

## Jan Garbarek Group - Live in London (2016)

Written by bluesever

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*01 Molde Canticle Part I 02 Molde Canticle Part II 03 Buena Hora, Buenos Vientos 04 Molde Canticle Part IV 05 Unknown title 06 Bass Solo 07 Gula Gula 08 Unknown title 09 Unknown title 10 Improvisation 11 Piano Solo 12 Unknown title 13 All those born with wings, 5th piece 14 Percussion Solo 15 Jan & Trilok 16 Unknown title 17 Encore* Jan Garbarek (Saxophon) Rainer Brüninghaus (Piano) Yuri Daniel (Bass) Trilok Gurtu (Percussion) Live at Royal Royal Festival Hall, London, 13 November 2016

Returning to London for the first time in four years, the inimitable Jan Garbarek Group took to the stage during the opening weekend of the 2016 EFG London Jazz Festival to play to a full house. On the face of it, the four musicians make an unlikely combo, spanning a diverse range of musical influences, genres and styles quite apart from their very different stage personae, and in the process show an extraordinary versatility.

Garbarek's longstanding German pianist, Rainer Brüninghaus, is commandingly regal and rebelliously boogie-woogie in equal measure. The electric bass player, Brazilian Yuri Daniel, is just as adept at slap bass as he is when meting out a lyrical melodic line that sounds like a deeply sonorous sitar - not surprising given his collaborator on percussion, Trilok Gurtu, tabla player supreme, who looks just as much at home on a conventional drum kit. And then there is Jan Garbarek himself, the consummate tenor and soprano saxophonist, treating both instruments to his precisely honed, fine-hued sound, that is limpid and graceful but somehow never cloying. Without ever speaking between numbers to announce a tune or to introduce themselves, the foursome nevertheless communicated on a very human level, weaving together spare but complex melodies with complex rhythmic textures, the forms loose and dynamic, the solos crafted and thoughtful.

Garbarek's tunes are characteristically spatial, and as performers they also gave each other a

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lot of space - both musically and literally - on many occasions three musicians would leave the stage to allow one player to take the spotlight. In fact, it struck me that they could each have done a solo gig and the audience would have been more than happy, especially when Gurtu turned to the array of percussion instruments behind him and began to implement one after another during an extended improvisation. This culminated with him playing a galvanised bucket full of water, tapping the handle while immersing a brass tray into the water and vocalising konnakkol, as he splashed both sound and water with abandon. Garbarek, spurred on by this unorthodox display, returned to the stage with a wooden flute to accompany Gurtu. Other memorable moments of pairings were Daniel and Brüninghaus trading micro phrases, teasing and chiding, before melding their sound into an epic intro for another tune.

A friend noted afterwards that when they came to take a bow after their encore number, there did not seem to be much sense of camaraderie between the band members, but to my mind there had been more than enough connection established in the music itself. Whilst at times the cool, nordic vibe prevailed, veering towards an expectedly plaintive tradition, referencing Garbarek's extensive work with exponents of plainsong and Gregorian chants, the folk motifs and use of non-western scales made for a more ethnographically diverse repertoire than I had anticipated.

Now forty-odd years into his career, Garbarek is as close to perfection as it's humanly possible to achieve, showing himself to be a master of silence as well as sound, of striking rhythmic figures as much as achingly beautiful phrases. ---Sarah Chaplin, londonjazznews.com

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