

Bitter Funeral Beer Band with Don Cherry and K Sridhar

Live in Frankfurt 82

Country & Eastern CE 09 | ★★★★★

Bengt Berger (ko-gyil (Lo-Birifor funeral xylophone),
Atsimevu (Ewe drum)), Anita Livstrand (ko-gyil, v, perc),
Bosse Skooldund (perc), Thomas Mera Gartz (perc, t sax),
Sigge Krantz (el and db), Matthias Helldén (cello), Tord
Bengtsson (vln, gtr), Christer Bothén (s sax, b clar), Ulf
Wallander, (sop and t sax), Jörgen Adolfsson (sop and a
sax), Tommy Adolfsson (t), Don Cherry (pocket t) and K
Sridhar K Sridhar (sarod). Rec. 1982

Importing musical elements from other cultures has a long and illustrious history in jazz. Think of Dave Brubeck, John Handy, John Coltrane, Pharaoh Sanders, Andy Sheppard or Courtney Pine. Sweden's Bitter Funeral Beer Band was "world music" before the marketing term was coined but very much in the stamp of world music as Georg Capellen (1869-1934) conceived it as "attaining a new style of music, 'Weltmusik' by marrying traditions." The Bitter Funeral Beer Band's musical steer came out of time Bengt Berger spent in Ghana absorbing traditional drum styles and traditions. This band recorded for ECM and the Sweden's Dragon label. Hessischer Rundfunk (Hessen Radio) recorded this material at the 1982 German Jazzfestival in the company of Don Cherry, a musician whose genre-crossing work pre-defined the coinage "world music" and the Indian sarodist K Sridhar. Home in on 'Darafo' for its cello and pocket trumpet, 'Bitter Funeral Beer' for its sarod, pocket trumpet, vocal and tenor sax, and the whole shebang of 'Funeral Dance'. Utterly important historically. Utterly mesmerising musically Afro-Indian-European teamwork. Ken Hunt

BITTER FUNERAL BEER BAND WITH DON CHERRY AND K SRIDHAR

Live In Frankfurt 82 Country & Eastern CE 09

The Bitter Funeral Beer Band was a Swedish band that made albums for ECM in Germany and Dragon in Sweden. One of the most accomplished bands of its kind, it was only after they had gone that I ever heard them. Helmed by Bengt Berger, they tacked between jazz and world music with extraordinary confidence, aplomb and wit. This archival recording comes from Hessischer Rundfunk's tape locker and captures a festival line-up at the Deutsches Jazzfestival in Frankfurt am Main augmented by the pocket trumpet player Don Cherry and the sarodist K Sridhar, as they say in jazz parlance, sitting in. Both had lengthy Swedish credentials.

Prior to the Bitter Funeral Beer Band, Bengt Berger had spent time in Ghana studying traditional drumming. (Country & Eastern's *The Music Of Ammasu*, a volume of Ghanaian tribal music, recorded by Berger and co-released with this album, is to cherish.) The core band itself fields Bengt Berger on *ko-gyil* (Lo-Birifor funeral xylophone) and *atsimevu* (Ewe drum), Anita Livstrand on *ko-gyil*, vocals and percussion, Bosse Skooldund on percussion, Thomas Mera Gartz on percussion and tenor saxophone, Sigge Krantz on basses, Matthias Helldén on cello, Tord Bengtsson on violin and guitar, Christer Bothén on tenor sax and bass clarinet, Ulf Wallander on soprano and tenor saxes, Jörgen Adolfsson on soprano and alto saxes, and Tommy Adolfsson on trumpet. The dynamics of the band are wonderful, especially on *Darafo* featuring cello and pocket trumpet (how many times can a writer say that without risking sniggers from the back of the class?) and, at almost ten minutes, *Bitter Funeral Beer*. The heart of this ménage à quinze is *Funeral Dance* – over 26 minutes of Afro-Indian-European fusion. Hear it and be dazzled. www.countryandeastern.se

Ken Hunt

fROOTS - may 2008