

Oùat (Once upon a time)

SIMON SIEGER | JOEL GRIP | MICHAEL GRIENER

SIMON SIEGER | piano

JOEL GRIP | bass

MICHAEL GRIENER | drums

With a sound reminiscent of acoustic piano trios of the 50s and 60s, **Oùat** sets out to explore the idea of a jazz standard song format of today.

The venue Au Tropsi Pohl in Berlin allowed for regular series of work where they could investigate and perform the music of Ellington, Hasaan Ibn Ali, Elmo Hope, Per Henrik Wallin and Sun Ra as well as develop their own sound and ideas. Their debut album *Elastic Bricks* (LP | Umlaut | 2022) is exclusively dedicated to their own material which might evoke a dreamed-up vacation of Hindemith in Alger; sounds and tempos in a curious mixture of recognizable disorder and unrecognizable order. For their most recent release, *The Strange Adventures of Jesper Klint* (2LP | Umlaut | 2023) **Oùat** reiterate trio music of Swedish pianist Per Henrik Wallin which is an escalating and beautiful venture of limits and questioning.

Oùat continue to praise the sound and momentum of collective concentrated creativity, making as much as possible out of an idea, a shared place and time.

Oùat (Once upon a time) can be heard as storytelling, a chatty trilogy instantaneously finding the sonorous meanings of what, where and when. How this is possible is another question. Simply listen - its a good beginning, and end! - to **Oùat** and its members who play momentous roles in the creative music scenes of Europe, from Marseille to Dala-Floda via Berlin. Their individual work is heard in groups such as Monks Casino, [ahmed], and The Art Ensemble of Chicago.

The musicians:

Simon Sieger is a multi-instrumentalist, arranger and composer.

His field of activity ranges from barrelhouse boogie to Sun Ra reinterpretations to hard-hitting sweet noise.

In his own words, "Music has no boundaries; anything can go anywhere, with the right attitude. That's the way the world should be."

He has been heard playing stride piano at noise concerts and Turkish maqam in a blues band.

Often called a "hunter-gatherer" by his peers, he has recently played with the Art Ensemble of Chicago, the Famoudou Don Moye Odyssey and Legacy Quintet, and Mars Music Bar Opera.

After studies in Sweden and Baltimore, USA (with Michael Formanek), **Joel Grip** moved to Paris where he opened Umlaut Records in 2007. Since 2019 he organizes weekly music series under the name Au Tropsi Pohl and Tropsi Unter Haltung in Berlin, as well as productions like Mars Music. Besides his musical activities, Joel Grip makes films and drawings/paintings.

Active in the groups Tropsi Unter Haltung, Oúat, Mr. Borelgrip, اسم [ism], أحمد [ahmed], Klub Demboh, Tribute to Sheep, duos with Tristan Honsinger, Seymour Wright and Takako Suzuki, Blythill, three trios with Sven-Åke Johansson (with Bertrand Denzler - Neuköllner Modelle, with Rüdiger Carl - In early November - and with Niklas Fite - Erinnerungen und Litfass), PTEE and Peeping Tom.

Michael Griener, self-taught by listening to and playing with many of his elders, spent his formative years as a teenager with bass clarinetist Rudi Mahall and began his freelance career in 1988, initially in intensive collaboration with Günter Christmann in Hannover, and since moving to Berlin in 1994 has distinguished himself as one of the most versatile drummers on the current jazz scene, as evidenced by his work with Mal Waldron, Butch Morris, Tal Farlow, Evan Parker, Aki Takase, Tony Malaby and many others. Together with Jan Roder he forms the rhythm section of the band DIE ENTÄUSCHUNG, ULI GUMPERT QUARTETT, MONK'S CASINO and various other formations.

Informed by a deep knowledge of the jazz tradition, he moves mainly in the border area between jazz and free improvisation, as for example in his trio with Ellery Eskelin and Christian Weber. In 2002, Baby Sommer brought him on as a lecturer at the Dresden College of Music, where he continues to teach jazz drumming. In March 2006, Griener received the "Most Creative Soloist" award at the New German Jazz

Awards ceremony in Mannheim. His music has been documented on numerous CD releases, including Intakt, HatHut, FMP, Jazzwerkstatt, Moers Music and many more.

Press reviews:

"A whisky bar piano trio, joyfully performed, loose, with an edge of drunken madness."

Gregg Miller <https://www.freejazzblog.org/2022/04/ouat-elastic-bricks-umlaut-2022.html>

"I can't think of anyone making these sounds today"

Peter Margasak, The Wire - March 2022 (Issue 457)

"What The fuck is this Ouat ?

Once Upon A Time, sir.

Rouges et bleues, les histoires déliées par le trio.

Souples et imparables, profondes et immédiates, aussi.

Parfaites."

Guillaume Malvoisin <https://pointbreak.fr/elastic-bricks-chronique>

"I'd also include a recent European piano trio called Ouât in this category. They bookended the year with two fantastic albums. The first, Elastic Bricks (Umlaut), is comprised of original tunes by the group's bassist Joel Grip and pianist Simon Sieger – the group also includes drummer Michael Griener – all of whom retain this general 'Black Mystery' aesthetic model in various ways while sounding rather contemporary in tone and melody. Equally strong is The Strange Adventures Of Jesper Klint, an end-to-end reimagining of Swedish pianist Per-Henrik Wallin's brilliant album Coyote, which posthumously argues for, at least, his adjacency to this coterie."

Peter Margasak. The Quietus, Best jazz music of 2022

But the trio's most distinctive features are its cheerfulness, liveliness and humour. This is what characterised Wallin's trio and his music to a large extent. Simon Sieger is a brilliant pianist on a par with Wallin. Technically very driven and at the same time free in his playing. With Joel Grip's firm and distinctive bass playing and Michael Griener's propulsive and well-balanced drumming, the trio becomes a whole that interprets Wallin's rich music in an extraordinary way! With the hope that Ouat will spread awareness of Wallin's music internationally as well. One of the records of the year!

Roger Bergner OrkesterJournalen

To experience French multi-instrumentalist Simon Sieger in the piano trio OÙAT is a revelation: from Fats Waller to Monk to Paul Bley and back again in one smiling breath - a hundred years of jazz piano he brings together effortlessly and compellingly in one beat. Joel Grip, an agile bassist who plays with powerful tone on intestinal pages, and Michael Griener, who is allowed to swing to his heart's content here, including wild breaks and overlays in fractions of a second, form a dreamlike trio with Sieger, full of drive, wit and playing mood.

Michael Bossong Jazz Podium

In late 2020 Matthew Shipp published an essay on a particular, idiosyncratic group of fellow pianists belonging to a group he dubbed Black Mystery School. He wrote: "Mystery School posits an alternative touch – something that does not directly fall within the mainstream's easily digestible paradigm of being able to play the instrument, even though the practitioners of the Mystery School are obviously highly skilled virtuosos whose touch, language, and articulation are extremely hard to copy."I'd also include a recent European piano trio called Ouât in this category. They bookended the year with two fantastic albums. The first, Elastic Bricks (Umlaut), is comprised of original tunes by the group's bassist Joel Grip and pianist Simon Sieger – the group also includes drummer Michael Griener – all of whom retain this general 'Black Mystery' aesthetic model in various ways while sounding rather contemporary in tone and melody. Equally strong is The Strange Adventures Of Jesper Klint, an end-to-end reimagining of Swedish pianist Per-Henrik Wallin's brilliant album Coyote, which posthumously argues for, at least, his adjacency to this coterie. Both of these trios fall in and out of Shipp's definition, which he acknowledges to be idiosyncratic. I think the value of his judgment, though, is identifying a previously unconsidered lineage that both retains and values history, but works outside of it innovative, deeply personal ways.

Peter Margasak DownBeat Magazine

ouat.info

<https://www.umlautrecords.com/produit/the-strange-adventures-of-jesper-klint-double-lp/>

<https://www.umlautrecords.com/produit/elastic-bricks-lp/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Ouat-103850725658431>