



Bio information: **HENRIK OLSSON**
Title: *ANTUMBRA ENSEMBLE* (Cuneiform Rune 548)
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RIYL: Henry Cow, Henry Threadgill, Sun Ra, Blast, Marc Ribot, Frank Zappa

Guitarist / Composer / Improvisor
HENRIK OLSSON
scours the Musical Universe for Road Maps
– from Henry Threadgill to Henry Cow,
Incredible String Band and Zappa
to Sun Ra and far beyond –
to Sculpt Highly Energized & Cohesive Jazz / Rock Pieces
for his 7-Piece, Denmark-based
ANTUMBRA ENSEMBLE

When we open the box to a jigsaw puzzle, we see a pile of disparate pieces, each with their own identifying characteristics. To assemble, we need to understand the logic of the shapes and how they might fit together. Eventually we need to zoom out and consider the big picture. For guitarist **Henrik Olsson**, composition works in a similar way.

His process is intuitive, playing until he finds the right musical figure, then tossing it about in repetition to discover everything it has to offer. “I constantly have to ask a piece what comes before or what comes after,” he explains. Slowly, the pieces reveal themselves, and the composition assembles.

On his **Cuneiform Records** debut, *Antumbra Ensemble*, Olsson has created eight musical puzzles, each unique in form and function. Joined with a group that includes fellow artists from the **Copenhagen** scene—a horn section of **Michaela Turcerová** on alto sax, **Erik Kimestad Pedersen** on trumpet, **Petter Hängsel** on trombone and recorder, and **Kristian Tangvik** on tuba, with a rhythm section of bassist **Jeppe Skovbakke** and drummer **Rune Lohse**—he draws on a seemingly unending well of sounds to form his songs, each serving as single pieces to form the record’s whole.

Olsson’s approach references artists like **Henry Threadgill**’s groundbreaking **Very Very Circus band**—a unit that remains instantly identifiable through labyrinthine structures—and **Rock In Opposition** artists, namely **Henry Cow**, who essentially made unpredictability their vocabulary. In each, it is a unique vision and framework that holds those groups’ sound together. The same can certainly be said for Olsson. “When I was a kid and really got into a record,” he explains, “I wanted to live in this world, where I could smell and taste and discover new things. That’s the kind of experience I want to give the listener.”

While those groups inform the intent of Olsson’s compositions, he also draws inspiration from **Sun Ra**, who forged a forward-thinking sound based on melodically focused tunes. Outrageous as it might seem to seek accessibility in such an avant-garde landscape, he aspires toward a perfect musical world for any curious listener, balancing his references to artists like the psychedelic **Incredible String Band** with the more pop-minded **Astrud Gilberto**, and draws on old-school **R&B** (as on “**El Excavador de mi Corazon**”) just as casually as he skronks out a deeply angular no-wave-inspired guitar solo (on “**Homeshredder**”).

If it sounds ambitious, it is. But he succeeds. Olsson's knack for a catchy melody is strong—dig the winding riffage of “**Will Sommers**”—as is his propensity to fuel his compositional ambition with a healthy dose of groove. (“**Hey Pedro, it's just cosmic dust**” will easily reel you in with its almost **Caribbean-informed** feel before heading to more sinister destinations.) Intrepid listeners will be all about the juxtaposition, but it's pulsing beats and inclination to rock that makes *Antumbra Ensemble* welcoming to ears of all varieties.

Though Olsson sees himself as a composer first on *Antumbra Ensemble*—“It's almost like the composer side of me gives the guitar side of me a role to stick to the composition,” he attests—his guitar playing is a major part of the record that both sets the tone and injects it with a shot of his distinct musical energy. Definitely not a pedal-tweaking gearhead, Olsson uses his sonic toolbox wisely, as his plunky single-coil twang and occasional noise-filled excursions nod toward **Marc Ribot** while his warbly vibrato-heavy melodies can evoke a modern-cumbia-guitar flavor à la **Eblis Alvarez** of **Meridian Brothers**.

Antumbra Ensemble is a wild adventure that blends an ever-evolving palette with a strong penchant for deep, shifting grooves and melodies that are both varied and catchy. It all centers around Olsson's fearless musical voice, his kaleidoscopic compositions at the forefront, supported by his bold guitar flavors and a well-oiled, highly versatile band who are committed to the cause. Together, they put together a puzzle you'll want to hear.

Antumbra Ensemble, featuring Olsson's 7-piece Copenhagen Antumbra Ensemble, is the Swedish-born, Denmark-based musician's debut on US-based **Cuneiform Records**. His previous releases under his own name include several well-received recordings with his projects **Hand of Benediction** and **Penumbra Ensemble**, released on Denmark's **Barefoot Records**. Besides leading his own groups, Olsson also plays in **OLSSON/ RUBIN**, **EHM**, **Ytterlandet**, **Jeppe Zeeberg & The Absolute Pinnacle of Human Achievement**, and others.

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"Olsson displays his own musical vocabulary which is full of surprising sounds and unpredictable explorations. He never plays the expected and somehow his sidemen follow him closely even when the music is at its freest..."

– Scott Yanow, *LA Jazz Scene*

"Olsson is apt to terrorize his guitar on a nanosecond's notice"

– Glenn Astarita, *All About Jazz*

"With 'Hand of Benediction' Olsson is pushing forward the idiom of avant rock, making it more wild... For sure here is somebody at work with a very outspoken vision and drive. It is a lovely madness and a very remarkable statement by this composer and guitarist of whom I hope to hear more."

– Dolf Mulder, *Vital Weekly*