



Despite there being nine members in the band, it is called the Diskreetse Mango Trio.

Lost in translation



Michael Bugeja

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A few months ago, while surfing the net, I came across a particularly interesting band from Estonia which, according to My Space, was in my extended network.

I'm still not sure what made me surf onto their website at the time, but I'm glad I did, as they happen to make some interesting folk music – the kind that blends tradition with contemporary sounds. The band's name is Diskreetse Mango Trio, although there are actually nine of them; and as they sing in Estonian – not quite my strong point – I have absolutely no idea what they are actually on about.

Most people will associate the Eurovision Song Contest with Estonia, but Diskreetse Mango Trio is as far removed from this scenario humanly possible. Instead, this Tallinn-based collective proffers a diverse musical excursion that applies the mathematics of rock to melodic frays that, clichéd as it may sound, reflect just how universal a language music truly is.

Set up in 2003, Diskreetse Mango Trio has always strived to bring together different forms of rock – and at times even pop – and the more rudimentary elements of folk music, namely the ancient Runo traditional song. It took them three arduous years of gigging and experimenting before they finally recorded and released their debut album, 2006's *Prigadi Pragadi*, a copy of which has regularly occupied my CD player ever since I ordered it, and for a very modest fee too.

Despite repeated listening, there is really no precise way to explain this band's musical course – the ethnic-meets-contemporary description is as close one could get as

each song trails off in a different direction. Some insight into Estonian folk culture would probably explain more of what Diskreetse Mango Trio is about, but since this is a field I'm not particularly well-versed in, I resign myself to enjoying the music and leave the explaining to Oliver Laanet, the band's guitarist.

What does the band's name mean and why call it a trio when there are actually nine of you?

I was the one who named the band and the name doesn't really actually mean anything. It translates in English to Trio of the Discreet Mango. We needed a name for one of our first concerts and the posters were going to print already, so I had five minutes to come up with a name. I've always wanted to name a band Trio, even if there are more than three members. I have always loved absurd humour.

Originally, there was a project by the same name in 2003, but we actually formed the band in February 2005.

My Estonian is a bit rusty. What are your songs generally about, and will you be uploading an English translation for the lyrics on your website?

The songs that we perform are ancient Estonian Runo-songs that we have blended with modern rock and guitar-pop. Runo-song is a song-style that is original to Estonian folk music. The Runo-verse form originated before our time; it is based upon the eight-syllable verse of the quantitative metre. The Runo-song is characterised by alliteration and parallelism. The melody line doesn't exceed more than five tones and it

is repeated through the song. Though the lyrics are the main component of Runo-song, the melody lines are not to be overlooked. Since some of the songs might be thousands of years old, they are usually about working, weddings, different rituals. There are also swing-songs and game-songs. Because of the rich poetical style of the lyrics, it is hard to translate them to English without losing the essence of the songs but we are working on uploading onto our website some English descriptions of what the songs are about.

Singing in Estonian probably limits your potential. Have you ever thought of singing in English to reach a wider audience?

We have never thought about singing in English, because as I explained earlier, it is difficult to translate the lyrics without losing some of their meaning. Personally, I don't really find the need to sing in English, especially because international folk audiences tend to prefer traditional folk songs to be sung in their original language. Different languages generally enrich the world of music.

What is the music scene in Estonia like?

Local radios tend to play international pop hits. And this is what most Estonians listen to. But there are really strong indie, metal, electronic and jazz music scenes in Estonia. The folk music scene is also growing year by year. Live music has been popular for some years now in Estonia, so there is a decent amount of different concerts and festivals to visit. The choral music has traditionally been very strong in Estonia. Estonian com-

posers Arvo Pärt and Erkki-Sven Tüür are known internationally.

You've been working on a second album. How far into it are you and will it be similar to *Prigadi Pragadi* or are you trying something different?

We have not yet started recording the second album though there is enough material for it. We don't really want to repeat ourselves, so we are looking for a fresher sound. Though the music and the complexity of the arrangements have evolved remarkably, I feel that the time is not right yet to rush into the studio. I would like to experiment with electronic sounds mixed with live instruments on our next album, but I'm not the only one who decides what our music should sound like.

Diskreetse Mango Trio won Estonia's Ethno/Folk award last year and released a new single, *Hea Mees* last December. What else is planned for this year?

The award was presented to us for our debut album *Prigadi Pragadi* and has opened some new possibilities for us internationally. The new single, *Hea Mees* was released to give our audience a taste of our newer material, since the new full length release is not yet due to be released. We have just finished an Estonian mini-tour to celebrate the third anniversary of the band. Hopefully 2008 will see a new Diskreetse Mango Trio release and also some international live dates.

For more information or to download some of the band's songs, visit www.diskreetsemangotrio.ee and www.myspace.com/diskreetsemangotrio.