

Molde International Jazz Festival 2013 - Live Review

By JOHN KELMAN, Published: July 29, 2013

Back in January, at the end of a week of musical woodshedding and, for some, a little music-as-business force-feeding, the performances of original material at Take Five Europe were good but a little tired after a week of little sleep—more a promise of what was to come. Nearly six months later, and with a few gigs under their collective belt, the members of Take Five Europe—dubbed "European Sunrise"—delivered a far more impressive set at Plassen's smaller Teatret Vårt Natt (capacity: approximately 150). Trimmed down from a tentet to a nonet through the unavailable saxophonist Guillaume Perret, but further pared to an octet when trumpeter Piotr Damasiewicz ran into some travel delays, the remaining eight members—bassist Per Zanussi, tubaist Daniel Herskedal, clarinetist Arun Ghosh, guitarist Chris Sharkey, trumpeter Airelle Besson, pianist Marcin Masecki, drummer Marcos Baggiani and clarinetist/saxophonist David Kweksilber—still represented the five countries (Britain, Norway, Poland, France and the Netherlands) which sponsored the educational event and helped create a series of at least five tour dates to allow the group a chance to evolve, both as a unit and as interpreters of its all-original material (one tune from each musician).

What was most impressive about the performance was just how much these eight musicians now sound like a group, rather than a collection of musicians selected to participate in Take Five Europe as players with careers established, but looking for ways to get to the next level. With the impressive and powerful Damasiewicz absent, it may have also worked to Besson's advantage, giving her greater opportunity to shine on her own; and while Kweksilber didn't need the absence of Perret to stand out, he did nevertheless, especially in the set's closing tune where he played with more fire than in Kent back in January, letting loose a series of John Zorn-like squeals in the upper register while Ghosh, the most visually animated and consequently charismatic performer, swooped and swirled in, out and around him. Masecki was hard to see, with his piano facing towards the rear of the stage as this was a group too large for the venue's small stage (another of the many experiences Take Five Europe helps its participants learn how to overcome), but his contributions were not, as he led the group, early on, through his own composition—standing and playing two pieces of tuned percussion rather than piano.



In his second performance of the week, Herskedal, too, impressed, in particular during his own composition, where an a cappella intro combined electronics and extended techniques to create something distinctly un-tuba-like, while Sharkey's southpaw creation of shimmering arpeggios and harder-edged lines early in the set were still a surprise to those familiar with his work in trioVD and, more recently, *The Geordie Approach*. Zanussi and Baggiani kept the engine stoked while, at the same time, responding to their musical partners and, as was most clearly seen in the after-show, friends as well. It was clear that the group had applied many of the lessons learned at *Take Five Europe*, most notably in its maintaining of the pace of the set and delivering introductions (because it was in Norway, from Zanussi and Herskedal) that were concise and to the point.

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