



Newsletter February 2006

Welcome to our special Fredrik Janacek newsletter to celebrate the former IB bassist's 40th birthday. Happy birthday Fredrik!

- 1) Interview with Fredrik Janacek**
- 2) Mats on Fredrik**
- 3) Competition!**
- 4) Björn J:son Lindh is awarded**

* * *

1) Interview with Fredrik Janacek

TO: Where do you live today? What do you do for a living?

FJ: I moved to the Czech republic in 1992. I met my wife there under tumultuous circumstances on a tour with IB in 1989. I had bad experiences from a couple of cultural-political things and I was paranoid about being on the dole for a long time and living in a flat that was going to be torn down. I first moved to Lund, where I studied the Czech language at the university for a year, and then moved to Prague in 1992.

Besides looking after a building that was returned to my father (a Czech immigrant) by the government in 1991, I tour with the soul-funk-jazz-rock-blues band 123min (www.minus123min.com).

We're doing pretty well. We are on a comfortable level of popularity for the Czech republic. Without belonging to the commercial field, we have managed to do at least 100 gigs a year for the past five years. I am having a great time, we improvise a lot and in a tiny trio, the jams rarely become unfocused or chaotic.



TO: Why and when did you start playing music? Which music did you like when you started out? Which album was the first one you bought?

FJ: It's a funny story. Both my parents tried to get me to play the piano, which I didn't fancy at all. But I inherited a mandolin from my grandfather. When I was about 10 years old I messed around with it in music school, but the classes were hardly what you would call inspiring, so I quit.

When a couple of guys in my class started talking about forming a band because one of them had been given a no-name Gibson SG copy by his uncle, and that a guy called Ingo was looking to buy a Vesper Popular drumkit for all of 500 kronor, I volunteered and said: "You haven't got a bass player, have you? I can play bass, because I can play mandolin, and it's tuned the same way." It wasn't, of course, which only made things worse since I tuned my first crappy bass, which I had begged my mother to get me, in fifths for several weeks until I discovered my significant mistake. However, the band split up before we got around to actually playing together since I didn't own an amp at that point. But the die had been cast and things started moving.

I started playing when I was 12 or 13 years old. I was really into Thin Lizzy, and then came Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin in rapid succession, but also – would you believe – Dixie Dregs (the expert within that field is Bo N. Roth) and soon Weather Report. The last two thanks to my first major source of inspiration: a then seventeen-year old amazing bassist who worked as an assistant at my school but later fell into the amphetamine trap thanks to the official Swedish stance to drugs: "Do you smoke pot you damn junkie? There you are! Bugger off!"

The first record I got at the age of seven through constant nagging (apart from Hasse Alfredsson's *Blommig falukorv och andra visor för barn* which I can heartily recommend [I agree says the editor of this newsletter, it's a great record for kids]) was an ugly LP on the German rock 'n' roll label Fontana: *Rock Revival 1*. Apart from a couple of highlights like "Pipeline", "Ghost Riders in the Sky", two

songs by Chuck Berry and two by the child molester Jerry Lee Lewis, the album contains a live recording of "Got My Mojo Working" by Muddy Waters. That's where my roots are. I still have the record.

TO: Which were your influences when you played with IB?

FJ: Without exaggerating, I have to say that I was very broad-minded. I was even into punk – primarily Swedish punk: KSMB – and new wave and whatever. My influences then weren't style-related at all, neither are they now. It's always been about honesty and attitude in music. I tried to make a list of what I listened to in those days. It hasn't really changed that much. You can find everything from Jobim (*Getz & Gilberto*) to Stravinsky; from Pixies to Pink Floyd; from Charlie Parker to Talking Heads; from Rolling Stones to Yes; from Zappa to Beatles; from Joni Mitchell to Earth, Wind & Fire; from John Lee Hooker to Steely Dan; from U2 to King Crimson; from Beastie Boys to John McLaughlin. You name it... HONESTY AND PASSION is all that counts!!

Interestingly enough, I heard IB's *Sagan om Ringen* tape when I was 16 and was completely smitten with it. A couple of years later Mats Johansson phoned me and during the first rehearsals, it turned out that I knew their old songs better than they did.

TO: How did IB work as a group during your years with the band?

FJ: When I came aboard, IB was a very active unit. One record was produced every year, and as many concerts as possible were booked. This put a lot of pressure on the members who had settled down, formed families and a career outside of music. I was the youngest and the horniest of them all, and got a grand education in pushy tactics from the band's constant driving force, Mats Johansson.

I have never learnt as much about politics or about real life as I did during my time as a member of IB. Mats was going at full throttle and got me on the road to total fascination. Since he composed the music, I worked on the stage sets and the graphics where I could run amok (at least in theory) with my creativity. The best soldier is young and inexperienced – burning with enthusiasm. I became IB's obersturmbahnführer, dedicated just for the sake of it, ready to do absolutely anything to achieve the aims. A couple of members couldn't take the heat and quit after choosing work and/or a normal family life.

Without him wishing it, Mats created some sort of culture monster that was me. When I realized what I had become, I handed in my resignation.

TO: How did you become a member of IB?

FJ: As most things in life it was down to chance. I had worked on a couple of amateur level theatre productions that came close to the professional in a couple of spots.

I worked as musical director with director Ulf Andersson who had been on the road with IB as a lighting engineer on their first German tour. When two sax players in the pit band had quit on me just before a theatre festival, Ulf came to the rescue with Bengt

Johansson from IB who learnt the music with me in an afternoon before the performance.

The following spring, Mats Johansson phoned me up, I accepted and we agreed to jam and rehearse with Kjell joining the two of us. I was nervous and hung over since my roommate had graduated the previous day, but I had brought a small bottle of Jameson in my gigbag. While we played in the studio, Kjell drank most of the Jameson and when Mats went home like a good man in his red Saab 96, Kjell, a wild friend of his and myself did Halmstad. An incredible night that I'll never forget. The Picasso statue in smoke from a stolen fire extinguisher, nightly boat trips on the river Nissan and in the Laholm Bay. Say no more...

TO: How come you never composed any music for IB?

FJ: Basically, I had only written a couple of pop things or pastiches previously. Mats' songwriting was lightyears ahead of my horizon at that point, and I didn't have some vain longing to pitch in with anything to IB's repertoire.

Since then I have been writing more, starting a couple of years after quitting IB. My best work is done under pressure; I have never had the natural impetus to compose. I prefer to satisfy myself with other types of creative work.

TO: Which equipment did you use during your time with IB?

FJ: When I started playing with IB I brought two basses that I still own and use today: a G & L L2000e and a fretless Fender Precision from 1968 with a JB pickup at the bridge. The G & L is sad that she has had to move over since the beginning of 2004 due to a slightly older lady taking its place: a Fender Jazz Bass from 1966, my long lost twin sister.

I also brought a Peavey Mark IV amp, but in 1988 I bought the first EBS product, the preamp EBS-1. This is a true darling that still rules after all these years, miles and check-ups. Then and now, it is amplified by a MOSFET power amp.

I got an EV cabinet for bassists with a 15-inch speaker and a treble speaker (no tweeter). It was really heavy, and even though it still sounds good, it has been in a shop waiting to be sold for two years now.

When we recorded the demos for *Eight Moments of Eternity* at Studio Bäst, a couple of months after me joining the band, we borrowed a double bass from the then major music shop in Halmstad. Mats J said something about it "being a pity that they didn't have an electric double bass, like Sting had, which you could take on tour". It turned out that the shop had a broken one in the attic which they were willing to put together. When the violin repairman had done his best, it turned out to be a Van Zalinge, which was Sting's instrument of choice too. IB rented it for a couple of tours and then I bought it. The only effect I used in those days was a TC Electronics stereo chorus/flanger pedal. String brands came and went constantly.

TO: What are your impressions today of the albums you played on (*Eight Moments of Eternity*; *Sagan om Ringen*; *Cheval*; and *Lost Eggs*)?

FJ: *Eight Moments of Eternity* was my baptism of fire. We recorded and mixed the album in three weeks. Highly disciplined, which you can notice – unfortunately – on the recording. A bunch of brilliant songs by Mats have a kind of stiff feeling to them, mainly rhythmically, because both Kjell and me probably had misleading ideals and technical ideas. The demo of "In the Same Class" was a lot better than the take that ended up on the finished album. I missed the mixing, but sat locked up sweating to finish the record sleeve. But even today I enjoy listening to "Gheel".

I think I nagged my way to releasing *Sagan om Ringen*. Partly because of personal nostalgia, partly because I thought it was a pity that such a milestone in IB's development should be a tape only release. Some re-recordings were just as stiff as the previous record, but some paved the way for IB's contemporary sound, "Ringarnas Härskare I" for instance (a favourite of my ten-year old son). Also, the way we started working with sounds, textures, effects and tapes was pointing forward. "Tom Bombadill" made me love IB when I was 16 years old.

Cheval is my favourite, period. A record that in spite of its extremely dated sound has a depth which gives it – in my mind – an eternal standing. "L'interprète" which should have been in the middle is a piece that unfortunately annoys me with its pseudo classicism. Sure, "33 ans" is also in that vein, but it's so incredibly beautiful that I can be moved to tears even today. Brilliant. "Initiation" and above all "Le viellard" make my hairs stand on end in a very positive way. "Le ciceron" is a fusion hit, "Présent" is a child of its time and as such you have to digest it that way. "La 8. merveille" feels like an unnecessary appendix. The LP version of *Cheval* ended perfectly.

I regard *Lost Eggs* as some sort of later documentation like *Sagan om Ringen*. Not much to say about that except that it was good that it was released. How the hell did I get that bass sound on "Happy New Ear" at Studio Bäst? This take of "Second Step" should definitely have crowned *Eight Moments of Eternity*.

TO: When and why did you quit IB?

FJ: As I mentioned earlier I had three very energetic years with the band and to a large extent I burnt myself out during that period. I pushed so hard that it hit me in the back of my head. After our European tour in 1989 I felt I had to move in a different direction. Musically, I wanted to compose more for the theatre and I thought IB's music lacked blackness. Mats Johansson was very into serious art music at the time and that wasn't exactly what I felt like doing at that point.

I suppose you could also say that that particular autumn of 1989, when we travelled both sides of the iron curtain and witnessed the earth-shattering political goings-on, inspired me to impose radical changes on my life.

TO: Which other bands have you played with?

FJ: Apart from some theatre productions, I played with the promising rockband Bohunks between leaving IB and moving to

Prague. We struggled but nothing happened. Eventually it came to nothing even though the band continued without me.

After a couple of months without anybody to play with in what was then Czechoslovakia, I joined a crazy bunch of people called Slunicko that actually made it on a national level. We did an album for BMG and split up under unhappy circumstances.

During my time with Slunicko, I started playing with the ethno-fusion trio Slunecni Orcestr. We still haven't split up, but we haven't played together for a couple of years. We recorded three CDs for different companies.

In the summer of 1997 I started playing with 123min where I still feel happy and at home. We have just released our fifth album, which was mastered at Digitalfabriken in Sweden, thanks to Mats Johansson who made the connection.

TO: Have you followed IB's activities after your split?

FJ: The guys keep me posted by sending me records. I listened to *The Voyage* quite a bit when that was released. I liked "Das Junkerhaus" the best. During the 90's, I felt the band developed slowly. Having said that, I was unaware of the project with the symphony orchestra etc, but all the documentation I received were photos so how was I to know? Then *MIND Vol. 1* was released. I liked it, but didn't get into the album for some reason. "A Blank Page" really got me though, mainly through the magic that's inherent in the track. But that's a really subjective comment of course. It's been a really long while since I listened to the album and maybe I would enjoy it more today. The cover is wonderful, but unfortunately my CD has disappeared.

I do remember however that Jonas Christophs blew me away. A world class guitarist with complete technique and above all, soul. We did some pub crawls together in Halmstad when I lived there, and we once jammed until the wee hours of the morning in some place with Kee Marcello and "MP". It was fun, but hard the following day. Too bad we didn't get to play more. Jonas is fantastic.

MIND Vol. 2 is a joy, mainly because live records are wonderful documents of great bands. But the faked applause... I also think it's a pity that you can't figure out who plays on what. You tend to think: "Damn, what a shame that I don't play on the tracks I did once in the studio". And finally, the orchestral collaboration was documented.

I haven't heard *MIND Vol. 3*, not even seen it. I first heard *MIND Vol. 4* in my former hometown, recommended by the same shop owner who recommended *Sea Reflections* to me almost 20 years ago. Great. Only thing is, if you play contemporary progressive music with rock vocals, you can't avoid being compared to Gabriel and King Crimson, which is the reaction I have had when playing the album to friends in the Czech republic. Personally, I have stopped thinking about doing anything groundbreaking no matter what a long time ago.

Postmodernism is the last resort, where we can work with combinations. Unfortunately it doesn't do it for me. Nowadays, I live by the rule that I play what I like, no matter where the music belongs, but with one rule: no covers. If I love it and play it to someone and the wonderful energy between performer and audient occurs, that's better than sex of any kind.

I am sporadically in contact with several of the members, sadly almost only Mats J, Kjell and Klas.

TO: You did a few songs with IB at the band's 20th anniversary. What was that like?

FJ: It was a wonderful feeling. I remember playing "Blizzard" with Mats Nilsson, who I had parted ways with in a less than perfect way. Mats N was just the way I had loved him in the old days. A warm human being with a sense of perspective and a sense of humour. Maybe I wouldn't have quit IB if he'd stayed in the band. At the anniversary he made a couple of mistakes and laughed it off, which was so beautiful that it tore down the wall that I had constructed during my toughest period in IB. Then we played "Ciceron" which I felt was a kind of bass tour de force on my part from my last year with the band. But the best part was playing it with Klas Assarsson, who I have known since I was 15 years old. A wonderful feeling since we had worked together under other magic circumstances.

TO: Could you imagine being part of an IB-production today?

FJ: Definitely. It's mainly a practical question. I am lazy by nature.

TO: I heard you live with IB a few times. Your enthusiasm on stage really struck me. Later on, I found out that your enthusiasm was apparent off stage too. You were very committed to stage sets and presentations. Do you see it that way too?

FJ: When I commit to doing something, I want it done 100%. Of course I agree with the way you describe things during that period. I controlled it to a large extent too. Since Mats took care of the songwriting, I went amok with everything around me, like the horny young man that I was. But it took its toll: I longed for radical changes following that.

TO: What do you listen to on a Sunday morning?

FJ: The blackbird before the church bells silence him.

TO: Before going to a party?

FJ: I prefer happy soul. Marvin Gaye from the 60's or Earth, Wind & Fire from the 70's. Maybe even "Tom Bombadill" or "Blizzard"?

TO: When your heart aches?

FJ: I am so incredibly happy that it very rarely happens, but when it does I only listen to my contaminated inner thoughts and maybe play some blues.

TO: When you're cleaning?

FJ: Anything. How high is my oestrogen level then?

* * *

2) Mats on Fredrik Janacek

Writing a few lines on Janacek is hard. Writing a novel would be somewhat easier. There probably was a breakdown in the air when Fredrik quit. But I would prefer to call it a breakthrough. For him and for IB. Fredrik had put his soul into IB for three years and what he did for the band, nobody even comes close to. No wonder he wanted IB to crash and burn without him. Sure, he was right, IB went straight to Hades, but turned quickly.



Fredrik represented artistry, honesty and passion. No doubt about it. If only everybody did. I was truly sorry the day he quit, but didn't want to start a campaign to convince him to stay. At that point, we were at the beginning of a major musical project, and I wonder if Fredrik understood that?

Sometimes he was a handful to deal with. When I played him a demo of "Initiation", he left the room and slammed the door with the words: "This wasn't what I had imagined". Ten seconds later the door opened again and he returns as if nothing had happened and we started working with the musical arrangements. It was the soldier reloading. What a drama queen! You've got to love the guy.

That I made him into a culture monster is of course misleading. He was a monster to start with and he was committed to the avantgarde of life. Fredrik was a control freak and I am sorry that we never composed together. But it's not too late yet.

I remember the chaos in Prague in 1989 and I sometimes think there was a conflict between the Czech state and Fredrik. Our tour manager Honsa asked him to stay out of trouble, but he didn't of course. Honsa, a very kind man, was arrested that night, but Fredrik didn't. Mind you, he did look angry when he returned to the hotel. We were right there in the middle of the revolution and we will never forget the "blue night". Soldiers guarding our bus and our instruments. Military police in the audience. Clothes were

stolen during our shows. Even my only pair of sneakers were stolen. Fredrik was the only one of us who was politically aware and he said things onstage which didn't make everybody happy. Daring on all levels!

Fredrik's bass playing is interesting in many ways, and it's thanks to him that "Gheel" and several other tracks turned out so well in the end. He is an extraordinarily nice man with a personal bass style. I am convinced that Fredrik could become anything: writer, doctor, architect, whatever. His intellect is brilliant and I envy his capacity. And maybe he is right, "33 ans" turned out beautifully and maybe it was a good way to end our intense partnership.

* * *

3) Competition!

To celebrate dear Fredrik's birthday, we give you the opportunity to win 123min's latest CD *Mom*. Just answer this simple question:

How many officially released Isildurs Bane tracks does Fredrik Janacek play on (including live tracks and alternate takes)?

Easy? OK, send the answer to thomas@isildursbane.se
The competition ends on February 25th, 2006, when one winner will be chosen at random from the correct answers.
The winner will receive a copy of *Mom*.

* * *

4) Björn J:son Lindh is awarded

Tomorrow, on February 4th, our dear friend Björn J:son Lindh is – finally – awarded a prize for his great contributions as a composer of film music.

The Swedish organization SKAP (Swedish composers of popular music) have decided to do something about the fact that composers of film music rarely get mentioned in reviews or at award ceremonies. Therefore, SKAP have inaugurated an annual prize to someone within the field of music drama. The very first person to be awarded is Björn J:son Lindh and he will be given the prize and a check for 30 000 kronor at the closing of the Gothenburg film festival.

We can only applaud this very wise decision and cheer for Björn. A person more deserving of this prize we can't imagine. Well done Björn!

* * *

Go visit our website regularly! www.isildursbane.se
And Jonas' website: www.jonaschristophs.com
And my blog: thomasmusicology.blogspot.com/

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.