



# Per Oddvar Johansen

Helge Lien  
Torben Snekkestad

THE  
QUIET  
CORMORANT

## The Quiet Cormorant

There is something rather wonderful about the choreography of a drummer, how they sit with their dancer-like poise, whether they're in full flight, or whether they're almost whispering their music, like caressing a bird with a broken wing. How I envy a drummer's ability to 'inhabit' time, stretching it, dancing with it, interrupting it, making mischief. Per Oddvar Johansen has this extraordinary physical connection with his drums, they simply belong together, sharing a deep sense of listening, singing their own mysterious language.

So, it's out of this relationship with his instruments, with music itself and with nature, that Per Oddvar's compositions have grown. Together with pianist Helge Lien and sax player Torben Snekkestad he created the album 'Let's Dance' with its infectious physicality and clear lyrical lines, while exploring a musical world left behind by the great Paul Motian who died in 2011, a world which Per Oddvar felt was in danger of disappearing.

The titles of the 9 tracks on *The Quiet Cormorant* read like the titles of a collection of short stories, or of miniature paintings on the wall of a gallery: 'Island Movies', 'Brown House (by the sea)',

'Waltz for Hire', 'The Still'. If there is a journey here it's a deeply personal one for Per Oddvar, but it also becomes a personal one for the listener. This idea of 'playing with time' means it's fluid enough to find ourselves inside the music too.

Per Oddvar wrote much of the music in quiet, creative solitude in The Arctic Hideaway on a coastline near Bodø in northern Norway where the Norwegian Sea, the light, the sounds of birds and the sense of space and distance become an artist's palette. (The track 'Sørvær Major Manor' is named after the Hideaway's own island.) In his head were the sounds of his fellow musicians in the trio. Helge Lien he describes as having "a unique way of incorporating a Norwegian sound in his playing", while he talks about Torben's phrasing and detail, his unbelievable control over his saxophone. Audiences, too, perceive so much thoughtfulness in Helge's playing, a quiet passion as he leans into every note, while Torben's sound is profoundly songlike, the breath mattering as much as the notes.

Joining the trio on two tracks is the guitarist Hedvig Mollestad, another remarkable presence in Norwegian music in recent years. "Hedvig is such a great musician" says Per Oddvar "I like the rock-remembrance it gives to the record as a whole". Certainly, it's

far more than a guest appearance from Hedvig. When 'Love, Peace and Currywurst' powers on to the album's landscape it's like the crash of the oceans wave onto the beach, a hymn to Nature, a party on the sands of time.

Per Oddvar has already had a remarkable career in music, from early rock days, through working with such luminaries of the Norwegian scene as Christian Wallumrød, Trygve Seim or Solveig Slettahjell. He's always in demand, so what does this trio give him that isn't answered elsewhere? "It's a very strange and rewarding thing to have someone play music from your own head", he tells me. "My goal is to create rubato, open music, that floats or hovers, I like to think of it as weightless music."

In Norwegian mythology the cormorant is seen as a good omen, a strong, powerful bird that listens, and knows when the time is right. Maybe what we discover here is that Per Oddvar himself is *The Quiet Cormorant* of the title.

Fiona Talkington  
December 2019

### Thank you:

Jan Erik - for all your wonderful work all these years.  
Torben, Helge and Hedvig - for your great contribution to this record.

Mathilde Grooss Viddal - for lending us your bass clarinet.  
Odd Gjelsnes - for releasing this album with me.

I would especially like to thank Håvard Lund and the others at Fordypningsrommet Fleinvær, aka The Arctic Hideaway, for letting me stay a whole week in solitude. It made many of these songs come to life.

Also thank you NOPA for letting me stay and work in the Berlin apartment Ormen Lange.

### Side A

- 1 **The Quiet Cormorant** 3:41
- 2 **Waltz For Hire** 4:55
- 3 **Brown House (by the sea)** 7:21
- 4 **The Njalla Suite** 6:27

Total Time 22:20

### Side B

- 1 **Island Movies** 3:26
- 2 **Love, Peace & Currywurst** 3:10
- 3 **The Still** 3:27
- 4 **Sørvær Major Manor** 5:49
- 5 **A Ballad In Popular Keys** 4:31

Total Time 20:20

**Per Oddvar Johansen** drums, vibraphone

**Helge Lien** piano

**Torben Snekkestad** tenor & soprano saxophone, bass clarinet

**Hedvig Mollestad** guitar on track 3 Side A & track 2 Side B

All compositions by Per Oddvar Johansen © TONO/POJ

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