

It is written that the idea for Nostalgia trio came into your mind as a remembrance of your New York days and gigs you had in Harlem with various Hammond organ based bands. Could you go deeply into this story?

When I moved to NYC in 1992 my neighbour was a hammond organist. He made me hip to the whole hammond tradition and took me to a jam session in harlem every sunday. I loved the scene and learned a lot about where this music comes from. When I moved back to Germany in 1994 I had the desire to form a hammond trio that uses the tradition but plays their own music. Some kind of contemporary bebop.

Saxophone or guitar we hear more often in this kind of surrounding. Where is trombone finding his place?

There are no trios of hammond, drums and trombone in my knowledge except for Nostalgia. there is one recording of Jimmy Smith with a few tunes with Curtis Fuller on it. I love the blending of Hammond and trombone so I ask myself why I am the first one who did this combination.

From the first Nostalgia CD Daddy's Bones, it was clear that you are not feeling it as a classical „soul-jazz-groove“ outfit, but just as a new vehicle to explore variety of music. Does the presence of Hammond B3 sound and power limiting this exploration or, on contrary brings more challenge to you as a composer?

The band started as a more or less classic bebop trio with my own tunes. Then it transformed into something else. We used material from the romantic callical music and later even pop rock music. Now we are back in the more tradition acoustic sound. The challenge is to use the tradition but do it in your own way. I don` t want to have a retro band. I want to continue the path of the beautiful tradition. Writing my own tunes helps a lot with this goal.

Also, thinking about „Nostalgia“ name, one will expect many ballads and romantic moods, yet this is not the main issue of the trio at all. Please comment.

Nostalgia refers to something that comes from the past and has been proven to be beautiful and strong. My goal with this band is to use that feeling and tradition and do my own thing with it. In fact our music is very emotional and in parts romantic. that is a strong statment if it does not get silly or corny.

New CD is called „Sturm und Drang“. Could you enlight the main ideas on it, moods, and differences in comparing to previous albums?

"Sturm und drang" was released un 2012. In the meantime we have a new program that we already play live since a few months. It is called "nature" and is more acoustic and less rock

orientated. Our new album will be released in March 2015. Sturm und Drang carried the idea of a jazz band using elements from pop /rock but still make it sound like jazz and improvised music. We still perform parts of this.

Dutch Arno Krijger is a newest member of the band. How this personal change reflected to the overall sound of the trio?

Well Florian quit the band and I had the challenge to find an equal sub on the organ position. In Arno I found someone who is even deeper in the organ tradition but also likes to explore adventures things in music. He plays the hammond differently than for example Jimmy Smith. He plays the bass with his foot, the chords with his left and the melody with his right hand. That makes it more comfortable for me because I can now have bass, chords and melody at the same time even when the organist plays solo. Usually there is no chords during the organ solo unless there is a guitar who does that job. In our case I have more options for the music and it always sounds orchestral.

Serbian Dejan Terzic is one of the well known figures of European Jazz. May you describe your work with him, also in the light of the fact that he is as well an accomplished leader, with various interesting projects behind him.

I met Dejan in the mid 90ies and felt that we have a very strong common sense of time form. I always wanted to put together a band with him and when I had the idea with the hammond trio he was my first call. This time feel is very strong and he is based deeply in the jazz tradition. At the same time he always looks ahead and wants to explore new things in music. When he started being a band leader as well he developed a very personal style as a writer and player. He is now a complete musician and the work with his own band contributes also to the band Nostalgia because his voice is so strong now. What a drummer and musician!

Four years ago, you decided to self-publish your CDs, establishing your own record label. What kind of advantages and what kind of challenges is this bringing to oneself?

I had no choice: the record company I was working with fired both of their label managers and offered me a deal that was absolutely depressing. I felt: now is the time to do what I had planned years ago: getting independent. It has been the right decision because a lot of things that did not work with these small labels are now a lot better:

- I can plan the releases well in advance
- the artistic decision is 100% up to me and I can follow a continuity with my bands
- through better promotion a lot more people hear about my albums
- finally I am making a little bit of money with my albums

Of course I have to say that I have a lot more risks and costs doing this myself but therefore I have the chance to get all the money back with sales and it is so great to have the

freedom. In order to get organised with all the administral stuff I hired a person who manages my label and I have great partners for promotion to spread the word.

Your first visit to Serbia was in early 2000s, when you played in a duo with Simon Nabatov. This is when we first met. What in genreally chenged in your musical thoughts, career, and life from that time?

My music changed indeen since then. I think it is simpler and more accessible. Complexity is not such a big part of my composing anymore. I am looking for deep emotions, tradition and strong moods. I guess as you get older that becomes more of a subject and is easier to realise than in early years.

During a long period of time you are keeping alive many bands, al different in format and style. How do you work with this? Could you, in short words, describe your essential thoughts on Root 70, Septet and Vertigo Quartet?

The main idea behind this is the fact that most great jazz bands in the history stayed together for many years and developed an original style. For example the Ellington band or Miles Davis Quintet. They managed to come up with something deeper than a short get together. There is a clear philosophy behind this and that is what I am looking for. Root 70 is chordless band with a light and transperent touch. I t is my most known ensemble and we play together since the year 2000. My septet is some kind of a brass band with horns and drums. Almost a little big band with the flexibility of a small combo. It features mainly my writing and arranging. Very energetic. Vertigo is a new trombone quartet collective. I write about half of the tunes for this band. The goal is to simply play acapella music with the artistic challange of a string quartet so we leave behind the fact that trombone is a rather special and sometimes awkward instrument. We are now on CD release tour and have big fun.

The wish to connect both very past of jazz and look into the future is clear when listening to many of your projects. One could hear on one side New orleans blues reflections, elements of folklore and odd rhythms, so-called modern creative mainstream, then strong avantgarde aproach. Where is your music world based and how it survives such widely?

I believe that it is not so important wether your music is modern or traditional. It has to be personal and the musiuc one plays has to come from your heart even when it is complex or dissonant. The audience feels that and can relate to any kind of music if it carries this. So I simply go by intuition: when I find music that I like to do I do it without asking myself if this is to traditional or to modern. It reflects my personality and my musical background and therefor it is filtered mix of many influences. Nevertheless I try to avoid clear styles and a strict retro sound.

You are also teaching, in the Luzern conservatory. Could you describe main principles in your educational work?

I try to give my students a good fundation for their own muscal developement. In order to get there I use all the stuff that comes from the jazz history: standards, great solos, deveopment of styles. With this luggage you can find your own way in music even

something which is beyond the jazz style. From a certain point on I focus more on the individual preferences of each student. I try to help them finding something personal in their music.

interview by Voja Pantic