonic Orchestra.



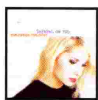
4 Nils Landgren/ Rigmor Gustafsson 'Fragile' (Summer) 3:13 from *Sentimental Journey ACT 9409-2* (2003)

"Nils Landgren is a dream of an artist for a record label," says Siggi Loch. "Not only is he one of today's best trombone players in jazz but also a gifted composer, bandleader, producer and vocalist." After a series of very successful Funk Unit projects Landgren went into the studio to produce his debut vocal album for ACT which was soon to top all his previous successes. On *Sentimental Journey* he teams up with vocal duo partners Rigmor Gustafsson and Viktoria Tolstoy as well as with two Swedish piano stars Esbjörn Svensson and Anders Widmark.



5 David Binney/Chris Potter/Uri Caine/Brian Blade 'The Global Soul' (Binney) 4:10 from *South ACT 9279-2* (2001)

David Binney's ACT debut album *South* was very instrumental in making him popular in Europe where the album was received with superlative critical acclaim. He is a courageous spirit who, influenced by the many styles and periods of jazz along with rock, funk, and on through to modern classical, plays and composes a music of hitherto unheard of beauty. The album also features Chris Potter, (ts); Adam Rogers, (g); Uri Caine, (p); Scott Colley, (b); Brian Blade and Jim Black, (dr).



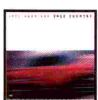
6 Viktoria Tolstoy 'Shining On You' (Svensson) 4:03 from *Shining On You ACT 9701-2* (2004)

In 1997 Esbjörn Svensson composed and produced the fantastic *White Russian* album with Viktoria Tolstoy for Swedish Blue Note that made very little impact outside of their own country. It took two years before Nils Landgren brought the two together again and produced her ACT debut *Shining On You* which scored with a German Jazz Award. Today the Swedish singer is one of the most prominent vocalists in Europe.



7 Gerardo Nunez/Michael Brecker/Chano Dominguez 'Calima' (Nuñez) from *Jazzpaña II ACT 9284-2* (2000)

Jazzpaña II is an album that wishes to finally place the importance of the current Spanish jazz scene in the right light. The first *Jazzpaña* recordings in 1992 were clearly dominated by American players. In 2000 Siggi Loch put together a more Spanish dominated session led by the flamenco guitar genius Gerardo Nuñez, Chano Dominguez, (p), Jorge Pardo and Perico Sambeat, (saxes), Carles Benavent, (el-b). This group was joined by Renaud Garcia-Fons, (b), Fareed Haque, (g) and the unforgettable Michael Brecker. The openness extended by all involved with *Jazzpaña II* has resulted in a music that sounds like flamenco and jazz have somehow always belonged together.



8 Joel Harrison/Norah Jones 'Tennessee Waltz' (King/Stewart) 4:22 from *Free Country ACT 9419-2* (2002)

ACT heard about Norah Jones prior to her sensational Blue Note debut from saxophonist David Binney who played on this recording. Once Blue Note found out about the Joel Harrison recording the legal department was up in arms and they wanted to put a stop to the release. But the good relationship between the ACT label chief and the Norah Jones producer Arif Mardin prevailed and led to a friendly agreement between all parties concerned and *Free Country* was finally released.



9 Tomasz Stanko/Jazz Baltica Ensemble 'Down By The Old Well' (trad. arr. Bengt-Arne Wallin) 6:51 from *The Birth and Re-Birth of Swedish Folk Jazz ACT 9254-2* (1998)

Quincy Jones lived in Stockholm in the early 60s working as an arranger for the Swedish Radio and sharing a room with the young trumpet player Bengt-Arne Wallin. It was Jones who advised him to dig into the deep Swedish tradition of folk music to create the album *Old Folklore in Swedish Modern*, released in 1963. Along with the piano works by Jan Johansson these recordings were absolutely groundbreaking and highly influential in the evolution of Scandinavian Folk-Jazz. Rainer Haarmann, the musical director of the Jazz Baltica Festival, invited the Swedish composer to re-arrange and direct the original music for the Jazz Baltica Ensemble. The concert was a triumph. The radio recording with Tomasz Stanko at his very best, together with the re-release of the original 1963 album, is another absolute highlight of the ACT catalogue.



10 EST 'Dodge The Dodo' (Svensson / Berglund / Öström) 5:15 from *From Gagarin's Point Of View ACT 9005-2* (1999)

Esbjörn Svensson was introduced to ACT as the keyboard player of the Nils Landgren Funk Unit in 1995. The release of *From Gagarin's Point Of View* on ACT in 1999 was the beginning of the unparalleled international success story of this magic piano trio and 'Dodge The Dodo' became their anthem in concerts for years to come. In October of 2006 EST made the cover of the oldest US jazz publication *Down Beat* as the first European jazz artist, spearheading what they choose to call "The European Invasion". They have just won a Swedish Grammy for *Tuesday Wonderland*.



11 Soriba Kouyate/Paolo Fresu/Linley Marthe 'Massanicissé' (trad. arr. Philippe Gaillot) from *Kanakassi ACT 9272-2* (1997)

Soriba Kouyata is a griot and his family traces its roots back to the time of Sundiata. Soriba's father Mamadou Kouyaté is a legendary kora player and opened the first kora school. The son toured the world with him and investigated the possibilities of widening the scope of the kora by combining the richness and depth of the griots' tradition with contemporary music. His eclectic worldview has led to his work with Peter Gabriel, Salif Keita, Youssou N'dour and Dizzy Gillespie. On *Kanakassi* he was joined by some of the finest French world jazz players such as Linley Marthe, Joël Allouche and Italian trumpet star Paolo Fresu.



12 Eddie Harris/Nils Landgren/Bernard Purdie/WDR Big Band 'Wade In The Water' (trad.) 4:45 from *Soul To Jazz ACT 9242-2* (1996)

In 1996 Siggi Loch invited the innovative saxophonist and composer Eddie Harris to become part of the ACT/WDR Big Band project *Soul to Jazz*. On 'Wade In The Water' Harris is chasing one of his greatest admirers Nils Landgren on trombone. The studio recordings as well as the concert on 15 March 1996 proved unforgettable and sadly became his swan song. Eddie Harris was hospitalised after his return to L.A. and died four months later.



13 Nils Landgren Funk Unit/Esbjörn Svensson 'Walk Tall' (Adderley) 5:17 from *Paint It Blue ACT 9243-2* (1995)

When sitting and talking about the concept for trombonist Nils Landgren's first ACT studio album the idea of a Cannonball Adderley tribute was born. Esbjörn Svensson was on keyboards with special guests Michael and Randy Brecker, Till Brönner, Aírto Moreira and Bernard Purdie. The rest is history. By 2007 Nils Landgren has recorded 15 and produced a further six albums for ACT. He received 16 Gold records in Germany and Sweden and 3 Platinum German Jazz Awards as an artist and/or producer.



14 Nguyễn Lê/Huong Thanh/Paolo Fresu 'Mangustao' (Lê/Borker) 4:08 from *Tales From Viêt-Nam ACT 9225-2* (1994)

The French-Vietnamese guitar player Nguyễn Lê was introduced to ACT by Peter Erskine in 1993. This led to his debut trio recording *Million Waves* but he had always dreamed of a band mixing jazz musicians with Vietnamese traditional musicians, playing a music inspired by the songs his mother used to sing to him. In September 1994 he began recording *Tales of Viêt-Nam*: a journey back into his childhood, a return to his lost roots.



15 Joachim Kühn, Django Bates, Douglas Boyd/Michael Gibbs 'Black Is The Colour Of My True Love's Hair' (trad. arr. Michael Gibbs) 4:42 from *Europeana ACT 9804-2* (1993)

"This is a towering achievement by any standards, inspired by Bengt-Arne Wallin's *Old Folklore in Swedish Modern*. Michael Gibbs was commissioned to provide imaginative settings of folk tunes from around Europe for symphony orchestra and jazz soloists. Gibbs wrote arrangements with Kühn's approach to the piano in mind; harmonically rich, there are tempo changes and use of dissonance but it is the sweep and grandeur of his musical vision that is compelling. Add to that a cast of soloists who rise eloquently to the challenge of the music, and you have exactly what this album is. A classic." (*Jazzwise*)



16 Vince Mendoza / Ai Di Meola / Michael Brecker / Canizares / WDR Big Band 'Tangos' (Mendoza) 7:08 from *Jazzpaña ACT 9212-2* (1992)

Thirty years after Siggi Loch's debut as the producer of Klaus Doldinger, *Jazzpaña* was the first new recording for his own ACT label and remains one of the most challenging albums in the catalogue. Recorded in July of 1992 this flamenco-jazz-extravaganza was praised around the world. The (then unknown) composer/arranger/conductor Vince Mendoza, as well as co-arranger, Arif Mardin were both nominated for a Grammy for this album. A timeless cultural highlight.