



Isildurs Bane

Newsletter June 2004

In this month's newsletter, you'll find:

- IB tour in Italy
- What Klas Assarsson will do on his vacation
- What Linnea and Mariette will do this summer
- Mats gets an artists' grant
- New website
- New logo
- Profile of the month: Joanna Bladh
- Your questions
- Happy birthday Jeff Beck!

* * *

The MIND Vol. 3 line-up (Luca Calabrese, Jonas Christophs, Franco Feruglio, Mats Johansson, Christian Saggese and Kjell Severinsson) plus special guest marimbaist Teddy Bergström will tour northern Italy during July. Exact locations and schedules for the concerts are not fully confirmed as this newsletter is sent out, but if you are interested in coming to hear some music from MIND Vol. 3, some exciting improvisations and some new light being cast on older material, send an e-mail to office@isildursbane.se or thomas@isildursbane.se and we will inform you about the concert details.

* * *

IB's percussionist will be a busy man this summer performing a wide range of music with different ensembles.

- Along with cantor Andreas Hjalmarsson, Klas will play church concerts at Torup (July 7th) and at Karl-Gustav (August 18th).
- On August 11th (at 10 am), Klas will perform a 30-minute solo percussion recital at the church in Varberg. The music performed includes "Pound for a Brown" by Frank Zappa, "Music for One Percussion Player" by Oystein Sommerfeldt, "Mexican Dance nr. 2" by Gordon Stout, one of J. S. Bach's cello suites arranged for percussion, and "Synopsis" by Klas Assarsson himself.
- As one third of the Varberg Trio, Klas – featured on drums, piano, xylophone and glockenspiel – will provide light entertainment in Halmstad, Laholm and Varberg. The repertoire includes everything from Bach to Bowie (and the occasional composer whose family name doesn't start with a B, like singer-songwriter Cornelis Vreeswijk).

- Last, but not least, Klas will share his extraordinary percussion skills with interested and dedicated students at a summer course at Harplinge between July 19th and July 26th. The course is arranged by Musik i Halland and focuses on orchestral music.

* * *

As the avid reader of this newsletter knows, Linnea Olsson and Mariette Hansson have several musical lives outside of Isildurs Bane, one of them being their band Ethan Xiphias. This band offers top class entertainment at Hotell Mårtensson in Halmstad every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday during July and the first couple of weeks in August. If you get the opportunity to check this band out, do it. If not, do it anyway!

* * *

Hats off to Mats Johansson! He has been awarded an artists' grant for 2004. Konstnärsnämnden (The Arts committee) support the work, development and international contacts of professional artists. The main criterion for receiving a grant is a high level of professional artistic quality.

I asked Mats how he was going to spend the money:

“The money will be used strictly for composing music, primarily for IB, but also for other projects, most of them IB-related in one form or another. In other words: This grant guarantees more music.”

Anonymous sources claim that celebrations happened in a secret place with dark chocolate and a bottle of Amarone della valpolicella classico. Just a short break from composing.

* * *

Isildurs Bane's website will get a facelift and may be under construction. The new website has been constructed by Joanna Bladh (se profile below) and Annika Nilsson and should be up and running soon. Please note that the address will remain the same as before:
www.isildursbane.se

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Henrik Ström, the previous webmaster, for his efforts during the last years.

* * *

As you may have noticed, there is a new IB-logo at the top of this newsletter. The logo was designed by Annika Nilsson at Orera kommunikation, one of the new webmasters. I asked Annika about her thoughts on the logo.

“We wanted something timeless, classic and distinct. The most interesting feature of the new logo is the stamp, which can be used on its own to show that something has been IB approved or just because it has a nice shape and sums up the name.”

* * *

Profile of the month is one of Joanna Bladh, who is responsible for the construction of IB's new website.

Name: Joanna Bladh

Currently living: Outside of Malmö

Tell us about your work as a photographer and builder of websites

"I studied film, radio and the web, but I am self-taught as a photographer. I use my digital camera almost exclusively nowadays, since you get a finished result much faster. I used to live in London for a few years where I worked as a portrait photographer, taking pictures everything from families and kids to artists and models. In Sweden, I have worked as a freelance photographer. Constructing websites is a longer and more time-consuming process, but what I enjoy about building websites is that you have to work both technically and graphically."

Tell us your thoughts when building IB's new website

"I looked at their records, listened to the music and found out where they get their inspiration from. You can see some of IB's history in the design, and you could also say that it is the way I see the band."

What do you like about IB?

"I like the way they mix genres and instruments into an exciting musical experience."

What equipment are do you use?

"A Canon EOS 10D, flashes, lenses, my computer etc."

Which music do you enjoy the most?

"I prefer live music, and I have a broad taste in music: old and new music from all the corners of the globe. Some examples would be The Levellers, David Bowie, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Cheb Mami, The Beatles and Prodigy."

Do you think there is a relationship between music and pictures?

"I think pictures and music trigger the same type of feelings. Every observer has her or his own experiences that leads to an individual interpretation of what is being seen or heard. There are no rights and wrongs. On TV and on film on the other hand, you get served everything on a plate and there is very little left to your imagination."

Do you have any favourite photographers?

"I don't have any favourite photographers, but I have lots of favourite pictures. I particularly like simple and pure pictures with many colours or lots of contrast. I spend a few extra moments looking at pictures taken from an unusual angle or pictures that I feel I can learn something from."

Joanna's website can be found at www.joannabladh.com

* * *

And now to this month's questions.

Maria from Sweden, apparently a big Tolkien fan, asks about *Sagan om ringen*:

"I was wondering about *Sagan om ringen*, and particularly about the lyrics, apparently taken from the Swedish translation. Was it hard for you to get permission to use the words?"

At the time of Isildurs Bane forming, Tolkien was all the rage, but during the early 80's, the situation had changed. We had no problems getting a written permission to use the lyrics.

Mike from the US asks "Would you ever consider getting together with some of the guys who used to be in the band?"

In fact, this has already happened. When IB celebrated their 20th anniversary in 1996, a concert was held and the then line-up of IB was augmented on stage by Mats Nilsson, Fredrik Janacek, Ingvar Johansson, Bo Roth and Jan Severinsson. A few of years ago, Bo Roth joined IB on stage for a couple of songs at the Theatre in Halmstad performing his composition "Looping" and "Magnificent Giant Battles". The contacts with former members are absolutely fine in other words.

Keep your questions coming! Send them to thomas@isildursbane.se

* * *

Guitarist extraordinaire Jeff Beck, a musician held in high esteem by all of us in the IB camp, turned 60 on June 24th. What a perfect opportunity to recommend a three exceptional Beck releases! Beck recently joined Eric Clapton at the Crossroads guitar festival in Texas and weaved his magic. Jimmie Leslie, writing for Guitar Player magazine wrote about Beck performing with Clapton:

"Beck caressed notes out of his yellow Strat that no mortal bluesman can imagine, much less locate, allowing him to express himself in ways that others simply cannot. Listening to him play alongside Clapton and Bramhall II, and after a hundred other guys had wanked away all weekend, was like watching a fabulous painter who happens to have the most colors in his palate and knows just when to press hard with his brush, or utilize a subtle stroke. Beck conjured much of his magic using slight-of-hand—swelling his volume or manipulating a floating tremolo system, sometimes *simultaneously*—allowing him to hit a harmonic and send it towards the heavens, dive it to the depths of the sea, or simply add some shimmer to a note or chord at the end of a phrase, leaving an almost vocal signature at every turn."

Guitar Player associate editor Barry Cleveland wrote: "the subtlety, beauty, and technical virtuosity of Jeff's playing was truly transcendental"

Agreed. Being a huge Beck fan myself, I would like to take the opportunity to recommend five of my personal Beck favourites. Perhaps not the obvious choices – no, *Truth* is not one of my selected albums – but, I dare say, albums featuring truly brilliant music by Jeff Beck. Here they are:

Blow by Blow (1975)

Beck's first full-on dabblings with fusion supervised by George Martin and his excellent pair of ears. Typically, Jeff Beck manages to produce some very un-guitary sounds from his trusty white Stratocaster and oxblood-coloured Gibson Les Paul. On this classic album, you'll find the original version of Stevie Wonder's "'Cause We've Ended as Lovers", the funky "Scatterbrain" and one of my all-time Beck favourites, "Diamond Dust" which comes with a stylish string arrangement, courtesy of George Martin. There's great support from three underrated players, Max Middleton on keyboards, Phil Chen on bass and Richard Bailey on drums.

There and Back (1980)

The first Beck album I listened to. On several cuts, you're hard pressed to tell the difference between Jan Hammer's keyboards and Jeff Beck's guitars. For some reason unknown to me, this album is often ignored or even ridiculed. I have no idea why. To me, songs like "Star Cycle", "The Pump", "Space Boogie" and "The Final Peace" are four solid arguments for ignoring vocals and just getting on with the music, simply because that's more than enough. At least when you have cream-of-the-crop musicians like Hammer, Simon Philips, Tony Hymas and Mo Foster. And if anybody tries to tell you that groove and technique don't make happy bed partners, instruct the person to listen to "Space Boogie". That'll do the trick.

Jeff Beck's Guitar Shop (1989)

After lots of guest appearances and the uneven *Flash* album, Beck elevated himself to an envelope pushing position within the shred guitar community while at the same time continuing being an elder statesman of rock guitar, an position nobody else has managed to this day. This album features keyboardist Tony Hymas once more, but also the amazing Terry Bozzio on drums from outer space. Beck goes absolutely berserk with his guitar on "Guitar Shop", but soothes us with unbelievable eastern European influenced whammy bar antics on "Where Were You". Mind-blowing. An absolutely essential album for any guitar player interested in the development of electric guitar playing.

Amused to Death (by Roger Waters, 1992)

Beck only appears on seven tracks, but his performances are nothing but stunning. The way he improvises over Patrick Leonard's chords on "The Ballad of Bill Hubbard" is astoundingly affecting, I find, a perfect foil for the spoken words on the subject of loss and suffering in the first world war. There's also some riotous lead playing which again complements Waters' fuming words. Without a shadow of a doubt the best guitar performances on a Roger Waters album ever. If only they had toured together...

You Had It Coming (2001)

Jeff Beck – contemporary guitarist. Which other guitar player from the 60's could get away with performing techno and drum 'n bass and still keep his or her artistic integrity intact? Not only is the man integrating and adapting to the intense electronic beats and sounds, he's merging it with some first-rate blues playing on the old Muddy Waters chesnut "Rollin' and Tumblin'". My personal favourites on this album tend to vary, but today, I'd recommend the lyrical "Nadia" and the remarkable interplay between Beck and a blackbird on "Blackbird".

* * *

Lookout for a new section in the newsletter next month: “Concerning”, where discussions on relevant topics regarding Isildurs Bane will be discussed. The first topic will be music. Your opinions are invited and encouraged.

Best wishes from Isildurs Bane!

Thomas Olsson
Newsletter editor

Do you know anyone who may be interested in receiving newsletters from Isildurs Bane?
Send an e-mail to thomas@isildursbane.se and we will put you on our list.
If you want to unsubscribe, send a message to the same address and you will be taken off our list immediately.