JOHAN BLOHM BIOGRAPHY

Johan Blohm was considered one of Sweden’s best-kept secrets for many years, but thanks to a sensational YouTube clip The Refreshments boogie rolling pianist has been able to show the world what a keyboard master he is. The film clip in question shows Johan roaring through his signature solo number ”JB’s Boogie” in less than two minutes during a break in a Refreshments show. For the ever so cool Johan Blohm it’s just another day at work, but an astonishing 22 million views (and counting) proves that stunned boogie-woogie lovers all over the world has started to spread the news.

One day Johan had an enthusiastic American voice in the phone, for example. It turned out to be the legendary producer and sound engineer Bruce Swedien, who had engineered all Michael Jackson’s solo album between 1978 and 2001, co-produced the world’s best selling album ”Thriller” as well as producing jazz and rock giants like Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, Diana Ross, Barbara Streisand, Paul McCartney, and Mick Jagger. Swedien invited Johan to his Florida home to get a first-hand glimpse of his piano technique. Following The Refreshment’s American debut at the SXSW festival in Austin 2011, Johan went to Florida where they made some demo recordings and discussed the possibilities of a future cooperation.

Rock'n' Roll and Country Music It’s no exaggeration to say that Johan Blohm quite comfortably has taken the position as Sweden’s Jerry Lee Lewis, especially if ”The Killer’s” classic country style from the 60´s and 70’s is your thing. He was groomed in old school rock’n’roll and country from the beginning, growing up with the sound of his dad’s favourite artists: Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry, Charlie Rich and so on.

When he was seven the family got an old upright piano from a relative. Soon Johan had found the melody to ”Green Green Grass Of Home” with his right hand - and there was no turning back from there. Since then he has mixed rock’n’roll, country and boogie-woogie into a musical style characterized by a hard driving groove that he somehow manages to sound completely effortless.

Considering that Johan grew up in Sweden during the 70’s, he is about as much rock’n’roll as it gets. He has played together with legends like D.J. Fontana, Sleepy La Beef, Ray Sharpe, Al Ferrier and Stan Kessler. He has partied with Jerry Lee Lewis (and lived to tell). He has shown an impressed James Burton his patented boogie licks. And back home in his garage a Ford Thunderbird is parked beside a Pontiac Trans Am. JB has a ”rock’n’roll heart”. The right stuff, if you like.

His style is a contagious blend of all his musical heroes through the years - Gram Parsons, Merle Haggard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Hank Williams, Amos Milburn, Albert Ammons and so on. It’s country with a rock’n’roll attitude or the other way around. The total opposite of the contemporary country style that Tom Petty once referred to as ”bad rock with a fiddle”.

In 1999 Johan met Joakim Arnell of the The Refreshments. Upon hearing Johan play, Joakim was blown away and the boogieman soon was offered a permanent position in the band. On The Refreshments’ records he soon carved out his own niche with country tinged solo numbers, specially written for him by the band’s chief songwriter Joakim Arnell, but it wasn’t until the solo debut ”Reconsider Me” in 2005 that Johan felt mature enough musically to do his own thing.

Songs like Joe South’s ”Rose Garden” (which Lynn Anderson in the early 70’s made into one of the world’s biggest radio hits), Dorsey Burnette’s ”As Long As I Live”, Willie Nelson’s ”Mr. Record Man”, Rockpile’s ”As Lovers Do” och Harlan Howard’s “Sunday Morning Christian” presented Johan Blohm as an old school country singer with a classic rock’n’roll heart. But it was the intense album closer ”JB’s Boogie” that would steal most of the attention.

Tasteful choice of songs “Reborn Man” once again serves a tasteful blend of classic songs from the 50’s and onwards. Songwriter Rick Klang delivered ”Good News Travels Fast” to The Refreshments album ”On The Rocks” a couple of years ago. The band had heard the song on an 80’s recording by Jerry Lee Lewis, and Rick Klang was so delighted by the Swedish band’s version that he immediately offered them more songs. The initial kick-start ”Hot Mess” was one of them. Next is a song by one of Johan’s absolute favourites, Charlie Rich. He recorded ”There Won’t Be Anymore” in 1965, but the track wasn’t released until 1973 when it immediately became a #1 song on the American country charts. And then there’s Moon Mullican with the oldest song on the album, the rockabilly-boppin’ ”Big Big City” from 1958. Carl Mann is most known for ”Mona Lisa”, but his ”If I Could Change You” from 1961 is also a gem, made evident by Johan’s inspired version. ”Little Ol’ Wine Drinker Me” is another cool classic that Dean Martin took the charts with a wry smile back in 1967.

Randy Chaffer’s "She's Not Really Cheatin' (She's Just Gettin' Even)" is also familiar for country lovers with an eye on the 70’s outlaw scene, being a hit for Moe Bandy in 1982.

But a major part of the songs are actually written now. Joakim Arnell has once again managed to dial in a creative flow with the time zone set somewhere around those sounds from the 60’s and 70’s, where Johan feels most at home. Songs like the hard rocking title track, the melancholy ”Cold Day Light” and the persistent foot stomper ”Paradise Coast” complements the classics just as good as Eva Eastwood’s soulful duet ”Wherever I Turn”.

The album climaxes with two smoking bonus tracks. Jackie Brenston’s original roots-rocker ”Rocket 88” - recorded in the Sun studio in Memphis and regarded by many as the world’s first rock’n’roll song - is a take from the actual Sun studio, where The Refreshments earlier this year recorded their Chuck Berry tribute “Let It Rock” in the most famous rock’n’roll recording studio on the planet. Johan’s own piano showcase ”Bada Bing Boogie” is a new awesome piece of improvisation for all the millions that has enjoyed his skills on YouTube.

A few really good friends and musicians has made great contributions along the way: Joakim Arnell (bass, acoustic guitar and backing vocals), Göran Holmberg (bass), Mats Forsberg (drums), Jonas Göransson, Ulf Holmberg and Robin Olsson (guitars), Eva Eastwood and Linda Gail Lewis (backing vocals) and JT Holmström (saxophone).

But in the midst of it all, we’ll find a quiet and humble pianist who once again let the fingers do the talking. If you haven’t discovered Johan Blohm yet, it’s about time to do it now!