

Dungen Tio Bitar

Over the past two years, the profile of Swedish psychedelic rockers Dungen has grown at an alarming rate, from a cult studio project into a worldwide musical phenomenon. And on *Tio Bitar*, we're hearing the end results of an outpouring of success and support – one which has, for once, inspired the creative processes at hand to make something wholly new and original, yet remaining within the same sphere of emotions that fostered Dungen's three previous albums.

Gustav Ejstes, Dungen's founder and principal member, made *Tio Bitar* (translated, "Ten Pieces") – a bracing display of psychedelic rock, presented with a bright, avid confidence – largely by himself, with the assistance of guitarist Reine Fiske. Gustav wrote the songs, and played all of the instruments on his own, with Reine on many lead guitar and bass parts; his style of play puts him well within the top ranks of modern guitar heroes past and present. Says Gustav of Reine's tone language and instrumental expressiveness, "He has a way of wielding the guitar that not many people have." An understatement, indeed, and one important piece of the puzzle that allows Gustav to achieve, in his own words, "the best possible result."

"It's similar to how they often do it in hip-hop," Gustav states in his description his recording process. "One producer is behind it all, and in this case, I am that producer." Feel free to draw your own conclusions as to how this all bears out – reasoning crumbles when you hear just what Gustav, Reine, and company have made happen through this process. Dungen is a project that distinctly, effortlessly aligns its soundscapes and influences with an authority that will make you believe these sounds were always meant to go together.

Tracks like "Familj," "Sa Blev Det Bestamt" and "Gor Det Nu" suggest a new, unburdened direction for the belabored concept of "jamming." Here, it hems in the melodies, borrowing some of their phrasings but spinning off into lucid counterpart, all anchored by the bass, drums, and organ. When vocals – as on past efforts, sung entirely in Swedish – or a flute appear, they're diverging out to a third melody, still safely within the frame, in tune with each part. Complex arrangements find the songs boiling over with dozens of ideas, stitched together with studio flash, yet played so soulfully that there's no evidence of the kind of smug, cynical hamminess that's been hurting rock music since the early '70s. Nor is it the other extreme; no wide-eyed innocence and eagerness to please.

Tio Bitar follows world tours and enthusiastic responses from the press and public, and answers the praise with yet another set of cohesive, adventurous rock songs that can't sit still, yet possess the vision and focus to distance itself from distraction and obvious influences. According to Gustav, it all comes down to one thing. "When I was eight years old," Gustav remembers, "my mother gave me her copy of *Are You Experienced?* by Jimi Hendrix. That's where I first discovered and understood what a 'groove' was. Since then, whenever I heard that groove, I recognized it, and I liked it." He's not looking to emulate the past, though, at least on the past's unfailingly outdated terms. "Dungen is not retro," he states. "Dungen is contemporary. Contemporary because it consists of elements from both then and now."