

Erland Dahlen – Rolling Bomber (2012)



1. *Flower Power* (6:31) 2. *Funeral* (5:23) 3. *Piratman* (5:41) 4. *Dragon* (5:21) 5. *Monkey* (4:49) [play](#) 6. *Pyramid* (4:34) 7. *Germany* (3:32) Personnel: Erland Dahlen - Drums,, Timpani, Gong, Musical Bow [Bow On Cakeform With Springs], Percussion [Tank Drums], Cuica, Maracas, Kalimba, Temple Block, Steel Drums, Percussion [Logdrum], Bells, Electronics, [Sticks/mallets On String Instruments (monkey Drummer With Battery)]

Erland Dahlen never attended the Dave Grohl School of Drumming, though the former sticksman for Madrugada, one of Norway's biggest rock acts, suffered a similar fate to the Foo Fighters frontman. In his case, the sudden death of guitarist Robert Burås in 2007 brought about the break-up of the band with whom he'd spent the last year playing. But, rather than step out from behind the kit, Dahlen has chosen to collaborate in the years since with an impressive list of his country's more forward-thinking acts, including Hanne Hukkelberg, Serena Maneesh and Mathias Eick. His debut album sees him focus on his kit to the exclusion of almost any other instrument, using it to conjure up dark, ambiguous atmospheres and hypnotic, engrossing soundscapes that bear little relation to his former work with the Norwegian heroes.

Proof that his kit is the central focus of this intriguing debut lies in its title: the Rolling Bomber is a Slingerland drum set from the Second World War era made out of rosewood. (Most metal was required by the war effort.) Consequently its tone is unusually warm, despite the recording sessions taking place in an abandoned Oslo coffee factory, and Dahlen's approach is also far from conventional. At times it seems as though no part of his kit is safe from his sticks, and the additional use of electronic embellishments and a musical saw – both used sparingly but resourcefully – mean there's no Monkey Wrench here for arena crowds.

Instead there are seven tracks of crepuscular intensity that combine a love for complex but driving rhythms and the free structure and experimentation for which Norwegian jazz is known.

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Flower Power sounds like a music box malfunctioning as it falls down a grand but squeaky wooden staircase – a recommendation, as it happens – and Monkey could be a Lalo Schifrin soundtrack stripped of all but its percussion and sound effects. Piratman, full of cymbal splashes and eerie sounds, is particularly effective, a distant cousin of Moon Over Morphosa, the 2004 collaboration between sometime Stooges drummer Toby Dammit and Bad Seeds drummer Thomas Wydler. Overall, it's confusing, sometimes creepy, with anthems entirely absent, but it's also an enlightening reminder of how versatile a simple drum kit can be.

---Wyndham Wallace, BBC Review

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