



Revenge of the fiddlers

- Being the girl with the fiddle wasn't so cool when I was 13, Tuva Livsdatter Syvertsen admits.

By Ingrid Hvidsten

Today, the 25-year old has been booked to festivals throughout the summer together with her good friends Ola Hilmen and Erik Sollid. They are the Valkyrien Allstars, and they have made traditional Norwegian folk music hip. With fiddles as their main instrument, and all of their songs written in Norwegian, they certainly stand out from the crowd.

- The Hardanger fiddle is traditionally a solo instrument, and it is fun to experiment with it together with others on stage. Our first record is a mix of several genres. We play Norwegian folk music, but are inspired by jazz, rock, blues and soul. We are first and foremost a party band, Tuva says when asked how she would describe her band to 500 people from all over the world who've never heard of the Hardanger fiddle.

When Tuva, Erik and Ola go on stage in Lillehammer this weekend, they want you to feel it - even if you don't know a single word in Norwegian.

- I think it's going to be fun. We are going to play some old stuff and some new stuff, and bring a lot of energy to Lillehammer, Erik says.

Love, pain and humour

The core of the Valkyrien Allstars (sometimes they bring a drummer and a bassplayer on stage as well) met each other during a fiddleseminar some time in the late 90's. They were about 15 years old,

and their meeting was the beginning of something big. A few years later the three of them moved in together in Oslo.

- We lived near a pub called Valkyrien, and played gigs there sometimes. We rarely write anything, most of our music is made by improvisation, often at parties. As time went by, our playing got more serious, and we started getting jobs outside the pub. Since then, the most important thing for us has been to do a lot of concerts, and we became the Valkyrien Allstars, Tuva says.

- We rarely rehearse, Erik admits with a grin.

A lot of their music is based on ancient Norwegian verses, rhymes and poems. Their first record came in October last year, and the next one is expected some time in 2009.

- It is all about love, pain and humour, Ola says.

Harder in Norwegian

- You don't hear a lot of our kind of music in Norway today. I think that the fact that we sing in Norwegian makes the impression stronger, you get a completely different understanding of the music, Ola says.

- And it's obvious that people like that, considering the way they act when we play, Erik adds.

Tuva, the lead vocal, admits that it is far from simple to sing in Norwegian.

- It is a huge challenge. Everything feels closer and more personal, sometimes embarrassingly personal. I think it is harder than singing in

English, she says.

As their success grew bigger, the trio decided to move apart last year, before the record came out.

- We can make a living on our music now. But our friendship comes first, then the band. Living together any longer could have been too much, Tuva says. The other two agrees.

They've soon been together for ten years. And they're not planning on splitting up anytime soon.

- We believe in our music, Ola says.

So does the Norwegian audience, it seems. This summer, they've been flying and driving all across the country, playing at festivals of different sizes. Next stop: Lillehammer and GIJC.

- We should have a really extravagant entry, Tuva says,

- I'd like to be shot out in a rocket from one of the ski jumps, and land on stage, she adds with reference to part of the opening ceremony of the Lillehammer Olympics in 1994. The Lillehammer opening ceremony took place at the bottom of a ski jump outside the city and included various mythic characters coming "on stage" by jumping of the Olympic size ski-jump.

Valkyrien Allstars

Established sometime around the year of 2001, by Tuva Livsdatter Syvertsen, Ola Hilmen and Erik Sollid, all of them playing Hardanger fiddles. Their lyrics are often based on ancient Norwegian poetry, and they rarely sit down to write. In 2006, they made it to the final rounds of NRKs program Kjempesjansen (The Great Chance), and were given the Grappa Debutant Prize. Their first album, Valkyrien Allstars, was released in October 2007.