

Chemistry can come from the most unexpected places. While Scandinavia is known for intrepid cross-pollination of musical styles, the place where most of the attention seems to be focused - right or wrong - is Norway, where the amount of music being created seems almost inversely proportionate to its population of less than five million, scattered freely across its 125,000 square miles. But equal innovation is taking place in the geographically larger and more heavily populated Sweden, much of it sadly beneath the radar of North American music fans. For fans of guitar-heavy jamband music, the innocuously named Trio has struck a curious mix of relentlessly psychedelic fusion, balls-to-the-wall guitar pyrotechnics and crazed, Captain Beefheart-inspired vocals with hard-edged grooves that are in-your-face impossible to ignore.

The music Trio makes might suggest a young band that's been heavily influenced by everyone from Jimi Hendrix, Frank Zappa and John McLaughlin to Jaco Pastorius and Buddy Miles, but these are no youngsters. Drummer Lief Fredriksson is a 30-year veteran of the Swedish music scene, with a résumé that includes work with artists ranging from Don Cherry and Barney Kessel to Jan Akkerman and the recently deceased Esbjorn Svensson. Bassist Bjorn Egelius may not have as large a C.V., but as the founder of Trio he's a resoundingly virtuosic player, with hints of Jonas Hellborg in the sheer density of his sound and an ability to bring out the funk when necessary, as he does on the irregularly metered "New Dehli," one of four tracks on the group's powerful debut, *From Nowhere to Eternity*.

Egelius and Fredriksson sound like they've been playing together for years, pumping out rock-hard and odd-metered grooves throughout, from the pedal-tone opener, "The Beginning" and its brief reprise/album closer "The Beginning Part II," to the visceral, thumb-slapping funk of "Yugoslavian Ferry," where guitarist Tobbe Johanson scats along with his high octane lines, sounding like Jaco Pastorius on steroids. Johanson's tone is wildly overdriven, his playing possessing the kind of reckless abandon that finds him often looking over the edge of a precipice, considering making the leap but always pulling back just in the nick of time. On "The Beginning," Johanson's seemingly stream-of-consciousness lyrics come in after an intro of wammy bar-driven, feedback-laden Hendrixian guitar, questioning life and change with curious naïveté, before heading into a lengthy solo excursion that combines staggeringly fast runs with long-held harmonic feedback and curiously scratched and scraped notes. Loose and unfettered, Johanson is clearly someone to watch, though it would be interesting to hear him in a more structured context.

That's because Trio is undeniably more about creating general contexts--albeit rhythmically complex ones--that provide a foundation to release any and all inhibitions and let the music go where it will. The four tracks that comprise this relatively brief CD run together to create 37 minutes of sonic mayhem over thick, propulsive grooves that, when it's all over, is more than enough to leave most not just satiated, but exhausted. *From Nowhere to Eternity* is an unabashedly unconstrained debut from a group that takes a retro vibe and updates it for the new millennium.

Tracks and Personnel

Tracks: The Beginning; Yugoslavian Ferry; New Dehli; The Beginning Part II.

Personnel: Bjorn Egelius: bass; Leif Fredriksson: drums; Tobbe Johanson: vocal, guitar.

John Kelman Review