

ACT

Viktoria Tolstoy

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Letters to Herbie

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ACT 9519-2Special Guests:
Nils Landgren and Magnus Lindgren

LC 07644

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Herbie Hancock is without doubt one of the few remaining greats of jazz as a pianist and composer. Of late he has been playing jazz, rock and pop standards with a number of prominent guests - on "Possibilities" (2005) and most recently on "The Imagine Project" he joined up with global stars like Santana, Sting, Christina Aguilera and Pink to perform a range of popular classics. Now the tables have turned, and rather than Herbie covering the music of other artists, a fan of the 71-year-old has written a series of musical "Letters to Herbie" – ACT's star Viktoria Tolstoy has recorded 12 songs for (and in most cases by) Herbie Hancock.

Viktoria Tolstoy has been a great admirer of Hancock since her early youth and the idea to do a tribute project has been with her for a while. "I think it was in 2004," says Tolstoy, "at the Jazz Baltica Festival in Salza, when I had the privilege to share the stage with Herbie and his band, including the amazing Wayne Shorter. As usual, after that there was a big late night jam session going on. I was sitting behind the drums and had just started to play, when someone called 'Viktoria, Herbie is expecting you – he wants to have dinner with you!' I immediately dropped the drumsticks and went downstairs, where Herbie and his entire band were already waiting for me. I was seated directly opposite my idol and next to Wayne Shorter. It was a truly surreal experience and I enjoyed every second of it!"

Needless to say, it was Hancock's openness towards pop, soul and funk which won Viktoria Tolstoy over. She herself found widespread acclaim with her pop influenced '90s album "White Russian" (which she recorded with the Esbjörn Svensson Trio), and ever since she has remained true to melodic jazz spiced up with Scandinavian, Russian or American pop and folk music. With "Letters to Herbie" Tolstoy was faced with a tough choice. "It was not easy to select 12 out of the huge amount of songs, but I just listened to my heart." Her smart decision was not to pick the biggest hits, such as "Cantaloupe Island" or "Watermelon Man", which have already been covered too often. Her choice of songs fits together perfectly, although the selection covers Hancock's different musical eras. The focus is largely on the songs of his funky '80s era, with selections such as "I Thought It Was You" or "Give It All Your Heart", but classics are also included; Hancock's "Butterfly" or Coltrane's "Naima", of which Hancock recorded a thrilling version in 2002.

Whether its ballads like "Chan's Song", or groovy pieces like the bonus track "Come On, Come Over", Tolstoy's versions sound timeless, neither artificial nor deliberately, ostentatiously modern. All of them are carried by Viktoria's voice, which gives the music a special touch with its incredible clarity and imaginativeness. The overall effect also has a lot to do with the wonderfully attuned band, particularly Nils Landgren. As well as producing the album and playing the trombone, he wrote the title song himself and sings it with Tolstoy and Magnus Lindgren, telling the story of Viktoria's encounter with Hancock. Tolstoy's longstanding pianist, Jacob Karlzon, accepts the challenge of taking the seat of the master and convinces with impressive solos on piano and a variety of tones and colours on keyboard and Fender Rhodes, while Matthias Svensson on bass and Rasmus Kihlberg on drums provide the silky, groovy rhythms. Krister Johnsson's guitar is strongly influenced by soul music, occasionally evoking George Benson (but not forgetting the funky wah-wah-pedal), and the impressive brass sections were played and arranged by Magnus Lindgren.



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In order to discover all the technical nuances and the musical subtleties, such as the brass section in "Come Running to Me", and the outstanding quality of the individual interpretations, you have to listen to the songs several times. "I wrote a letter to Herbie, he never answered," sings Viktoria Tolstoy in the title song. This time he most probably will.

The CD: Letters to Herbie – Viktoria Tolstoy – ACT 9519-2 - LC 07644

Line Up:

Viktoria Tolstoy / vocals
Jacob Karlzon / piano, keyboards
Kristen Jonsson / guitars
Mattias Svensson / bass
Rasmus Kihlberg / drums

Special Guests:

Nils Landgren / trombone & vocals
Magnus Lindgren / woodwinds

Tracks:

01 Trust Me	08 Letter To Herbie
02 Textures	09 Paradise
03 I Thought It Was You	10 Chemical Residue
04 Chan's Song	11 Tell Me A Bedtime Story
05 Butterfly	12 Naima
06 Come Running To Me	Bonus Track:
07 Give It All Your Heart	13 Come On, Come Over

Produced by Nils Landgren. Recorded at Gula Studio Malmö by David Carlsson & Jan Ugand. Additional recordings, mixed and mastered by Lars Nilsson, Nilento Studio, Gothenburg.

Distributor:

edelkultur (DE), edel Musica (AT), Musikvertrieb (CH), Challenge Records Int. (Benelux), Harmonia Mundi (FR), Harmonia Mundi (UK), Allegro-Nail Distribution (US), Naxos (SE/Fl), A&N Music (GR), Andante Music (RO), Apostrophe (RU), AS Jahipaun (EE), C&L Records (KR), CD Bar (HU), Dargil (PT), DC Comp (UA), Outside Distribution (CA), Divyd (SK), Dukyan Meloman (BG), Egea (I), Equinox Music (TR), GIGI Distribution (PL), Gramofon (BA), Intek (SI+HR), Jassics (ZA), Jazzworld (HK), JSC "Bomba" (LT), Karonte (ES), Musikklosen (NO), One-Hifi (RS), Planet MGM Distribution (AU), Southbound Records (NZ), Sundance (DK), Videoarts Music Inc. (JP), 2HP (CZ)

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