

Hedvig Mollestad Trio – Black Stabat Mater (2016)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Approaching - On Arrival* 14:16 2 *In The Court Of The Trolls* 8:15 4 *-40* 6:18 5
Somebody Else Should Be On That Bus 4:26 Bass – Ellen Brekken Drums – Ivar Loe
Bjørnstad Guitar – Hedvig Mollestad Thomassen

Over the last few years, the Hedvig Mollestad Trio have become one of the more exciting units on Norway's music scene. Led by electric guitarist Hedvig Mollestad Thomassen, their previous studio offerings have broken into genre-blurring statements of heavy metal and hard rock riffery that touched on the noisier realms of jazz improvisation. *Black Stabat Mater* is the group's fourth studio offering. It is being simultaneously released with the live-double album *Evil in Oslo*. Clocking in at only 33 minutes, these five tracks offer something different than previous outings. This set is a bit less concerned with the riff-oriented pyrotechnics of hard rock and metal, and lean more into jazz-rock and even avant-jazz. First track "Approaching" commences with Mollestad's fat, spacious guitar chords, Ivor Joe Bjornstad's careening snares, double-kick drums, and toms-toms, while Ellen Brekken's throbbing bass finds the zone to push at and break through, though it never quite does. Mollestad invokes the influence of Ritchie Blackmore and Ray Russell -- think "Highway Star" meets "Dragon Hill." When it segues into "On Arrival," riffs drop out and dissonance claims the center. Angular chord voicings, feedback, distorted, droning bass, and free drumming elevate noise to the level of doomy improvisation -- like Sunn O))) by way of Sonny Sharrock. In the middle, the tempo increases. Mollestad explores tone and texture in the jam's margins. Despite the circular rhythms in much of "In the Court of the Trolls," she employs feedback and sustain to touch on knotty fusion, Hendrix-ian blues, and free jazz. "-40" is altogether more formless and investigative, and a reversal of roles. Mollestad functions as the rhythm section, playing a repetitive series of chords in pulsed eighths while Brekken's cymbals and Bjornstad's bowed basslines freely flit in and out commenting on them. It's an utterly lovely modal ballad. Fat, woody bass introduces "Somebody Else Should Be on That Bus," followed by drum sticks on wood, then the full kit. Mollestad doesn't enter until a minute or so in. Her squalling solo juxtaposes single-string lines, digital delay, and waves of distorted vamp-like chords. The rhythm section responds not by trying to push her, but by playing the blues. Eventually they all come together in a vice-like angular groove that is equal part jazz-rock and prog. *Black Stabat Mater* continues to have plenty to offer Mollestad's more

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rockist fans. But the more investigative elements they get up to here are exceptionally attractive and offer a portrait of this band as a mature, confident unit, and a hint of where they may travel to next. ---Thom Jurek, AllMusic Review

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