



Jonas Knutsson + Johan Norberg

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**SKAREN : NORRLAND III**  
introducing Kraja

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ACT 9474-2

LC 07644



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In past years it has often invigorated jazz as well as world music when musicians have grappled with foreign sounds and styles outside their own cultural background. For some projects, however, what is most needed is authenticity – take for example the Knutsson-Norberg duo and their homage to Northern Sweden, its folk music, and the culture of the Sami. No one else could better bring it about than saxophonist Jonas Knutsson and guitarist Johan Norberg. The two palpably and audibly work through their childhood memories and specific personal, particularly Nordic thoughts and feelings.

Their debut CD *Norrland* (ACT 9014-2) in 2004 and the follow-up *Cow Cow: Norrland II* (ACT 9425-2) two years later were lauded by both the critics and the public as “a simple declaration of love to their country”, and “an oasis for the ears”, so motivation and inspiration for a third album was no problem. However for *Skaren: Norrland III* (ACT 9474-2) Knutsson and Norberg wanted to amplify with new voices and colours what was up until now a bilingual conversation. After they played in Leipzig with Eva Kruse, who is one of the most outstanding figures in young German jazz (among others, with Michael Wollny and Eric Schaefer in the group [em]), they agreed that Kruse’s sophisticated and at the same time crisp, voluminous contra-bass play would fit perfectly with what they had in mind. As the two were working out the new pieces shortly before it was time to go into the studio, ACT chief Siggı Loch assured for a further change when he passed on a real find: a demo album of the female vocal quartet “Kraja” with Lisa and Eva Lestander, Frida Johansson, and Linnea Nilsson – all of whom likewise come from Northern Sweden.

“Jonas and I quickly recognized that the ideal way to further develop our concept was to add these unusual voices. It’s crazy that someone from an office in Munich discovers the perfect musical connecting link – and it comes directly out of our Swedish neighbourhood”, comments Norberg. But it was no less remarkable that Knutsson and Norberg ever met in 1999 in the first place, although they had both been among the outstanding representatives of the Swedish jazz- and folk scene for many years: Norberg as a part of the Duo “Chapter Two” which he had formed and continued for a highly successful 17 years with ACT star Nils Landgren; Knutsson as accompanist to the folksinger Lena Willemark and her internationally successful “Nordan” projects and by the folk-jazz pioneering “Enteli”.

This time it’s as a tour group heading direction-North, as it were, joining up the basic beauty of something jazzy with Swedish folk music. Now Johan Norberg’s mild, often brightly re-tuned Sandén acoustic guitar, his 1934 Levin school guitar, and his Kantele, that zither-like Finnish national instrument have more to communicate with than just the mellow but strong saxophone; now there are Eva Kruse’s minimalistically-accentuated bass and Kraja’s onomatopoeic vocals to correspond with. This time the details can be entirely different. There are the traditional folkways, songs and chorales, and then there are the original compositions, from intimate question and answer games between spirited saxophone and laid-back guitar in “Resan” over to urbane-sounding folksongs like “Vore du ett Blad” on through to the many-voiced and multi-layered hymn “Vaggsång”. There is a fundamental brightness, exuberance, and joy that unexpectedly run through both the most solemn and the most simple pieces.

Clothed in a new line-up, there are a whole new set of possibilities; take the far-North-transplanted reduction version of the Bavarian barn dance “Schwarzer Bua” for example. In this, their third go, Jonas Knutsson and Johan Norberg have evolved a new iridescent expressiveness. At the same time they have maintained their character, their uniqueness, and with it their essential quality. The expression *Skaren* from North Sweden is dead on: the crusty sheen that forms on top of pure snow.

**ACT****Johan Norberg & Jonas Knutsson  
with Eva Kruse****The CD:**

Skaren: Norrland III – Jonas Knutsson + Johan Norberg – ACT 9474-2 – LC 07644

**Line Up:**Jonas Knutsson - saxophones  
Johan Norberg - guitars, kantele  
Eva Kruse - bass**Kraja:**Eva Lestander - vocals  
Lisa Lestander - vocals  
Frida Johansson - vocals  
Linnea Nilsson - vocals**Tracks:**01 Schwarzer Bua (trad.) 03:13 02 Majas Polska (Eva Lestander) 04:18 03 Skaren (Johan Norberg) 04:23  
04 När jag om morgonen uppstår (trad.) 02:19 05 Resan (Johan Norberg, Jonas Knutsson) 04:36  
06 Pelle in i lia (trad.) 03:22 07 Lyckan (Johan Norberg) 05:23 08 Vore du ett blad (trad.) 03:58  
09 Åkallan (Johan Norberg, Jonas Knutsson, Eva Kruse) 04:36  
10 Guoika (Johan Norberg, Jonas Knutsson) 03:43 11 Villvassvisan (trad.) 02:33  
12 Skogen (Johan Norberg) 02:55 13 Den signade dag (trad.) 03:10 14 Vaggsång (Johan Norberg) 03:59

Recorded by Lennart Östlund at Polar Studios, Stockholm, February 2008

Mixed by Johan Norberg at Krubaston

Produced by Johan Norberg

Executive Producer: Siegfried Loch

**Jonas Knutsson – Johan Norberg on ACT:**

ACT 9425-2 Cow Cow: Norrland II

ACT 9014-2 Norrland

**Distributors:**

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