

**“4 stars: ...this CD of highly individual progressive jazz should have a broader appeal – it’s just plain inspired.** Swedish musicians Mats Öberg and Morgan Ågren are influenced by Miles Davis, Frank Zappa, the Mahavishnu Orchestra and Earth, Wind & Fire. ...The band had some listeners tell them “It feels like flying when I listen to you guys!” So with tongue firmly in cheeks the band decided to call this CD *Thanks for Flying With Us* – the joke doubly emphasized by the front and back photos...in which...the member who is shown piloting the plane in the cockpit is the one who has a white cane (not a prop). The band’s whole approach upholds Zappa’s philosophy of iconoclasm and humor.

Drummer Morgan also reports that it took about two years to make this CD, and that he used **vintage tube amps and tube mics plus the best A-D converters to achieve their best sound. ...Other attractions of this terrific disc are the interesting guest artists brought in...**

**The Mats/Morgan band is tight and precise and seem capable of playing absolutely anything with great gusto. Some jazz groups make feeble attempts to incorporate other genres such as pop, hard rock or world music into their music; 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

“Swedish wunderkinds, Mats Öberg (keys) and Morgan Ågren (drums) have been performing together since their teen years. ...all that...commitment reaps fruitful dividends here, on this polished prog-rock foray. **Along with a cute vocoder like vocal tune and a narration/parody of armed airline pilots, their knotty time signatures and flair for the dynamic generates gobs of excitement.** ...The duo is augmented by...guitarist Jimmy Ågren, bassist Tommy Thordsson and others. ...there’s an abundance of peppery soloing maneuvers to whet the ardent prog-rock fan’s appetite. Also included are live bonus tracks where Mat[s] and Morgan perform as a duo. ...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

“...child prodigies Mats Öberg and Morgan Ågren... are one of the most distinctive acts around these days. What else would you expect from a band whose blind keyboardist player (Mats) was listening to Zappa and the Mahavishnu Orchestra by the time he was 8 and whose drummer was honing his drum skills in public performances at the tender age of 7 inspired by...Buddy Rich and Return to Forever! ... They did go on to play with Dweezil Zappa...on various projects. Now a band in their own right their 1996 debut CD ‘Trends and Other Diseases’ and their live 2001 CD give a real flavour and...are well worth tracking down.

...**‘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’ distinctive use of harmonica also appears on his solo track... they truly do ‘break through the sound barriers of genre, style, time and trend’ as suggested in the sleeve notes... The most obvious reference point though remains Frank Zappa- partly through the sardonic humor that permeates some of the music!

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

– Phil Jackson, *Acid Dragon*, November 2005

“...the new *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 – listen to Thanks For Flying With Us and JF’s Tati Car, where hypnotic-sounding ostinatos reminded me of Daniel Denis** from recent albums; also good are La Baratte, Wounded Bird ...

A few long live bonus tracks round up the picture; they are all very good, and they succeed in presenting a different palette: Coco is nice, Live Neff and Alive In Eskede are two long, complex tracks played only by the duo... **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... These cuts are not as grandiose but no less significant, divergences on differing wavelengths. ...

Twenty-five minutes of bonus material tops off this album: three more, different and live, duet pieces from two different tours...and a demo... *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

“...fellow jazz-brains and youth-prodigies Mats Öberg (keys) and Morgan Ågren (drums)...kept cooperating with offspring Dweezil and disciples as distinct as Bozzio and Vai,...It’s no wonder, then, that this release still carries that devil’s name written all over it... But the songpenning duo...is making **one helluva mix in here too, citing King Crimson, Jan Garbarek and a myriad others in the prog-cess. 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 – handled mainly by Mats – with odd time-stamps and spaced-crazed melodies. ...

I’d sincerely advise this complex...release to fans of out-there experimental, progressive instrumental tendencies with few or no regard for melody or straightforward structures. **I can smell Vai’s work, Zappa’s synclavier-heavy shadow, King Crimson’s mid-late period venturings, bits of a retro-funk thing too...** I’d still be sure to direct Mats/Morgan’s latest onto the more open minded, **avantgarde prog/jazz enthusiasts who will probably be floored...**”

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

**“This one is a captivating and stirring record from beginning to end.** ...this is my first encounter with this band... At first hearing I was struck by the obvious 70s sound of this keyboard dominated band. It woke up old memories of Todd Rundgren’s Initiation... The album sounds almost like an homage to this period. But this does not mean that we are dwelling in a retro atmosphere here. All fusion, progressive and other influences inspired them to a very

coherent and massive whole of full-grown music... it is impossible not to be impressed by these virtuosic speed devils. Happily they do not lose themselves into meaningless technical exercises, as their music remains very open and communicative.” – Frans de Waard, *Tokafi*, www.tokafi.com

“...the music contains a wide variety of references... Bruford, Hatfield And The North, Allan Holdsworth, Jaga Jazzist, National Health and at certain times even Utopia can be heard.

... Thanks For Flying With Us is by far this collective’s most mature product up to date. 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.** While still teenagers, they played as guests with Frank Zappa...performed as part of the Zappa’s Universe band in 1993. ... *Thanks For flying With Us* is their seventh album... **Like Zappa, their music can range from detailed and complex to simple and melodic.** ... There are lots of fast keyboard riffs on clav, parallel harmony lines, and changing meters. A few of the tracks have *Wardencllyffe Tower*-era Allan Holdsworth-sounding soling. Tunes like “ADAT Dropsout I Love You” and “Softma” contrast these these complex pieces and showcase a slower melodic side of the band. ...”Please Remain Seated” has a standout drum solo... The live tracks...allow Mats and Morgan to stretch out in several directions. **These guys can definitely play.**”

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

“While the opening track has the influence of Frank Zappa ... (that’s not a criticism, these guys do an outstanding job of tracking FZ’s stylistic tendencies), things get even more varied and adventurous as this disc progresses. ... **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—and this disc— a unique sound. ...plenty of...ultra-intense moments scattered across the disc; complementing those, several more moody and softer melodic pieces...including one Mats solo...plus some cuts that...hard funk in a sort-of 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. ... **For three musicians (including guitarist Jimmy Ågren) whom have played together most of their lives they truly sound telepathic. The title track says it all: relentless synchronized playing between guitars, keys and drums but smoothly executed.** ...the band is heavily steeped in complex charts and whirlwind arrangements that are simultaneously spectacular and intricate. “Not us” is pure Frank smiling down from beyond... **Oberg is a fine keyboardist – his selection of synth tones is unique, with a heavy digital gear sound, but less metallic. His symphonic approach reminds me of Chick Corea’s RTF work... “Softma” rekindles themes that suggest Kit Watkins playing with the Mahavishnu Orchestra. ... Overall 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... The jazz oriented prog fan who fancies a sonic adventure should...give this album a try.**”

– 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