



Bio information: **MATS / MORGAN**

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FILE UNDER: ROCK / FUSION / AVANT-PROGRESSIVE

**One of the World's Finest Progressive / Jazz-Rock / Fusion / Jam Bands,
the MATS/MORGAN BAND
– the Swedish blind-keyboardist & drummer duo
who awed Frank Zappa with their musical prowess and promise –
Release a Dazzling, Two-Album Collection of Their Earliest Recordings and Beyond**

Swedish collective **Mats/Morgan**—also known as the **Mats/Morgan Band**—occupy, or more aptly, *create* their own sphere in the transcontinental music scene, a zone wherein progressive rock, jazz-rock fusion, experimental rock, electronica, and progressive pop overlap and intertwine. The double-CD set *Radio Da Da/The Teenage Tapes* compiles Mats/Morgan's earliest works but with a difference: These albums have been lovingly **remixed, remastered, resequenced, and overdubbed** by **Morgan Ågren** himself—they are virtually new offerings. Recorded in 1992 (*Radio Da Da*) and the years 1981–2008 (*The Teenage Tapes*), this compendium captures Mats/Morgan to some extent in embryonic phases, yet there's nothing tentative or unfinished about its contents. Everything comes from someplace, and the genre-defying breadth of styles, bracing ideas, and high level of musicianship will appeal to both longtime followers of the group and neophytes, as well as fans of prog-rock and experimental rock in general.

Co-led by Swedish musicians **Mats Öberg** (keyboards) and **Morgan Ågren** (drums), Mats/Morgan remain one of the longest-running European bands (30 years!) in the sometimes-overlapping spheres of jazz fusion and progressive rock. The Mats/Morgan Band has released ten albums and played countless concerts and music festivals. Each has successful parallel careers as leaders and collaborators in a wide range of contexts. An internationally acclaimed drummer, Morgan frequently rates highly in drummers' magazines' polls worldwide. Morgan is one-third of a power-improv trio with **Raoul Bjorkenheim** and **Bill Laswell** that performs at festivals worldwide and recorded the album *Blixt*, a thorny, cathartic set released on Cuneiform in 2011. **Öberg** has performed and recorded with players the caliber of **Denny Walley**, the **Nederlands Philharmonisch Orkest**, and **Bengt Berger's Beches Brew**.

Born in 1972 and blind from birth, Mats was a musical whiz by age three, playing keyboards and singing; by age eight, he was digesting the works of **Zappa**, the ecstatic jazz-rock fusion of the **Mahavishnu Orchestra**, and the progressive R&B of **Earth Wind & Fire**. Born in 1967, Morgan began drumming at age four, graduating to a full drum kit at five. By seven, he was playing publicly, absorbing the influences of jazz drummers **Buddy Rich** and **Louis Bellson** along with **Chick Corea's Return to Forever**. In 1981 a concert promoter asked 10-year-old Mats and 14-year-old Morgan to perform together in Swedish university town Umeå—they selected their own program, a mix of Zappa, **Beatles**, and **Stevie Wonder** songs—they've been collaborators since, an almost ideal example of true musical brotherhood.

While most musical prodigies sharpen their early chops on works of Beethoven and Liszt, the precocious Swedes **Mats Öberg** and **Morgan Ågren** were guided by a modern compositional titan, the late **Frank Zappa**. Musical satirist/provocateur Zappa, with his complex compositional style and strict dedication to superior musicianship, was a major inspiration. **Zappa** impacted the musical lives of the lads more directly, becoming a mentor of sorts. In 1984, Mats and Morgan formed **Zappesteetoot**, which would become an internationally known Frank Zappa tribute band. Not an easy fellow to impress, Zappa asked them to guest with his band on the Swedish 1988 tour. Zappa invited them to *join* his touring band but his illness derailed those plans. Nevertheless, Mats and Morgan played in the 1991 **Zappa's Universe** concerts and recorded with **Mike Kenneally**, **Steve Vai** and the **Persuasions** on the like-titled, **Grammy-winning** album on **Polygram**. Mats and Morgan played in the **Frank Zappa Memorial Barbeque** (1994-96).

The **Mats/Morgan Band** got busy establishing a legacy of its own. Embracing the DIY ethic, Morgan founded the **Ultimate Audio Entertainment** label in the 1990s. **Mats/Morgan's** first album, **Trends and Other Diseases**, came out on **UAE** in 1996. **Trends** encompasses dazzling instrumental technique, insouciant chamber music elegance, thorny time signatures, rascally wit, and catchy bittersweet melodies, reissued by **Cuneiform** in 2008. In 2004 USA-based **Cuneiform Records** signed the Mats/Morgan Band to its roster after their monumental showing at **Les Tritonales Festival** in Paris. The label, regarded as one of the premier American labels in progressive rock and jazz circles world-wide and distributed internationally, exposed Mats/Morgan's music globally. In 2005, **Mats/Morgan** released its first album of new material with Cuneiform, *Thanks for Flying With Us*, their most mature recording conveyed by vintage tube amplifiers and microphones as well as digital instruments. In 2008, Mats/Morgan released their first DVD

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as part of the double-disc CD/DVD package *Heat Beats Live*. The DVD, *Tourbook 1991-2007* contains nearly two hours of performances, featuring Morgan solo (unaccompanied!) and with **Steenland**, **Fleshquartets**, and **Captain Beefheart** and **Magma** tribute projects. *Heat Beats* features a slightly expanded edition of the band achieving their striking studio savvy in live in Stockholm and Paris. In 2010 Cuneiform reissued *The Music or the Money*. Cuneiform augmented the original UAE release with an additional 45 minutes of previously-unreleased material. That same year, **Morgan** scored first place as 2010's best Fusion Drummer in **Modern Drummer Magazine's Readers Poll**. In 2011, Cuneiform reissued the Mats/Morgan Band's third album, *Live*. Recorded June 1999 in Stockholm and first released on UAE in 2001, *Live* accurately conveys a band at the peak of its powers.

In 2013, Cuneiform presents its sixth Mats/Morgan release, a two-disc set entitled *Radio Da Da / The Teenage Tapes*. This double-disc marks the American debut of Mats/Morgan's second and third albums, both originally self-released in Sweden in 1998. *Radio Da Da* and *The Teenage Tapes*, augmented with previously unreleased material. On Disc One, *Radio Da Da* is Mats and Morgan performing nearly all instruments and vocals plus contributions from **Thordson**, **Mussa**, **Jimmy Ågren**, and more, augmented by two extra tracks. The brisk, snappy "Sigfrid" begins with some bracing **Terry Riley/Phillip Glass** minimalism before segueing into some searing, soaring keys-flights evocative of early electric-era **Return To Forever**. "Täljes Logan" and "Djungle Man" are likely inspired by Zappa's more satirical songs, contrasting deceptively sweet melody with comically caustic dissonance, while "Kul I Parken" with its backwards melody, crisp percussion, and pulsing melodic motifs imparts a nightmarish, **Tim Burton**-like tone.

Disc Two: *Teenage Tapes*, which compiled the duo's earliest works, including home and DIY recordings from as early as 1981. While the original *Tapes* contained 29 tracks, this edition has been expanded to **36** (!) tracks to include recordings up to and including 2008. *Tapes* seems relatively rough-hewn compared to *Radio Da Da*, yet never amateurish. Indeed, *The Teenage Tapes* finds the duo wise beyond their years, presenting playfully grandiose textures (the elemental, fugue-like "JP3"), thorny fusion, dream-pop interludes ("Wanna Dance?"), and gothic bebop ("Bandet Gär"). "Chicken Pie" pays tribute to the flamboyant proto-prog of Yes and Genesis while "Basflarp" is a stirring slice of Scandinavian funk, **Billy Cobham** and **Stanley Clarke** carving a niche in the Arctic Circle. While *Teenage Tapes* presents a band still finding its way, combining razor-sharp instrumental acumen with a puckish sense of humor, seeds of forthcoming greatness are already evident. "Bombonk" finds these youths blending the whimsical and the nightmarish with equal aplomb. "Foxtrot" (a nod to Genesis?) evokes post-*Discipline* King Crimson.

"All of our albums are special because they are personal to me, and the material on Teenage Tapes is special because it contains some of the first recordings me and Mats did, at all, and it contains the first TV show that we did...so it's like an old baby, you can say." - Morgan Ågren

With the release of the double-CD *Radio Da Da / Teenage Tapes*, fans and novices will be able to go "forward" with Mats/Morgan in terms of a "new" opus to relish by jumping headfirst into the past via these hitherto-unheard (outside of Sweden) albums. Devotees of **Rock In Opposition**, the "old-school" prog of the **Canterbury** bands, fusion, and even commercial powerhouses **Yes** and **Brand X** will find vistas a-plenty to cherish.

The Mats/Morgan Band remains active as a live group, performing at jazz and progressive rock festivals worldwide as well as doing shows within Sweden. Its 2013 performances include dates in Switzerland and France (Charleville Action Jazz), and for 2014, the band is planning an extensive Swedish tour with a very special guitarist (TBA). The Mats/Morgan Band has also begun recording material for a new album, to be released on Cuneiform. Besides its upcoming shows and recordings, Mats/Morgan will also be represented in the near future on film: LA filmmaker **Carl King** is doing a documentary movie on drummer **Morgan Agren**.

For more information on Mats/Morgan, see:

www.morganagren.com

www.cuneiformrecords.com

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution] versions of these images are available for download on www.cuneiformrecords.com



“...Mats Öberg and Morgan Ågren doing what they...have always done – best: playing beautifully complex music that fires the imagination and the soul. ... Although the music owes something to a bygone era...Jeff Beck and Mahavishnu Orchestra...it’s not crippled by that debt, instead emerging as an original sounding entity...”

What’s remarkable throughout is the group’s equal blend of playfulness, humour and sense of serious musical dedication, the ability to fuse complex musical passages with heartfelt emotion, and courageous performances. This band...it’s certainly one of the rarest, most interesting groups that can and is at or very near the top of its rarefied class. ... [8 Stars]”
- Jedd Beaudoin, *PopMatters*, January 12, 2012, www.popmatters.com

“... The Mats/Morgan Band recalls the heyday of jazz fusion and progressive rock and blasts that music into the modern day with great musical chops and a sense of humor. With the intricacy of some of Frank Zappa's more ambitious work along with the virtuosity of The Mahavishnu Orchestra and Return to Forever. ... Fans of progressive rock and roll or jazz fusion should enjoy this disc quite a bit...”

- Tim Niland, *Music and More*, November 27, 2011, jazzandblues.blogspot.com

“This is excellent keyboard and drum work full of inspiration and improvisation. ... [4 stars]”

-Mark Johnson, *Sea of Tranquility*, November 23rd 2011, www.seaoftranquility.org

“Mats/Morgan...their 2001 live album...released on Ultimate Audio Entertainment has been remastered by Morgan Argen... **The playing is awesome from what many consider to be the best line-up of the group** with no less than three keyboard players who do not in any way diminish the role of fluid bassist Tommy Thordson (listen to the...impossible syncopated interplay on ‘Guardian Pitch’ followed by the brief Zappa-like interlude then the furious, hyperactive rhythms of ‘Etage A41’ ...concert opener ‘Hollmervalsen’). Deceptively close to Canterbury jazz at its origin...assimilates a familiar riff...**stunning in execution, quirky, insane rhythms sounding like a classical study from another planet!** ...There is probably enough in that one track to satisfy the most ardent listener! ...”
- Phil Jackson, *Acid Dragon*, May 2012

“**Keyboardist Mats Öberg and drummer Morgan Ågren...are at their hyperactive best on this remastered recording...**

Öberg and Ågren were on their way to becoming household names in their native Sweden. They'd already collaborated with both Frank and Dweezil Zappa, and Ågren even had his own television show, Trum...

At this point, the Mats/Morgan sound was mostly centered around its namesakes. ... Öberg's solos...are wondrously unlikely mashups of classical, avant-garde, gospel, and jazz. ...his sound has roots in George Duke's keyboard work from the early '70s—both with Zappa and on solo LPs... Ågren is a percussive marvel, making oddly syncopated patterns in odd time signatures flow and groove like the simplest 4/4 pattern.

Ågren's composing on "Hollmervalsen," "Etage A41," and "Jigsaw Variations" contains a dose of highly rhythmic minimalism of the sort espoused by composer Steve Reich. ... These pieces feature dizzying polymetric and polyrhythmic phrases, often in odd time signatures, that are repeated with a near-obsessive attention to detail and dynamics. ...

The Zappa influences are most evident in the melodic content of Öberg's "Ta Ned Trasan," "Min Hast," and "Iglloo." Here, the band shows its lyrical side a bit, while executing oddly accented, dissonant, nearly impossible to play phrases and turnarounds with effortless grace and panache. ... A jazz-rock fusion marvel over a decade ago, the Mats/Morgan band has subsequently gone from strength to strength. Recent recordings reveal a more organic approach to music-making, and one less concerned with musical mathematics. ...**Live proves that fusion can be as entertaining as it is mindboggling.**”
- Dave Wayne, *All About Jazz*, February 22, 2013, www.allaboutjazz.com

“...Morgan Ågren and...Mats Öberg... formed this phenomenal ensemble that exercised a jaw-dropping mode of execution within the progressive-rock schema, amid some Zappa and jazz-centric influences. Revered for its otherworldly approach to the genre and superior technical faculties, Mats/Morgan Band is known for its exhilarating live performances and manifold approach to composition.

... Rooted in a multifaceted constitution, "En Schizofrens Dagbok," is entrenched with hyperactive funk grooves, ferocious exchanges, scorching guitars, tricky time signatures, and jovial melodic content. Serious-minded but sprinkled with quaint sensibilities, the musicians' divergent implementation tender split-second breakouts, polytonal treatments and fluent cartoonish escapades. The differentiator resides within the artists' penchant for merging a chops-heavy element with sustainable themes and passages that move along with the impetus of a fast-paced action thriller. Its progressive rock with a college education by an outfit that has few, if any, peers in the business.”

- Glenn Astarita, *All About Jazz*, December 7, 2011, www.allaboutjazz.com

MATS/MORGAN BAND *THE MUSIC OR THE MONEY*

CDx2

CUNEIFORM 2010

“Cited as geniuses by no less than Frank Zappa, Swedish musicians Mats Öberg and Morgan Ågren have been collaborating since 1981. ... Inspired by everyone from Zappa, Return to Forever and the Mahavishnu Orchestra to Miles Davis, Buddy Rich and Louis Bellson, the two have...their unique brand of iconoclastic jazz-rock... **The music is dense, complex, ridiculously tight and relentlessly astounding**, with innumerable virtuosic turns by the amazing Öberg on piano, synthesizer, accordion and harmonica.” - *JazzTimes*, February 2010

“**The double CD titled The Music Or The Money...was their masterpiece, and it's still the best introduction for newcomers. ...**”

-Beppe Colli, *Clouds and Clocks*, www.cloudsandclocks.net/CD_reviews/matsmorgan_tffwu_E.html

“**Inspired by everyone from Zappa, Return to Forever and the Mahavishnu Orchestra to Miles Davis, Buddy Rich and Louis Bellson...The music is dense, complex, ridiculously tight and relentlessly astounding, with innumerable virtuosic turns by the amazing Öberg** on piano, synthesizer, accordion and harmonica.”

- Bill Milkowski, *Jazz Times*, February 2011

“...**sparkling musicianship and melodies...make this one of the most accessible Mats/Morgan recordings...** ‘Coco’ and ‘I Wanna’ touch on psych, with a devilish sense of humour while the closing number...**‘Baader Puff’ is astonishing, like ELP meets the Mothers of Invention with a**

bit of Kraftwerk thrown in, ending in mellow mood like a piece of melodic progressive rock, definitely one of my all time favourite Mats Morgan tunes!... These guys certainly push the boundaries and this is one double CD it will take a long, long time to explore!"

– Phil Jackson, *Acid Dragon*

"The Mats/Morgan Band careens from progressive rock to fusion-fueled jazz rock and from Frank Zappa-esque pop spoofery to rock-etched avant-garde...

...familiar musical quotations...are tweaked or mocked...French composer Olivier Messiaen gets twisted and pulled apart like taffy during "Advokaten Le Messiaen," a rock/classical crossover light years removed from the usual Emerson, Lake, and Palmer-inspired pomposity.
..."

– Doug Simpson, *Audiophile Audition*, February 25, 2011

"There's a bracing quality to the music... The 35 tracks cross knotty jazz rock, playful pop pastiche and densely woven prog rock overtures to form a fascinating and fast-moving hybrid. ...

When they...stretch out...it's deeply rewarding...fierce, acid-etched guitar lines on the Canterbury-esque suite, *Hjorton Från Mars*, are especially noteworthy and typify the virtuoso support supplied by a tightly drilled ensemble across the entire album. First rate stuff."

– Sid Smith, *Progression Magazine* and *Classic Rock Present Prog*

"The band around 1997 showed brilliance and intelligence with domination of keyboards, bass and rhythmic ideas... The extended...album is brilliant..."

– Gerald Van Waes, *Psychemusic.org*, July 3, 2010

"...The Music or the Money...A wild but virtuosic performance of originals that showcase their vast abilities...The payoff comes in amazing performances... The Music or the Money? never takes the easy way out, and Mats/Morgan wouldn't have it any other way."

– S. Victor Aaron, *Something Else!*, November 11, 2010

"There's a level of genius to how Mats/Morgan combine excellent jazz fusion, classical arrangements, off the wall antics, and extremely weird ideas on *The Music or the Money?*

...nearly two hours of music that is simultaneously complex, unique, interesting, repetitive.

The sequencing on the reissue is totally different from the original release...None of that matters, though.

... *The Music or the Money?* is a mixture of odd sound effects, rapid drumming and piano playing, and a lot of experimentation with timbres and form...There is a lot of intelligence and craft.

Mats/Morgan deserves applause...*The Music or the Money?* simply floats into its own space; it's a fascinating journey."

– Jordan Blum, *Sea of Tranquility*, October 8, 2010

"The Mats/Morgan Band and their two CD release *The Music or the Money?* are so good it scares me. ...with the incredible drumming of Morgan Ågren spurring Mats Öberg on to some dizzying improvising heights that go beyond what anybody who listens to "post-prog" has any right to expect... There are moments that can take your hair out by the roots...Then there are songs that have an irresistible quirkiness and show arranging prowess and melodic singularity.

These folks have incredible chops but there is nothing cliché about it...The music goes by like a high-speed express bullet train, but it's not just fast, it's compositionally striking. Anyone who follows the advanced rock world should not miss this one. Whoooo."

– Grego Applegate Edwards, *Gapplegate Guitar and Bass Blog*, August 13, 2010

"Music that contains elements of avant-garde/free jazz, progressive and modern classical music, jazz, dance, techno, electronic music, cleverly constructed, technically excellent and very interesting to listen to.

... The double CD is full of syncopated rhythms that at times deviates from the regular notation, placing stress and accent on the rhythmic notation where you wouldn't expect it... an album that is built on strange, rapid drum and piano patterns, an experimentation of timbre and meter... Diversity is the order of the day.

...an album full of interesting work...featuring a beautiful virtuosity of Öberg punctuated by Ågren intelligent percussions.

It is an album that does showcase the abilities of Mats and Morgan...to challenge and more importantly to intrigue.

This is a definite must for lovers of Zappa, The Residents, Steve Vai, and anyone who likes intricate quirky music. ...

This is an album that certainly floats my boat."

– John O' Boyle, *Dutch Progressive Rock Page*, 2011

MATS/MORGAN BAND HEAT BEATS LIVE // TOURBOOK 1991-2007 CD+DVD CUNEIFORM 2008

"Öberg, blind from birth, is a keyboard prodigy, while Agren is regularly voted into the top three best drummers in the world. The music is jazz-rock, echoing Zappa, but more often world/jazz-rock supremo Joe Zawinul, and his ilk. Bassist Tommy Tordsson aids the remarkable duo. The tracks, all live, range from heavyweight jazz-rock freak-outs in impossible-to-follow time signatures, to otherworldly Zawinul-esque divertissements. Öberg wrings some great sounds out of his synth...it does grip the listener, especially the insane piano/harp/drums/brass trip cut "The Bösendorfer of Advokaten." The DVD collects sixty-five clips of Agren in action, ranging from studio work to sessions to live cuts. Excellent quality material, and an absolute must for drummers in any genre." – Simon Lewis & Stephen Palmer, *Terrascope*, www.terrascope.co.uk, 2008

"With a collection of eight albums already and the experience of playing at concerts and festivals alike, Mats Öberg and Morgan Agren have a life long rush of musical genius behind them and they are not stopping there...the duo definitely have something huge going for them... The CD, Heat Beats Live, is a collection of the excellence of their live performances... Jazz Rock must have... If you are a fan of any type of jazz music from Medeski Martin and Wood, Frank Zappa, or even trip hop artists such as Bjork or Massive Attack, you need to pick up this album for you collection. It's a decision you won't regret!" [5 star]

– Lisa Knapp, *Lucidforge*, www.lucidforge.com

[Ranked number 3 on Loughborough Radio's Alternative playlist] – *Jazzwise*, November 2008

"If your tastes run to the more experimental side of things, this is a disc you simply must have... **highly charged experimental jazz-fusion with doses of modern classical influences.** The musicianship of this duo is first rate; it's absurdly complex at times yet on a dime will become minimalistic featuring tinkling keyboards and harmonica... it's a musical roller-coaster. You will never quite know where the music will be going next because it defies traditional convention."
– Jerry Lucky, "My Progressive Rock World", *JerryLucky.com*

"...this new live album...it's a wide variety...**complex fusion, full of solos, blending-in folk and all sorts of other elements, with obvious influences like: Zappa/ Mothers, Mahavishnu Orchestra, Samia Mamma Manna, in fact lots of jazz-fusion and RIO** type musicians are adapted and sewn into their lively concoction... The bonus DVD credited to Morgan Agren...does showcase his talent well in a wide variety of settings... he's good, and with an original style."
– Alan Freeman, *Audion*

"**Mats/Morgan Band produces a frenetic, musical stew that always intrigues... Equipped with jaw-dropping chops,** the band sometimes lets unbridled virtuosity get the better of it... But wait – sometimes the utter wild musicianship trumps everything: One finds oneself bowing in humble acknowledgement of genius bracketing whatever reservations one might have about the downright audacity of the proceedings ("Tuvas Rumba"). Other times ("Cry of Laika") there's such a pure folk sensibility operating, that grouching would be curmudgeonly without cause... if you're all taken by **chops-heavy world/jazz/rock/classical fusion**, it's certainly worth a listen."
– Jan Dennis, *Audiophile Audition*, www.audaud.com

"**Their music is influenced by jazz, classical, progressive rock, Magma, Frank Zappa, and jazz-fusion...** Most of the songs are very complex and are not in your standard 4/4 time...Mats uses a full range of keyboard sounds creating a very full sound. **Morgan's drumming at times reminded me of Terry Bozzio's** playing, where they play melodies and rhythm at the same time. He also changes where he accents the beats... and this gives a lot of color to his playing... The highlight of this package for me is the DVD... put together by Morgan Agren... There are over 70 video clips... videos of the Mats/ Morgan Band, Frank Zappa and Captain Beefheart tribute bands, Fredrik Thordendal (Meshuggah) and other jazz ensembles... really good close up shots of Morgan playing... **He definitely has his own style and adds a lot to the music he plays from jazz to metal. I could not recommend this DVD enough to anyone that plays drums or enjoys them... One amazing drummer!" [4 stars]**
– Christian Bernier, *Sea of Tranquility*, www.seaoftranquility.org

"The live DVD *Tourbooks*...opens with a tight shot of drummer Morgan Agren's hands...poised over a vast drum kit...When he starts, his hands fly over the set, impossibly fast but light-tempered and playful. ...**Agren is... a drummer's drummer who can flit from cool traditional jazz to proggy rock to howling Swedish metal, without dropping a stick, without batting an eye... Heat Beats Live is...distillation of the pair's technical proficiency and playful musicality...** The disc starts with "The Return of Advokaten", a prolonged, fast-paced three-way between Agren's pulsing, storming rhythms, Oberg's cool Return to Forever-ish keys, and Tommy Tordsson's frantic bass. The keyboard takes all kinds of roles here, sounding like an electric piano, an organ and, briefly, a flute. Yet it's the duel in the rhythm section that gives the cut oomph. You quite simply can't believe that both of them can keep up with the pace and complexity... **the most powerful cuts seem to be...the ones where Mats and Morgan go at it, just the two of them, their difficultly paced rhythms matching sometimes and intersecting at odd angles at others. You are struck first by the skill at work ... but then by the sense of play. There is a lightness, a giddiness, a trick-rider bravado to the stunts they pull, as if they themselves cannot stop grinning at what they have gotten away with... on Trends and Other Diseases...** the addition of vocals takes the focus off their really excellent playing and puts it on the melodies. **It's much more of a pop take on what they do, a fusion not just of rock and jazz, but of R&B, funk, and diva crooning...** the skill level is undeniably high.... **If you've got a drummer in your family, pick these records up for him. He'll either thank you or give up his instrument forever."** [7 stars]
– Jennifer Kelly, *PopMatters*, www.popmatters.com

"Swedish jazz/prog rock outfit **Mats Morgan Band** owe a lot to the more exploratory flirtations between jazz and rock through the 60's and 70's, especially in **John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra**, and more significantly **Frank Zappa's** work... **The controlled insanity of Zappa comes through in Heat Beats Live... Mats Morgan Band are successful when they go for sustained intensity... It would be criminal to ignore just how amazing the performances on this album are. The bass work is particularly notable.** Even though it undoubtedly evokes the jazz fusion of the 80's, particularly when slap is used, bass guitarist Tommy Thordsson ultimately proves to be a strong basis for the musical material above, particularly where Morgan Agren seeks more to add color and spectacle to the band's structure... his breakneck voicings are breathtaking and of the kind of harmonically obtuse chord structures that would make Zappa proud... ignore just how alive these players are in a live format and how well the style does come off when put forth with consistency and structural order. **Above all, when on song, Mats Morgan Band is totally ridiculous fun."**
– Marcus Whale, *The Silent Ballet*

"The CD/DVD set showcases the talents of Swedish drummer Morgan Agren... and keyboardist Mats Oberg playing their **unique brand of Zappa influenced jazz/rock...** Both feature **great drumming from Agren...**" [3 stars]
– Brent Keefe, *Drummer Magazine*

"**A solid fifty two minute fusion jazz workout by this Swedish group of brilliant musicians,** and a feature-length DVD of footage from throughout their career."
– George Parsons, *Dream Magazine* #9

MATS/MORGAN BAND THANKS FOR FLYING WITH US CUNEIFORM 2005

"**4 stars: ...this CD of highly individual progressive jazz should have a broader appeal – it's just plain inspired.** Swedish musicians Mats Oberg and Morgan Agren are influenced by Miles Davis, Frank Zappa, the Mahavishnu Orchestra and Earth, Wind & Fire. ... The band's whole approach upholds Zappa's philosophy of iconoclasm and humor. ... **The Mats/Morgan band is tight and precise and seem capable of playing absolutely anything with great gusto. ...the Mats/Morgan men integrate everything and make it their own. This is one of the biggest-sounding quintets I've auditioned in a while."**
– John Henry, *Audiophile Audition*, www.audaud.com

“...these Swedes are **terrific musicians who combine insurmountable energy with a poised sense of determination!**”

- Glenn Astarita, *All About Jazz*, January 2006, www.allaboutjazz.com

“...‘Thanks for Flying with Us’ is their most accessible musical adventure...concentrating on shorter, cleverly constructed pieces with outstanding backing from a variety of musicians... The music is faultless throughout but reaches a compositional peak on the pieces ‘JF’s Tati-Car’ and ‘La Baratte.’ Mats’... they truly do ‘break through the sound barriers of genre, style, time and trend’ ...

...**Highly recommended** for the initiated and also those unfamiliar with the remarkable musical universe of Mats and Morgan!”

- Phil Jackson, *Acid Dragon*, November 2005

“...*Thanks For Flying With Us*... appears to get back to some of the compositional climates appearing on *The Music Or The Money*... Mats Öberg’s contributions are in a “classic” mode – check ADAT Dropouts I Love You, played solo, with keyboards and a harmonica played like a “cool” saxophone; the beautiful Softma, with violin and klavichord; and check his keyboards and harmonica contributions to the complex La Baratte. Morgan Ågren’s contributions are quite...fine...where hypnotic-sounding ostinatos reminded me of Daniel Denis...

...live bonus tracks round up the picture; they are all very good, and they succeed in presenting a different palette... **the CD is very well-produced, and it sounds great.**”

- Beppe Colli, *Clouds and Clocks*, November 10, 2005, www.cloudsandclocks.net

“...*Thanks For Flying With Us* is the Mats/Morgan Band’s most mature work to date; it’s **subtler, more varied, slightly more industrial-sounding as new approaches and angles are entertained. Worry not – it’s no less a chopfest!**

The rolling bassline of “Sinus” is enough to make your eyes water; five minutes later and a blissful awakening is awarded the M/M novice. This colorful leadoff piece is so catchy, so cool, it shouldn’t have any problem getting airplay... the angular title track zaps you with adrenalized syncopations and chills you with legato detours. “JF’s Tati-Car” operates a modal (or should that be *moodal*) color wheel that spins until a new sub-sub-subgenre dubbed “mercurial funk” makes a dangerous fly-by. Mats picks up his harmonica and indulges Morgan’s brother Jimmy’s guitar for a faux-duel on “La Baratte.” Arranged throughout the stratified band pieces are duets...

Thanks For Flying With Us is one flight path the listener is bound to trace over and over again. 5 stars.”

- Elias Granillo, *Sea of Tranquility*, January 25, 2006, www.seaoftranquility.org

“...the songpenning duo...is making **one helluva mix... citing King Crimson, Jan Garbarek and a myriad others... This is a fusion of jazz and prog-rock, with loads of not-so-subtle electronics, mad-gone-virtuoso drum patterns and fusion/funk sparkles.**

TFFWU reveals a progressive feast of aural sounds flying everywhere, with a heavy jazz/fusion underpinning. The diverse keyboards come across as the predominant instrument...with odd time-stamps and spaced-crazed melodies. ...**be sure to direct Mats/Morgan’s latest onto...avantgarde prog/jazz enthusiasts who will...be floored...**”

- Bruno A., *Ventrilocution*, January 2006, www.ventrilocution.net

“**This one is a captivating and stirring record from beginning to end.** ... it is impossible not to be impressed by these virtuosic speed devils. ...”

- Frans de Waard, *Tokafi*, www.tokafi.com

“...The album is both dynamic and refined, lively but modest and chequered but homogeneous... The dazzling rhythms, the complex shifts and the odd time signatures ceaselessly attract the listener’s attention. ...I...had a great time with this energetic disc full of demonstrations of metric musical mastership...”

- Frans Schmidt, *Prog Wereld*, www.progwereld.com

“... **To refer to these Swedish musicians as virtuosos is an understatement. ... These guys can definitely play.**”

- Mike Grimes, “Roundtable Review”, *Exposé*, Issue no. 33, May 2006

“... **Most of the vocals on the disc are wordless extensions of the overall instrumental approach. The drums and bass provide angular and jagged, yet solid grooves that set up the framework for all the multilayered keyboard interplay** that gives these guys...a unique sound. ...plenty of...ultra-intense moments scattered across the disc; complementing those, several more moody and softer melodic pieces... plus...hard funk in a...Herbie Hancock style. ... Another great one from M/M.”

- Peter Thelen, “Roundtable Review”, *Exposé*, Issue no. 33, May 2006

“Mats/Morgan have been one of Sweden’s best kept prog secrets for over 20 years. ...**they truly sound telepathic. ... I can’t convey enough how impressive this band is...**”

- Jeff Melton, “Roundtable Review”, *Exposé*, Issue no. 33, May 2006

“...in the universe [of] Mats Öberg and Morgan Ågren...enough mad funky sounds to be found and their signature sense of groove... It’s just a bit more woven into the tapestry...”

The now quintet called in a few guests for some extra flavour. A Turkish zurna pops up...and a choir makes a few appearances, it diversifies their unique blend of jazz, rock and pop even more and the end result is a pleasant listening experience. ...4/5 stars.”

- Martijn Busink, *Musique Machine*, www.musiquemachine.com

“...“Thanks For Flying With Us”...shows **a mature band with remarkable skills.** No wonder M&M are praised by famous musicians such as Bill Bruford and Steve Vai. The influences stretch from *The Beatles* and American jazz to *Univers Zero* and *King Crimson*.

M&M juggle with rhythms, grooves and beats in an inimitable fashion. Their highly original music testifies of a compositional complexity... a sonic adventure...”

- Christoph Lintermans, *Prog-Nose*, October 23, 2005, www.prog-nose.org

“Charting the Jazz message... **STUDENT: Loughborough Radio’s Alternative Alternative playlist: [#]1 Mats Morgan Band ‘Thanks For Flying With Us’ Cuneiform Records**”

- *Jazzwise*, February 2006