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Tord Gustavsen Trio

Being There



Tord Gustavsen, piano
Harald Johnsen, double-bass
Jarle Vesperstad, drums

Tracklist

1. At home [6:08] - 2. Vicar Street [3:43] - 3. Draw near [3:54]
4. Blessed feet [6:06] - 5. Sani [2:38] - 6. Interlude [2:18] - 7. Karmosin [5:10]
8. Still there [4:19] - 9. Where we went [4:46] - 10. Cocoon [5:49]
11. Around you [5:34] - 12. Vesper [4:27] - 13. Wide open [4:39]

All compositions by **Tord Gustavsen** except 7. by Harald Johnsen.

Recorded December 2006 at Rainbow Studio, Oslo.

Engineer: Jan Erik Kongshaug. Producer: Manfred Eicher.

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Norwegian pianist Tord Gustavsen views *Being There* as the third instalment of a trilogy that began with *Changing Places* (recorded 2001-02) and continued with *The Ground* (recorded 2004). On *Being There* the music's priorities are maintained. The album's title is borrowed from a tune on *The Ground*, intentionally stressing the continuity of the music, and also underlining its working concept, characterized by Gustavsen as "being acutely present, aware and focused in the fullness of the moment. The group has a definite direction or sound, but there are still many nuances to explore." Gustavsen's clearly-delineated melodies define a large part of the group's sonic identity, but so does the manner in which the trio approaches them. Technical flamboyance has almost no

role to play in Gustavsen's sound-world: restraint is one of the music's hallmarks. "On the one hand", he notes, "this is a matter of discipline, but it's a discipline inspired by a love of spaces, not by some anorectic minimalist ideology. It's about 'loving every note' – to phrase it as a slogan – or about trying to play what you'd actually like to hear rather than what you think you ought to play." This 'holding back' allows room for other musical developments to flower naturally, one of which has been the drifting of Jarle Vespestad's drums towards the centre of the sound: the drums are, as Gustavsen says, a crucial component of the music. If this has been a tendency of performances in the live setting almost from the beginning, it is especially evident on *Being There*.
(Ecmrecords.com / [further notes here](#))

Jazz Magazine, Disque d'émoi
Jazzman, Choc du mois

This is the final part of a trilogy of piano trio albums that began with *Changing Places and continued with [i]The Ground*, the whole comprising what could be the most essential jazz document of the last 10 years. *Being There* keeps to a similar feel: slow, limpid, ballads and "wordless hymns" where a sense of stillness is always present, however much the music rocks on its heels through gospel-influenced chording. ... This is the chill-out as a state of grace, and it can go as deep as you like. Sublime.
Phil Johnson, Independent on Sunday

It's easy to conclude that the kind of whispery, reverential north-European gospel music that Norwegian piano star Tord Gustavsen plays is simply a cooled-down pastiche (for the delicate sensibilities of classical fans) of earlier, raunchier, black jazz-piano styles. But Gustavsen was a church musician himself, and remains a churchgoer – so in his hands the style turns into a seductive mix of softly rocking, holy-rolling vamps, and slow themes that resemble hymns. Jazzers will always criticise the reduction of improvising to such minimally-nuanced variations staying very close to the melodies, but Gustavsen's tunes (often sounding like romantic movie themes) are hypnotically strong, and the integration of bass and drums in his regular trio is total. Sometimes it sounds like Brad Mehldau with the offhandedly imperious torrents of spontaneous melody missing. But in the beautiful near-motionless tunes of the trio-standby 'At Home', or the wordless hymn 'Draw Near', through the funkily Jarrett-like 'Blessed Feet', the sleepwalking slow-gospel of 'Still There' and the almost-urgent insistence of the Spanish-tinged 'Where We Went', it's possible for even hardcore jazzers to get the point about Tord Gustavsen. This one just did.
John Fordham, The Guardian



Tord Gustavsen - Harald Johnsen - Jarle Vespestad

... The trio has a very restrained and soft-spoken approach which often seems to blur the line between chamber jazz and classical chamber music. An initial impression of great simplicity à la Erik Satie is heard from Gustavsen. There is never any shouting; an almost meditative approach is frequently felt. Some of the lyrical melodies have great beauty, and tempi are usually quite deliberate. There are several hymn tunes among the 13 tracks. A folk-like melody graces one of the longer tracks (at over six minutes) which should have wide appeal. 'Blessed Feet' is quiet but dancelike and is dedicated to a young nephew of Gustavsen. The drum work on this and all the tracks is properly low-key, thus fitting well with the trio's overall sound. The piano sound is lovely, as on all ECMs, and the album is sure to grow on you the more you listen to it. It has 100% more depth and density than the many piano trio CDs that come our way regularly.

John Henry, Audad.com

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