

CONTRABASS PLAYER, COMPOSER: JASPER SOMSEN

It is getting more and more clear that there is a great variety of very diverging talents in our large worldwide family: From beekeeper to researcher of ants, from professor of Japanese tea-ceremonies to antiquarian map collector. There are also poets, writers, preachers and actors. And – last but not least – many musicians in many different sorts.

We have asked Jasper Somsen, contrabass player, composer and bandleader, to write a contribution for Somsen Horizon about himself, his music and his band.

by Jasper Somsen [2850]

From a warm and musical stock

Jasper Somsen was born in 1973 in the third generation of the Ede Somsen branch, as the son of Wim Somsen [440] and Greet van Erp [441]. He was baptised Marc Jasper [2850].

He was raised in a warm and musical family. His father is a musician and a musical advisor for the elementary schools in their hometown Wageningen. His mother is active, among other things, as an amateur choir conductor, his sister Iris [2849] used to play the piano with much pleasure. All three of them were responsible for Jasper becoming interested in music at a very early age. Inspired by the music of Johan Sebastiaan Bach he sat on the bench of the organ – his legs dangling in the air – in the church round the corner when he was only five years old. Though he took organ lessons from the music teacher Simon Marbus until he was seventeen, his musical interest went different ways. As he was moving into adolescence Jasper was very active in the most various sorts of pop music.

After playing the drums and the guitar he decided to take bass guitar and contrabass lessons at the age of fifteen from a student of the academy of music in Arnhem.

Moved by the overwhelming music of John Scofield, The Yellowjacks and Miles Davis he took an entrance exam for the preparatory training of the academy of music in 1990.

Contrabass

In this year – 1990 – he chose to apply himself completely to the contrabass.

After the preparatory training he studied contrabass – light music at the academy of music in Utrecht and Hilversum. He took his first and second degree and continued his study at the academy of music of Amsterdam with a special study: classical contrabass with Peter Stotijn, where he graduated in September 2000.

During his study Jasper did master classes in light music with renowned musicians. He did classical contrabass master classes with Niek de Groot, *Concertgebouw Orchestra*; with Maggie Urquhart, *Orchestra of the 18th century*; with Hökan Ehren, *solo bass player in Stuttgart*.

In the jazz world he performed together with Bert van den Brink, Michiel Borstlap, Eric Vloeimans, Denise Jannah and Jesse van Ruller.

Jasper Somsen. Photo: Hans Kempkes

Apart from the classical orchestra projects during his study, he also joined the National Youth Orchestra under the direction of the conductor Alexander Liebreich on a winter tour and he also participated in CD recordings of the Dutch Youth String Orchestra under the direction of conductor / violinist Johannes Leertouwer.

In 1998 he met contrabass player and composer John Clayton. This turned out to be a very important moment. Until the present day he considers this as one of the most instructive moments in his musical career.

At the moment Jasper is employed at the music school in his hometown Veenendaal, where he teaches contrabass / bass guitar. He also leads the junior big band and the symphony orchestra and he is president of the representative advisory body.

He plays in several groups and he is, together with his academy friend and fellow guitar player,

Folker Tettero, bandleader of the group **Tettero**.

The group Tettero

Tettero's genre can be seen as a mix of Jazz, Funk and Blues, or 'Acoustic Groove'.

The strength is:

Folker Tettero – Guitar,
Jasper Somsen – Contrabass,
Edwin Berg – Fender Rhodes and Keyboards,
Arthur Lijten – Drums.

The band results from the second-degree exam in 1999 of guitar player Folker Tettero at the Royal Academy of Music in The Hague. The mutual co-operation in the group was such a success that they decided to continue as a steady group.

Folker and Jasper make compositions especially for this band. The sound of the individual band members and the band's own identity are the starting-point. Though the members of the band have very different musical backgrounds, they also have so much in common that a very solid group sound is guaranteed.

Folker Tettero is active in both jazz and pop music. Edwin Berg is the leader of his own jazz piano trio and also plays in the quartet of saxophonist Carolyn Breuer. Arthur Lijten is a very many-sided percussionist who can be heard on many CD's, amongst others those of Lori Spee.

Arthur and Jasper are both responsible for the characteristic 'Acoustic Groove' of Tettero. But also the sound of Folker's electric guitar combined with the Fender Rhodes render a very special timbre to the music.

The band is unique because of its great love for a

dynamic balance between improvisations and compositions of their own. In the music of Tettero the roots of jazz and jazz-rock from the seventies and eighties can clearly be distinguished.

Illustration of cover CD 'Unicycle' inner side

Photo: Joke H. Lammers

CD 'Unicycle'

On 29 October 2000 their first CD 'Unicycle' was recorded live in Theatercafé Hofplein in Veenendaal. The music benefits by the interaction between the musicians and the audience. The technician Micha de Kanter succeeded very well in recording the concert. The band has very consciously chosen for very diverse compositions for this recording. Next to intensely swinging numbers the band also performs quite well in playing daring ballads. The slurring blues-like ballad: 'Daddy Ray & Cousin Clay' is dedicated to John Clayton.

The CD can be ordered by transferring \$ 40,-- (including mailing costs) to Postbank number 475177 of Tettero – band account in Veenendaal, mentioning CD 'Unicycle' and the number of CD's wanted.

On receipt of the money the CD will be forwarded as soon as possible.

Those interested can phone for more information to +31 (0) 318 561 526 or surf to:

www.jazzserver.org/artist/Tettero

e-mail address on the website.

