

Sinne Eeg

DREAMS

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Med sin perfekte intonation, sin sans for "time" og en udsøgt fornemmelse for klangfarve har Sinne Eeg fortjent beundring af både fans og andre musikere. Med DREAMS satses der også på USA, og hun har allerede lavet forarbejdet og turneret fra kyst til kyst, i klubber store som små. Hendes første US fans var de musikere hun mødte og spillede med på vejen. Selvom jazz længe har været populær i hele verden er en amerikansk bøjning af musikken måske bedst udtrykt af amerikanske musikere? Og derfor valgte Eeg at indspille DREAMS i Brooklyn.

Den danske pianist og Signes faste akkompagnatør, Jacob Christoffersen, er med ombord mens resten af ensemblet består af respekterede amerikanske navne. Eeg mødte første gang trommeslageren Joey Baron ved en master class i 2002. Larry Koonse er en respekteret LA-baseret guitarist, som Sinne mødte ved en koncert i Japan, de blev venner og har siden optrådt sammen ved talrige lejligheder i Europa, USA og Asien. Eeg har længe været fan af bassisten Scott Colley, der ikke alene har han været sideman hos mange kendte navne, men også er barndomsven med Koonse. Ifølge Eeg er det "vigtigt at optræde med de bedste musikere, men det er mindst lige så vigtigt at arbejde med folk, man godt kan li'. Du kan slippe dit ego, fordybe dig i sangen, og lade musikken tale. Det er næsten som at meditere."

Som sanger er Sinne forankret i traditionen. Hun har for eksempel været en mangeårig fan af Sheila Jordan, hvis version af Falling in Love With Love motiverede Eeg til at indspille sin egen udgave. Og hun har altid beundret Sarah Vaughans fortolkning af What Is This Thing Called Love der måtte med sammen med flere andre fra den store sangbog. Eeg har tilføjet nye ord til Anything Goes, der gør sangen næsten smerteligt moderne. Hun er jo en glimrende sangskriver og seks af pladens kompositioner er også hendes egne. Hun er en jazzmusiker af hjertet, og ikke tilfreds med bare et opkog. Selvom hun er en dygtig historiefortæller, så ønskede hun også at gå nye veje og skrev Dreams, en ordløs sang, med vokalen som endnu et instrument i bandet. Hun skrev sangen Aleppo efter at have set en dokumentarfilm om børns lidelser i Aleppo - "Det knuste mit hjerte at se disse traumatiserede børn. Jeg havde brug for at udtrykke mine følelser. Jeg har ikke skrevet om politiske eller sociale problemer før, men med alt, hvad der sker i verden, har jeg har tænkt mig at skrive mere og mere om disse emner."



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A year or so ago, on a chilly autumn evening, I stopped in at Chicago's legendary Green Mill nightclub to hear the Danish jazz vocalist Sinne Eeg, during one of her periodic visits to the U.S. With me was the wizardly pianist Jon Weber, who has a nearly phonogenic memory for music he's heard and has worked with plenty of singers in his long career, and who, like me, had never heard Sinne in person. After one tune, he looked at me with an expression that mirrored my own, as if to say: "We don't need to hear any more; she's the real deal." But we wanted to hear as much more as we could.

The real deal. Start with the sound of her voice: emerald tones both light and dark, sometimes throaty or biting clear. It's a voice both intimate and enveloping, resonant throughout her considerable range, with an exquisite flexibility: the music glides effortlessly, showing no sign of strain or stress. This same ease characterizes Sinne's sense of time, and of the subtle disruptions of the beat that constitute the elusive asset called swing. One barely notices her command of swing, because she does nothing to call attention to it; the rhythm flows as naturally as breath. Her phrasing (a separate but related concept) offers more to admire: she juggles the length and complexity of her musical lines with the flair of those legendary instrumentalists who served as her main influence. Now add in her interpretative skills – her ability to communicate thoughts and emotions with the musical equivalent of a raised eyebrow or a joyful leap. When she sings "What Is This Thing Called Love," you may wonder if you've ever truly heard these lyrics before.

And when you get to the top of the pyramid – the ability to improvise; to create new melodies and develop them into short compositions all their own – Sinne has few peers among modern vocalists. After her lilting solo on "Falling In Love With Love," you won't need to hear any more; but again, you won't want to stop. Growing up, Sinne didn't plan to become a solo singer. "I was very shy," she explains, "and besides church choir, I didn't sing in front of people until I was 18," even though she did play various instruments. But her high school music program required the students to sing for each other in class; and when they did, she recalls, "I thought, 'I'm not the worst at this.' I realized I could actually make music with my voice, and that for me it's much easier than on an instrument. The ability to connect, to convey all the little details you might imagine – some people can do that on instruments, but I can't." We're all the luckier for that. Sinne writes her own music, and sometimes the words as well, and these songs take her in different directions from the standard repertoire that she handles so winningly. Her own writing reflects more modern concerns than those found in tunes by Cole Porter and Rodgers and Hart; they tell new and engaging stories. But two songs on Dreams explore territory that Sinne herself had consciously avoided in the past.

One of these, the title track, has no lyrics at all. "I had wanted to record something without words for many years," says Sinne, "but I thought I was too much a singer" (as opposed to a pure vocalist). "So I felt it would be fun to do something in unison with the guitar, and for me to be a little more in the background of the band. The song is based on Northern European folk and classical music. We have a vibe and a way of approaching the beat that's just a little different from American jazz musicians. Embracing our cultural roots gives us something in common."

On the other hand, "Aleppo" seeks something in common with people far removed. It offers a message inspired by the devastating events in Syria, and specifically by one of the war's young victims, numb and silent in a photo seen by people the world over. "I'm a very political person," says Sinne, "but up till now I've been a little afraid to speak my mind in music. This is the first time I've dared to write a song about what's happening in the world." Hope that it won't be the last. The band that appears on Dreams lives up to the album title. Sinne has worked often with pianist Jacob Christoffersen and guitarist Larry Koonse and, she says, "I feel so extremely privileged to have worked with these amazing musicians for years now. And I have been dreaming of making music with Scott Colley and Joey Baron; it's a project I've been working on for three years. To be able to gather these four musicians in the recording studio is really a dream come true for me." Almost 175 years ago, Sinne's countryman Hans Christian Andersen published "The Nightingale," his story of a songbird beloved by her owner, the Emperor of China. Sometime after foolishly replacing the bird with a mechanical reproduction, the Emperor grows ill; Death stands by his bedside. The machine's ersatz warbling is useless: the mechanism has broken; it has no power to heal the sick, to lift the soul. But the nightingale returns, singing a song so compelling that Death itself gives up the ghost. Andersen's nightingale was the real deal. So is this one.

Sinne Eeg (voc), Jacob Christoffersen (p), Larry Koonse (g), Scott Colley (b), Joey Baron (d).

The Bitter End / Head Over High Heels / Love Song / What is This Thing Called Love / Falling in Love With Love /
Dreams / Aleppo / Time to Go / I'll Remember April / Anything Goes.

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