

Samuel Hällkvist

– BIOGRAPHY



SAMUEL HÄLLKVIST is the 2010 Jazz in Sweden artist. He is a guitarist and songwriter from the village of Gustafs outside Borlänge in Dalarna but is now living in Copenhagen since a few years back. He has mostly been heard as a band member of TELEVISION PICKUP, RHODODENDRON STRING BAND and 15,5. In 2010 he will be focussing on the newly started SAMUEL HÄLLKVIST CENTER.

“Incredibly luxurious, a great 30th birthday gift!”, he says gleefully about the award that entails a recording for Caprice Records and launching tours in Sweden and abroad with the help of Concerts Sweden.

He describes the music he writes for the new group Samuel Hällkvist Center as strikingly rhythmic.

“I’m more interested in rhythms than harmonies. I promise there will be no walking bass, no 32 bars or 12 bar blues. All I can say is that the music is built on figures that are repeated and intensified and in the best case they lead to a sort of meditative trance.”

He adds that his aim is to get away from the clear, set rules of jazz, that razor sharp line between soloist and accompaniment.

“I want to shift the focus from the ego and to give collective responsibility for the music. For me it is the whole, the joint sound that is important. Regardless of who is doing a solo.”

Samuel also says that one of his strong points is that he completely disregards musical fashions. Absolutely.

“I have my vision and stick to it. I’m not afraid of making mistakes. It’s a question of being clear and consequent. You have an idea? Show it and be convincing.”

He thinks of music in terms of story telling, imagination and sounds.

“It’s about always trying to get away from routine. With other sounds I am hopefully breaking old patterns and opening a door or two for the benefit of the curiosity of the musicians. You can, for example, play on the ‘sound of country’. It sounds like country music the difference being that jazz improvisation is one of the building stones.”

He discovered jazz by chance.

“When I was in ninth grade. I mostly listened to alternative, hard rock, metal and trash metal, groups like SLAYER. I still find that music extremely exciting and full of energy. But one day I found a forgotten CD in the CD-player, it was a KNUD

JØRGENSEN album, the Danish pianist, and it was – awesome! So I started playing the guitar, started a trio and played straight away.”

For a few years, it was mainly guitar jazz for Samuel. WES MONTGOMERY and DJANGO REINHARDT became the new household gods. He attended the Hedemora music gymnasium, but the real swing wasn’t there. Instead, he went to Jazzlinjen in Gävle and that was “brilliant”. After that, he went to Skurups folkhögskola (the Folk High School or Popular university, where he often substitutes nowadays) and then the Malmö Academy of Music, which was free and good for those who knew what they wanted to do. Samuel certainly did and does still.

Among other things, he wanted to listen concentratedly to a lot and to “everything”.

“I methodically work my way through artist after artist, genre after genre. Classical country, all new things in the jazz world, even popular dance music. And I have no problems shifting between modern and old.”

As a guitarist he describes himself, hardly surprisingly, as eclectic.

“Sure, I gather inspiration from all sorts of places. I have a MIDI guitar and my effect pedals. In my ears they are not toys, but real instruments. I can play a whole lot of string instruments like the mandolin, the ukulele and the lapsteel. I learned the bluegrass finger picking technique when I learned to play the banjo. It’s a different technique that produces another sound than the usual jazz sound. But I mostly play a Fender, either a Stratocaster or a Telecaster. They never sound like an old jazz box.”

On his journey as a Jazz in Sweden artist Samuel Hällkvist has brought saxophonist JOEL WÄSTBERG who also plays some floor tom and some guitar, JOHANNES BURSTRÖM on the electric bass and computer and KNUD FINNSRUD, drums.

“Yes, I know, someone is bound to ask us. We are four jazz musicians and the music is improvised to a high degree. So all I can say is that we play jazz. The fact that it doesn’t sound like hard bop or bebop or cool is just the way it should be. Jazz needs to find new modes of expression and always has. And anyway, who decides what is jazz and what isn’t?”