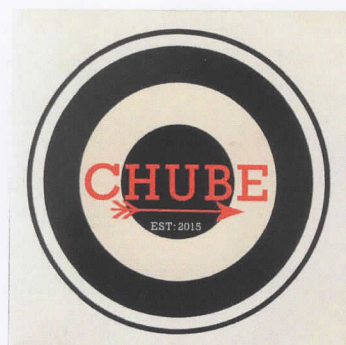




Chube – Chube EP



'Cool!'. The immediate verdict from the rear seat by my 6 and 8 year olds was clear. This was a few minutes into the first song of the EP "Chube", debut recording of Ben Creighton Griffiths' similarly named 3-man formation. Usually,

after buckling up, their first request is The Doors, The Beatles, or, admittedly, Kiss FM, so I would say Ben and his band are not in bad company there.

Several decades fast-forwarded though, we're listening to a truly contemporary harpist here. It's funky, and recognizes the electronically produced sounds of our time. A welcome new sound, where harp themes (both jazz influenced and more straightforward, pop, traditional sounding) interact with driving percussion by Matt Williams, jazz bass and guitar by Aeddan Williams, and synths and solo's from Ben's second - or, in fact, first? well at least competing - love: keyboards. More specifically: the Nord piano and Korg synthesizer. If you're not familiar with those, this may sound a lot like gadgets from your next Star Trek episode, but, well... why not actually?

With some tracks more atmospheric, and others coming close to rave-able EDM in their climax, the overall band sound would be filed under jazz fusion (I like Ben's qualification of electro-fusion). And with some decades in music ahead of them, expectedly, there is some more harp future to be built here! Available on disc and streaming services, 'Chube' will surely diversify music collections of harp lovers of all ages. Classical is cool, but this sure is too! BRENDA DOR-GROOT

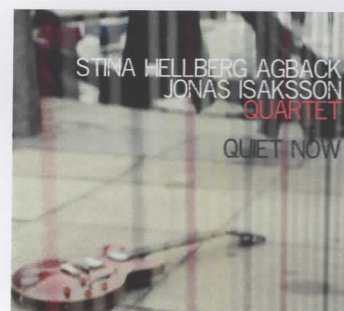
* notable fact: Ben often plays the harp with one hand, and keys with the other, simultaneously!

Stina Hellberg Agback/Jonas Isaksson Quartet – Quiet Now (Domusic records DMRC072)

An album to be listened to with eyes closed. Don't be misled by the title though, and don't expect a consonant yoga-spheric experience. There is quietness, but also full intensity and drive, and even carefully contained chaos at times. Having studied classical harp in her home country of Sweden as well as in the UK, followed by jazz studies in the US and a full

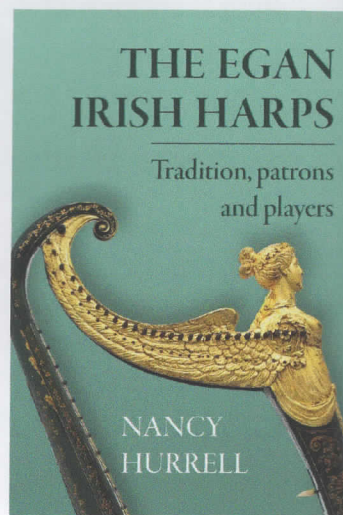
Bachelors and Masters degree in jazz performance back in Stockholm, Stina is now fully immersed in the Nordic jazz scene. A remarkable feat for a harpist on any continent, to be entirely involved and accepted on a jazz scene. At the same time in this case making total sense, as this Nordic jazz world is driven by experiment more than by conventions.

Stina 'knows her jazz', but what she plays is not mainstream. Like its predecessors, this album is about conversations through music, interplay, improvisation in (free) jazz idiom. That doesn't mean it's all 'out there' though. The sound is well rounded, and experimental tracks like Gospel Train are balanced with the familiar melodies and harping on My Favourite Things, the drive in Witch Hunt, and the delicacy of songs like Infant Eyes and the title track Quiet Now. Meticulously recorded, we hear very distinctive and pure timbres for the electroacoustic harp, the electric guitar (played by Jonas Isaksson), and the double bass (driven by Pär-Ola Landin) - quite remarkable given their traditional similarity in sound. Let's not forget an accolade for the fine drumming by Daniel Olsson. Enjoy this album on CD or stream it. BRENDA DOR-GROOT
* notable fact: the track 'Alice I Jönköping' is indeed paying homage to Coltrane. Expect lots of glisses there (but not so many in all of the rest, except for some witchiness in the Alice Coltrane tune 'Gospel Train';).



Nancy Hurrell The Egan Irish Harps: Tradition, Patrons and Players (Four Courts Press ISBN 978-1-84682-759-4)

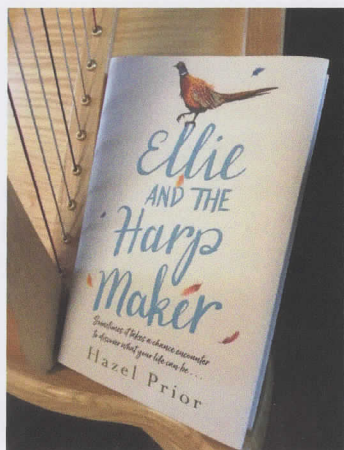
The scholarship surrounding the Irish harp has been much augmented by the publication of several substantial books in recent years. Hurrell's in-depth study of Egan's ornate and iconic revivalist harps is both substantial and fascinating. These instruments are familiar to all, gracing as they do the collections of many famous





museums. In 2015, a major exhibit on Irish art and domesticity at the Chicago institute of art had as its logo such a green-gilt dital harp, and the image could be seen everywhere in he city . With clarity, perception and vigour, Hurrell gets to the heart of her subject in easily flowing prose. The elegant jacket and quality illustrations make it no less desirable. A must for your library. ALEX RIDER

Hazel Prior - *Ellie and the Harp Maker*



I had been feeling a little soul-weary with the ways of the world and at times like these, a good read and a bit of escapism tend to do the trick. I had seen a posting on the Celtic Harp FB page asking ‘Who was Hazel Prior?’ with a photograph of the book “Ellie and the Harp Maker.” Somehow this lodged in my memory and some

months later, it was this book I went in search of to feed my soul. “Ellie and the Harp Maker” swept me up from the first few pages, so much so I had to make a pact with myself to make it last for at least a week as I could have easily consumed it during one hedonistic Sunday!

The story is set in a magical Exmoor. Prior has a gift for painting pictures with her words, her style is quirky and deliciously descriptive. As a freelance harpist she is able to infuse the book with harp gems and magic. “Ellie and the Harp Maker” is essentially a multiple love story (human, creative, family and nature), it’s a journey of discovery and an opportunity to see things in a new light, but like all good reads there are undercurrents of pain and adversity that have to be overcome, with some seriously uncomfortable moments for us harp lovers.

I feel this book will appeal to both harp and non-harp players, but there is no doubt that as a harpist you can access a whole different level of understanding and empathy for the lead character Ellie. I began my harp journey just over two and a half years ago. My life had been filled with harps due to being married to a harp fanatic and composer but it never felt like the

instrument for me until one day I met a lever harp and it spoke to me in a way no other instrument had. Within a month I had hired a harp and now I own three harps including two pedal harps! Ellie through a chance meeting met not only a lever harp, but its enigmatic maker Dan who changed her life in more ways than she could have imagined. Her reaction to the harp, finding her way around the strings and the deep longing and connection she felt to it had me blubbering into the pages. I felt I wanted to message Ellie and tell her I understand! The harp awoke sleeping dreams in her, and helped her view her life and herself from a different angle. Dan is fascinating, almost childlike, his life too is turned on its head by his chance encounter. On finishing this book I am left longing to visit the Harp Barn in Exmoor with its artisan atmosphere, and sit at one of Dan’s lovingly made harps, maybe Ellie’s harp made from cherry wood that matches her “cherry colour like socks.”

Oh dear, Hazel Prior you have opened a portal..... please hurry up and write a sequel! SHARON LEWIS

A Very Imperfect Instrument’ A masterclass on the single-action harp given by Mike Parker at Trinity Laban on 24th June 2019



On Monday 24th June, I disembarked from the River Bus right next to the Cutty Sark and made the short walk to Trinity Laban. Here, I was due to attend Mike Parker’s masterclass on the single-action harp. The masterclass was

intended for students at Trinity Laban, but was also open and free to visitors. It was an amazing opportunity to learn more about the first pedal harps, immediate predecessors of the modern double-action harps used in orchestras and concerts around the world.

Mike had already started by the time I got there,