



Bio information: **MATS/MORGAN BAND**  
Title: *LIVE* (Cuneiform Rune 337)

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**FILE UNDER: PROGRESSIVE ROCK / FUSION**

*"They played unbelievable, just unbelievable." – Frank Zappa*

*"The music is dense, ridiculously tight and relentlessly astounding..." – Jazz Times*

*"...the two most striking things when seeing them live is that keyboardist Mats Öberg, who is blind, plays like a monster, and that drummer Morgan Ågren is a beast...a fusion-ish instrumental band of almost impossible virtuosity and a palatable sense of fun." – Exposé*

As much as we all love recordings, the experience of LIVE music is what separates the wheat from the chaff, the Rodney Dangerfields from the Tom Greens. While touring Sweden, **Frank Zappa**—one of progressive music’s prime movers from the mid-1960s until his death in 1993 and one of the most *exacting* bandleaders EVER—was SO taken with the acumen and energy of acolytes **Mats Öberg** and **Morgan Ågren** in performance that he asked them to play with his band! **Cuneiform Records** founder Steve Feigenbaum, whose Wayside imprint distributed discs by **Mats/Morgan Band** in the US, caught them live in Paris (with members of **Magma** in the audience too!) and was so impressed he caught up with them backstage and asked them to be on his label. The proof’s in the pudding: *Live* is that rare CD that encapsulates a band at the peak of their powers, with dazzling creativity *and* immediacy in full flower.

As with the massive catalogs of **Duke Ellington** and **Miles Davis** in jazz, so the catalog of the late **Frank Zappa** is a gigantic watershed for both inspiration and interpretation in both jazz *and* rock. **The Mats/Morgan Band**, led by **Mats Öberg** and **Morgan Ågren**, both of whom were invited to join Zappa’s last touring band, are an epitome of his influence and the result of creatively channeling his inspiration. Swedish musicians **Mats Öberg** (keyboards) and **Morgan Ågren** (drums) remain one of the longest-running bands (30 years!) in the sometimes-overlapping spheres of fusion jazz and progressive rock. **The Mats/Morgan Band** has released nine albums and played countless concerts and music festivals. Each musician also has a successful solo career – an internationally acclaimed drummer, Morgan often appears in top place in drum magazine polls – and both frequently collaborate with other musicians.

The album’s one-word title – *Live* – is as potent as a single-malt whiskey. Mats/Morgan is first and foremost a live band, and this is one of their most powerful recordings to date. The band’s lineup here is one of its best, featuring **Morgan** on drums, **Jimmy Agren** on guitar, **Tommy Thordsson** on bass, and an arsenal of three keyboardists: **Mats**, **Eric Carlsson**, and **Robert Elovsson**. Recorded June 1999 at **Club Fasching** in Stockholm and first released on their **Ultimate Audio Entertainment** imprint in 2001, *Live* bristles with the burning, confident energy of a band at the peak of their powers, relishing the joy of exacting yet passionate music-making. Which isn’t to imply Mats/Morgan abandoned subtlety here – the first third of the opener “Hollmervalsen” is full of plaintive hues and cries...before it evolves into a runaway train of a travelogue through scenic images of Zappa’s and **Primus**’ ultra-caffeinated boogies, the crisp, snappy fusion of **Brand X**, and even some of the bracing slam-bang of early **Emerson, Lake & Palmer**. “Min Hast” has the chunky funk of Stuff, **Quincy Jones**’ soundtrack music, **Herbie Hancock**’s **Headhunters**, and early **Funkadelic**, shifting from funky-but-sleek to manic (with shifts in tempo that’d give the **Ruins** a run for their money) to surreal like it’s no big deal. The frantically driving “Kintornen” is like **Jan Hammer** sitting in with **Fantômas**: seething synthesizer lines give way to doom metal-ic disembowelments and a denouement that sounds like **John Cage** scoring a horror film with his 1940s prepared piano music. Wow!

Mats/Morgan Band remastered *Live* for the Cuneiform reissue. When doing so, it hid a surprise in the recording, following the last track – fans recognize such escapades as typical of the band’s playful humor. Unchanged from the original album, Mats/Morgan alternated using Swedish and English for their song titles, acknowledging their home base while striving for wider accessibility. The immediacy of their *Live* performances, tangible to music fans from any portion of the globe, prove that Mats/Morgan’s appeal spans cultures as easily as their music span musical genres. Fans of old and new progressive rock, math-rock, jazz-rock fusion, funky fusion, post-rock and the **Rock In Opposition (RIO)** axis of bands—you’ve got one band of Swedes to unite you: the **Mats/Morgan Band**.

*For more information on Mats/Morgan Band, see:*

[www.morganagren.com](http://www.morganagren.com) - [www.myspace.com/matsmorganband](http://www.myspace.com/matsmorganband)

**PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS**



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### **MATS/MORGAN BAND BIOGRAPHY:**

While most musical prodigies hone their technique on the works of European classical icons—such as Chopin, Beethoven, and Liszt—the precocious Swedes Mats Öberg and Morgan Ågren cut their teeth on the compositional complexities of American rock composer/guitarist/satirist Frank Zappa along with American jazz and funk. 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 fusion of the **Mahavishnu Orchestra**, and the progressive funk-pop of **Earth, Wind & Fire**. Born in 1967, Morgan began drumming at age four, graduating to a full drum kit at age five. By seven, he was playing publicly and absorbing the lessons of contemporary big band jazz drummers **Buddy Rich** and **Louis Bellson** along with **Chick Corea**'s proto-fusion group **Return to Forever**. In 1981, a concert promoter asked 10-year-old Mats and 14-year-old Morgan to perform together in Umeå, one of Sweden's university cities. The lads selected their own program, a mix of Zappa, **Beatles**, and **Stevie Wonder** songs—they've been playing together ever since. (That's brotherhood.)

**Zappa** impacted the musical lives of Mats and Morgan in other ways, serving as a mentor. In 1984, Mats and Morgan formed the tribute band, **Zappesteetoot**. Suitably impressed, Zappa asked them to guest with his band on the Swedish leg of his 1988 "Broadway the Hard Way" tour in Stockholm. He also invited them to join his touring band—alas, 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**. After Zappa's passing in 1993, they continued to work with other alums—including **Terry Bozzio**, **Denny Walley**, and FZ's son **Dweezil**. Mats and Morgan played in the **Frank Zappa Memorial Barbeque** (1994-96), and performed Zappa's orchestral "200 Motels Suite" with the **Nederland's Philharmonische Orkest** in 2002. 2003 found the lads performing a concert with the **Ed Palermo Big Band**, a NYC jazz big band that released two albums of innovative Zappa tune arrangements on **Cuneiform**.

The **Mats/Morgan Band** moved forward and fashioned a potent legacy of its own. Embracing the DIY ethic, Morgan founded a label in the 1990s, **Ultimate Audio Entertainment**, to release their band's uncompromising sounds to the Swedish marketplace. Mats/Morgan's first album, **Trends and Other Diseases**, came out on **UAE** in 1996. **Trends** combined dazzling instrumental technique (but never for its own sake), the insouciant elegance of the chamber music of **Stravinsky** and **Poulenc**, the thorny time changes and knotty infrastructure of **Zappa**, **Hatfield & the North**, and **Univers Zero** with the impish humor and bittersweet melodies of the **Beatles**, **Robert Wyatt**, and even **They Might Be Giants**, served up with the chilly warmth of Scandinavian cool. The following year, in 1997, Mats/Morgan released **The Music or the Money?** (a nod to Zappa's **We're Only In It For the Money**). It spotlights two aspects of their work – spontaneous playing on compositions and improvisations, and music that relies on heavily programmed electronic materials in the vein of Zappa's synclavier works.

In 2004, USA-based **Cuneiform Records** signed the Mats/Morgan Band to its roster after being blown away by their amazing live performance at **Les Tritonales Festival** in Paris. Association with the label, which was recognized in progressive rock and jazz circles world wide and distributed internationally, would expose Mats/Morgan's music to an audience well beyond Scandinavia. In 2005, Mats/Morgan released their first album of new material with Cuneiform, called **Thanks for Flying With Us**. It was perhaps their most mature and sophisticated recording as an ensemble, and an expanded one, at that – with guest artists such as Morgan's brother, blues guitarist **Jimmy Ågren** and Turkish reed player **Ismet Demirhan**. The music balanced songs with lyrics and grooves alongside tracks with more fantastical instrumental flights, and featured an expanded sonic palette, with vintage tube amplifiers and tube microphones as well as modern digital instruments. **Flying** inspiration encompassed vocal music with modern "pop" leanings (**Bjork**, **Massive Attack**, **XTC**) and world music-laced jazz/jazz-laced world music (**Hermeto Pascoal**, **L. Shankar**, **Jan Garbarek**).

When Morgan's music career required his total focus in the 2000s, he transferred label business to **Cuneiform Records**, who agreed to reissue and internationally distribute the Mats/Morgan albums originally released on **UAE**. Cuneiform began reissuing the **UAE** catalogue in 2008, when it released a remastered version of **Trends and Other Diseases**, augmented by a 15-minute bonus track. Simultaneously in 2008 – a watershed year for the band – Cuneiform released a *new* Mats/Morgan recording: a two-disc set of live material by Mats/Morgan and other musicians that included a CD, **Heat Beats Live**, and the first-ever DVD released by either of the band's core members, called **Tourbook 1991-2007**. Recorded at Stockholm's Club Fasching and Paris' Les Tritonales, the CD was an amalgam of knotty composition, inspired improvisation, and electric and *acoustic* performances, fervent soloing, and magnetic beats, all infused with Mats/Morgan's pervasive humor. The DVD's focus is more on drummer Morgan Ågren, with footage of performances with from the jazz, rock, blues and classical musicians – including **Frederick Thordental (Meshuggah)**, **Simon Steensland**, **Christer Karlberg Trio**, **Jannis Eliasson** and others. **Heat Beats Live/Tourbook 1991-2007** won Mats/Morgan new fans worldwide and secured Morgan's status as a world-class drummer. In 2009, Morgan was voted the world's 4<sup>th</sup>-ranking **Fusion drummer** in **Modern Drummer's Readers Poll**, a poll organized by the world's premiere drum magazine. Keeping the Mats/Morgan Band exposed to a growing international fanbase, in 2010 Cuneiform reissued **The Music or the Money?**. Cuneiform augmented the original **UAE** release with 12 additional tracks, adding 45 minutes of bonus/previously-unreleased material. That same year, **Morgan** became 2010's best **Fusion Drummer**, winning **first place** in the Fusion category of **Modern Drummer Readers Poll**. Now, in 2011, Cuneiform is reissuing the Mats/Morgan Band's third album, **Live**.

The Mats/Morgan Band continues to perform live at festivals in Sweden and internationally. In December 2010, they played at Portugal's **Gouveia Art Rock Festival**, and that summer at France's **Jazz et Sausisesses festival**. In June 2009, they performed at Sweden's **Humla Visfestival** and the **Trondheim Jazzfest** in Norway. The Mats/Morgan band performed in North America in 2008, at the acclaimed **Montreal Drumfestival**. Besides working together, both Mats and Morgan perform independently. Mats leads the **Mats Öberg Trio**, plays in a jazz duo with **Jonas Knutsson**, and belongs to Swedish group **BEFIVE**. Morgan is one of Sweden's most in-demand drummers. In July 2011, he performed alongside **Tina Ahlin** at Sweden's **Agnsjön Visfestival** (Song Festival). Earlier this year, he played with such wide-ranging acts as a **Tower of Power** tribute band, the Swedish group **Isidurs Bane**, and with both **Trey Gunn** and **Henry Kaiser**. The trio of **Morgan Ågren**, **Henry Kaiser**, **Trey Gunn** will release a new album entitled **Invisible Rays** on November 15, 2011 on 7d Media. Future Morgan projects include a record with cheery Euro-berserkers **Kings of Belgium**, and an album for **Cuneiform** with **Bill Laswell** and **Raoul Björkenheim**, entitled **BLIXT**, which Cuneiform will release at the same time as **Mats/Morgan Band's Live**. On October 20, 2011, Morgan Ågren will come full circle and perform Zappa's epic "**Greggery Peccary**" with a German symphony orchestra.

**“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

**“Side by side with the more ‘out there’ Zappa type improvisations and interludes there is, some sparkling musicianship and melodies (e.g ‘If Only I Had A Clavinet’) to 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, the 9:23 of ‘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...Öberg and Ågren...hopsotch from one genre to another, often on the same track. ...There is a lot more to The Mats/Morgan Band than Zappa influences, but his eclectic taste and far-reaching resourcefulness certainly color the proceedings. ...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. There are also instances when The Mats/Morgan Band emulate or simulate the distorted pop of archetypes such as The Residents, particularly during the melodic but warped pop piece, “Coco,” which marries 1960s psychedelic pop with decidedly odd auditory left turns. ...“Jeriko,”...is a keyboard driven improvisation which has a King Crimson flavor, with Öberg’s electronics taking the place of Robert Fripp’s guitar. Small doses of The Mats/Morgan Band prove to be the best way to appreciate *The Music or the Money?* ...the music can be listened to with concentration...wide-ranging creativity.”**  
– Doug Simpson, *Audiophile Audition*, February 25, 2011

**“There’s a bracing quality to the music from this Swedish band. The 35 tracks cross knotty jazz rock, playful pop pastiche and densely woven prog rock overtures to form a fascinating and fast-moving hybrid. Their piquant mix of complexity and needle-sharp musical humour is pungently reminiscent of Frank Zappa’s ability to move seamlessly between such poles. When they do stretch out, as on disc two, 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*

**“The band around 1997 showed brilliance and intelligence with domination of keyboards, bass and rhythmic ideas...It was then that the core of the band caught attention from Frank Zappa...the singing parts are special, with use of slightly odd vocal harmonies...The keyboard are rooted in something like jazz-rock without borders...interesting use of rhythms...The accordion adds extra ideas, occasionally rooted in Eastern European folk...The extended 1997 album is brilliant, well-mixed and surprised for the whole near 70 minutes...The second CD is more improvised, more simple, like jazz-rock improvisations...the opener “Dr. Thor” with its long classical/jazz improvisation is a favourite live track.”**  
– Gerald Van Waes, *Psychemusic.org*, July 3, 2010

**“An expanded and remastered version of 1997’s *The Music or the Money?*...A wild but virtuosic performance of originals that showcase their vast abilities...The payoff comes in amazing performances, like the live, Chick Corea-grade piano/drums improvisation of “Dr. Thor.”...Although Zappa influences abound I’m often reminded more of the Residents than the Mothers...*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?*. Considering their origins, it makes sense that much of *The Music or the Money?* resembles the odder and looser compositions featured on classics like *We’re Only In It For the Money* and *Uncle Meat*...This reissue adds forty-five extra minutes, resulting in 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. ...“If I Only Had a Clavinet,” and “Coco” stand out...The former uses a cartoonish vocal and playful arrangement, bringing to mind the silliness of Ween and The Residents...The latter is easily the coolest song...a quirky English vibe like a less eccentric and simpler offering by Neal Innes (The Bonzo Dog Band). Most of what remains on *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. I mean, they are good, brothers and sisters. They have been positively influenced by the best of Frank Zappa’s synclavier music, and there are parts that show this through madcap spacefunk meets Varesian encounters...Then they have jam as a trio, 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. Whooooo.”**  
– Grego Applegate Edwards, *Gaplegate 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. ...influenced by...quirkier moments of We Are Only In It For The Money and Uncle Meat era Zappa... also elements of Steve Vai, the Flex-able era,...with experimental soundstages...Some of the interactions also call to mind the stunning uniqueness of The Residents... 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. There are some mesmerizing guitar interactions...Dr.**

**Thor for me is a stand out piece, (which is not an easy thing to do with 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.** The re-issue may add forty-five minutes to the original release, (thank you Cuneiform)...It may drop into the realms of the avant-garde from time to time...makes what is here even more interesting. This is an album that certainly floats my boat."

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

**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 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 klavicharp; 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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