



## JLT: Johan Leijonhufvud Trio - Nifty Fifty

Heartcore Records' newest release available on September 15, 2023

*Heartcore Records is pleased to present Johan Leijonhufvud Trio's new album Nifty Fifty, featuring Johan Leijonhufvud on guitar, Johnny Åman on upright bass, and Niclas Campagnol on drums. Nifty Fifty is an album of Johan's original compositions, full of inventive, melodious playing by some of the finest musicians working in European jazz. Its charm lies in the lyricism of Leijonhufvud's playing, the trios' intimate and warm dynamic, and his compositional meditation on the places and the objects that inspire him.*

*Nifty Fifty's* namesake comes from Leijonhufvud's other passion—photography. A nifty fifty is a nickname for the 50 mm photographic lens, whose flexible focal length is used to shoot a variety of subjects. The Johan Leijonhufvud Trio brings you into their world, zooming in on spaces and objects and documenting them with grace, sensitivity, and immense feeling, all the while creating a musically robust album that will stand the tides of time.

Renowned Swedish guitarist and composer Johan Leijonhufvud has toured and performed all over the world as a bandleader and sideman, and has played with artists as diverse as Benny Bailey, Till Brönner, Nils Landgren, Mark Murphy, Svante Thuresson, Anders Bergcrantz, and Esbjörn Svensson. Johnny Åman is one of the most prolific sidemen in Sweden and has played bass with Billy Hart, Jerry Bergonzi, and Gilad Hekselman. Niclas Campagnol is a Swedish drummer who studied in Denmark. His resume is unparalleled internationally having played with artists like Mike Stern, John Patitucci, Bob Mintzer, Cliff Richard, Belinda Carlisle, and Mathias "IA" Eklund.

Leijonhufvud wrote *Nifty Fifty* in his family's 200-year-old country house near Mossbystrand Beach, near Skivarp, Sweden, where he spent summers as a child. A popular attraction in the area, boasting 1500 meters of white sand, the beach serves as a backdrop to Leijonhufvud's relaxed and poetic compositions, in which he documents the places he inhabits through the scenes and objects around him with care. "Le Onde" ("The Waves" in Italian) is a mysterious, elegant tune with counterpoint melody lines and brushed drums. Leijonhufvud describes writing it while sitting on an abandoned machine gun bunker on Mossbystrand Beach, trusty Hofner Jazzica in hand, scoring "the slow waves in the winter when all the leaves have fallen on the trees". "Sub Acer" ("Under the Maple" in Latin) was written under the maple trees in the garden behind the summer house, Leijonhufvud's dextrous and fluid chord melodies are effortless and relaxed, with Åman's upright bass providing an empathetic melodic counterpoint, and Campagnol's drums settling into a delicate groove. Other songs like the hard swinging "Firewood", propelled by Campagnol's dextrous ride cymbal work, were written intermittently while Leijonhufvud would chop and carry firewood into the house to heat it in the winter. The continuous and rhythmically engaged lines of "Rocking Chair" were written in an old white rocking chair draped with a yellow blanket that has been in the house since Leijonhufvud was a child. Elsewhere on "Bopcorn", Leijonhufvud pays a humorous tribute to gigs with a disgruntled blues guitarist who compared Leijonhufvud's speedy bebop lines to the sound of popcorn popping, and shows his tender side on the bossa-nova inspired ballad "Gratias" ("Thank You" in Latin), dedicated to the memory of his late father.



*"I like to be in nature. If it was possible I would live in the countryside, but as a musician living there is difficult. In the winter it's very peaceful and there are no people here. I like that."*

*(Johan Leijonhufvud on writing Nifty Fifty in his family's Swedish country house)*

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## **Johan Leijonhufvud Biography**

Johan Leijonhufvud is a renowned Swedish jazz guitarist living in Berlin, Germany, whose elegant, fluid lines and highly melodic bebop style has situated him within a tradition of jazz guitar greats like Joe Pass, Kenny Burrell, Wes Montgomery and John Scofield. He was born in 1971 in Gothenburg, Sweden, and grew up in Växjö, Sweden, and learned to play piano at the age of nine and guitar at the age of eleven. One of the earliest formative musical experiences of young Leijonhufvud's life was hearing Cannonball Adderly's *Things Are Getting Better* on his parent's record player.

In 1988 Leijonhufvud moved to Skåne, in southern Sweden to study at Skurups Folkhögskola, the folk school that would become famous as an educational and social incubator for some of the finest jazz musicians in Europe. After two years at Skurups Folkhögskola, Leijonhufvud moved to Malmö and started The Johan Leijonhufvud Trio in 1991, who released their first album *Speaks The Local Bebop* (1993) with Mattias Hjorth on bass and Kristofer Johansson on drums, followed by a quartet album *Happy Farm* (1996), two more trio records *Eurolines* (2001), *Strange Man* (2006), and a solo album entitled *Mighty Mezz Vol. 1* (2014). In 2021, The Johan Leijonhufvud Trio joined the Heartcore Records family and released *Harlem Nocturne*, with bassist Johnny Åman and drummer Niclas Campagnol. Their latest release is *Nifty Fifty* (2023), a beautiful collection of songs written in Leijonhufvud's family's 200 year old home in the Swedish countryside.

In addition to his work as a bandleader, Leijonhufvud is also a prolific session musician and sideman, having played and recorded with notable artists such as Benny Bailey, Mark Murphy, Svante Thuresson, Anders Bergcrantz, Esbjörn Svensson, Nils Landgren, Victoria Tolstoy, Claes Jansson, David Haynes, Kjell Öhman, Berndt Rosengren, and Max Schultz. He has a decades long musical relationship with German trumpeter Till Brönner, who is one of the most famous jazz trumpeters in Germany.

By his own admission, Leijonhufvud cannot read music, which at first seems at odds with modern jazz's history of academically inclined musicians. Since he was a child, Leijonhufvud has been a deep listener, and his musical education comes from a lifetime of listening to music and playing straight from his heart. As audiences all over the world can plainly hear, Leijonhufvud is one of jazz's brightest players, and his musicality and facility on the guitar has allowed him to tour and perform as a bandleader and as a sideman all over the world, including in several major clubs and festivals such as Montreux Jazz Festival, North Sea Jazz Festival, Nice Jazz Festival, Copenhagen Jazz Festival, Ronnie Scott's (London), Blue Note Milano, London Jazz Cafe, Jamboree (Barcelona), Berlin Philharmonie, Auditorium Parco Della Musica (Rome) and Pizza Express (London). His warm spirit and friendly demeanor belie the breadth of his immense talent on the guitar, and his performances and recordings are rewarding listening for any music fan.

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