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Leinonen Records Sound of Emotions

By Sergei Chernov

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Leinonen's new album "Auringonsade/Pommisuoja" is due out Sept. 9.

ST. PETERSBURG — Ville Leinonen, a Finnish singer-songwriter whose diverse recording career encompasses everything from folk to bossa nova and daring experiments, plays in Moscow on Sunday to showcase his 13th album, a departure from all his previous works.

Due out on Sept. 9, "Auringonsade/Pommisuoja" is split into two parts: the calm, atmospheric "Auringonsade," or "Sun Ray," and the dark, intense "Pommisuoja," or "Bomb Shelter."

Recorded during a nine-month period in Le Zen Tomb studio, Paris, the album, which features the revolutionary Afghan theater band L'Orch d'al-Fajr and Finnish pop singer Paula Vesala, is on Finland's respected indie label, Fonal.

Leinonen, 35, spoke in an interview about the album, his beginnings and his approach to pop music.

Your new album, "Auringonsade/Pommisuoja" can be described as experimental, conceptual and psychedelic. It consists of two parts that are entirely different in mood. Can you tell us about the album, its ideas and influences?
The album, like life itself, is an investigation of reality, hopes, chance and uncertainty. Some of the themes are influenced by events in my own life, some are universal. The soundscapes deal with these themes as well. I like to imagine what different emotions would sound like. What happens when you face something unexpected that forces you to face life's uncertainty? How do things sound after an experience of immense happiness, sadness, satisfaction or fear?

It took quite a long time — nine months — to record and features an Afghan band and singer Paula Vesala. To what extent was the album composed in the studio?
One could say that every album is a process, from its birth to the present. Or perhaps just a period of coincidences. During a studio process, I often create an imaginary setting to support the atmosphere. It is influenced by facts and fiction. Mrs. Paula Vesala, though, is real and lovely.

Some of your repertoire is covers; what does it mean to you to perform songs by other artists? Who are your favorites?
Our music cultures experience similarities in melancholy and excitement. In Russian culture, I feel you are more open to your emotions. I admire that and would like to bring something like that to my performances as well. To simplify, my favorite songs are ones that make me feel happy or sad. It is often a matter of good lyrics when choosing a cover, and it should somehow serve the ensemble. I like to sing or perform a good, moving piece, not imitate the original artist. That serves no purpose.

You were born into a musical family. What was the atmosphere like when you were growing up? What music did you like, and what made you want to become a musician?
I come from a family of four siblings. My father is a trumpet teacher and a musician, and my mother is a great lover of music. Even as toddlers, we had our hands full of real instruments. The musical atmosphere and encouragement of my childhood home has been key to what I am doing now. I studied my parents' album collection very carefully and am still very driven by the popular aesthetics of the '70s.

How did you come to form your band Valumo, which was active from 1997 to 2005? What were your influences?
I wanted to form a group to support a vision of good, innovative rock music. My influences at this time were everything from industrial noise to Serge Gainsbourg, and from gospel to national anthems and folk music. This has not actually changed that much.

What kind of music and songs can the audience expect to hear this weekend?
The program features a wide range of songs from my career. It celebrates this new album and cooperation with the wonderful musicians Janne Lastumaki and Teemu Markkula I get to play with. I'd like to say the program, the arrangements and the realization are worth checking out, even if you do not know my material. Just come and share a moment with interesting sounds and songs. We would love to have you there.

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