



## Anders Aarum Oslo Puzzle



## Norwegian Fakirs & Mental Battles

The Oslo-focus of this album may come as a surprise. After all, among the many incredible Scandinavian piano trios, Anders Aarum's is one the least Nordic sounding. Drawing from European classical music and gospel hymns, New Orleans sounds, global jazz and Caribbean rhythms, they were always keen to travel beyond the familiar and extend their horizon. As it happens, that's precisely what *Oslo Puzzle* does, too – just in a completely different way.

The idea for the album fittingly came to Aarum when he wasn't actually in Oslo. For a trip to Budapest with his good friend, the singer, and composer Hilde Louise Asbjørnsen, he had taken historian Even Saugstad's popular book about "Oslo originals" with him – a compilation of fascinating residents from the Norwegian capital's rich history. The book would directly influence the genesis of the music and lead its narrative.

Each title on the album, he decided, would paint a portrait of one of these intriguing personalities. Take "El Jucan", a tribute to Einar Olsen, who walked the streets as a fakir, swallowed swords, flames and glass and lay on a bed of nails. *Oslo Puzzle*'s cover photography, depicting a rainy day on the roof of the Oslo opera, sticks to the theme as well, as it was taken by Erlend Mikael Sæverud, who made a name for himself with various photo series built specifically around the many faces of the city.

Even the recording sessions relate to the concept behind the music. To be able to focus entirely on the performance, the trio headed out to the picturesque studio "Musikkloftet", located 20 minutes outside Oslo. In an inspiring twist of serendipity, this space happened to be in the immediate vicinity of a mental hospital. This set the mood perfectly, as many of the personalities captured on the album battled with alcoholism and deteriorating psychological health.

It is remarkable that this is the very first studio album by the Anders Aarum trio in its current constellation. After 15 years as the unofficial house band at legendary jazz club Herr Nilsen and recording with many of the leading voices of the Norwegian scene, they've developed a telepathic connection. It allowed them to spend no more than three days preparing the material before recording everything in a single 1,5 hour short session.

This impressive achievement proves two things: They, too, are now originals. They, too, have now become part of the Oslo puzzle.