



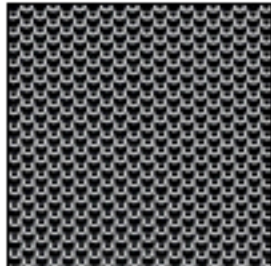
# Dungen

Tio Bitar

Kemado

2007

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The '80s seem almost archaic in the instant-orgasm Internet age, where everyone has a Netflix account to watch Bulgarian independent DVDs and iPods with enough horse-power to feed a Nepalese family of four for four years. But back in those black and white and fluorescent days when VHS rental shops and frozen yogurt were all the rage, I was obsessed with the *Back to the Future* series, obsessed to the point where every time I headed to Movies N' More, they were the only films my grammar-school self wanted to rent.

Twenty-plus years later, that's how I felt about Dungen's last record, 2004's brilliant *Ta Det Lungt*. It was the sort of record I always *wanted* to listen to, renovating '60s acid rock for the millennium, a refreshing anachronism at a time when "indie" was torn asunder by the burning question of whether it was better to emulate Wire or Joy Division. With critics wracking their brains for synonyms for "angular," 24-year-old Swede Gustav Estjes walked in the door. He was the spitting image of Robert Plant, weaned on a steady diet of Pink Floyd and Madvillain, a multi-instrumentalist capable of playing every instrument on wax, from fairytale flute solos to boom-bap drums, from hammer of Thor electric guitar riffs to gentle Laurel Canyon tambourines. Or to put it in more cinematic terms, Estjes was his own Michael J. Fox, capable of playing Marty McFly, Marty McFly Jr., and Marlene McFly, all at the same time.

Three years later, Estjes, has returned with another masterpiece, *Tio Bitar*, Swedish for "Ten Pieces." Still singing in Swedish, Estjes's lyrics are unintelligible to everyone but your average Peter, Bjorn, and Jens. But just as you don't want to analyze Doc Brown's unsavory readiness to deal with Libyan terrorists for a few rods of plutonium, you don't want to listen to Dungen for the lyrics. You listen to be transported to a place distinctly out of your time. Like Marty McFly forced to grapple with the disturbing prospect of sitting in a parking car with his soused and horny teenaged mother, Estjes's throwback sound seems distinctly out of stride with his own era, befitting of a man who was recently described by his touring bandmate Reine Fiske as "having no plans to tour," as he's currently "in the woods, writing and recording some more."

On the [Subliminal Sounds webpage](#), Estjes readily admits that his entire leitmotif descends from a memory of being eight years old and hearing his mother's copy of *Are You Experienced?* for the first time. Using Hendrix as a launching band, Estjes, aided by Swede postman by day/guitar god by night Fiske, spits back an impossibly melodic synthesis of the '60s and early '70s, seamlessly blending orange sunshine-laced Hendrix solos, snaking *Revolver* sitars, *Atom Heart Mother*-esque symphony, with some weird willowy flutes a la *Aqualung*.

Dungen makes music that feels recently submerged from a dusty analog reel discovered in a rural Swedish basement, glowing with a red-eyed and drugged haze, spray-blasted with brightness. It isn't the sort of artistic statement that promises to change anyone's life, but it's no less a great work of escapist art, the sort of essential record I'd pick for any hypothetical list of desert island necessities. It's an album that you can loop endlessly, letting you sink into a brighter world, one far removed from the Biff Tannens of everyday existence. With summer drawing near, it's the perfect thing to play loudly, with a pair of good strong headphones. Let it split your skull and take you to a different time. DeLorean not included.

**STYLUSMAGAZINE.COM RECOMMENDED ALBUM**

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