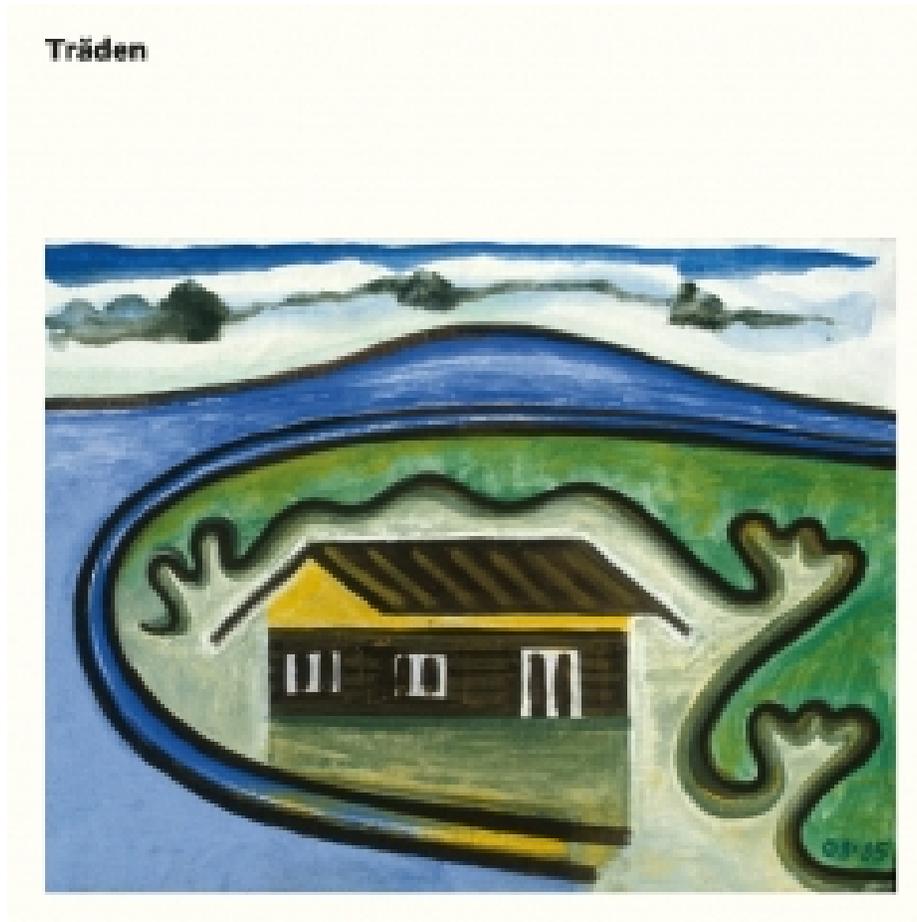


# Träden: Träden

SC [spectrumculture.com/2018/08/29/traden-traden](http://spectrumculture.com/2018/08/29/traden-traden)

Daniel Bromfield

August 29, 2018



A lot of bands are better at jamming than writing songs, which raises the question of why you'd ever want to listen to a band like Träd, Gräs och Stenar over your cousin's garage band. What makes freeform, improvisatory freak-outs as fun for the listener as for the musicians? Having both seen and participated in many endless guitar jams, I propose it comes down to taste. In a less-than-inspired jam session, a musician with an ego might swoop in and try to save it. In an inspired jam session, the collective product is so good no one tries to better it. Everyone surrenders to their instruments, in service of the sound.

Träd, Gräs och Stenar have been masters of the jam for half a century. First emerging as Pärson Sound in 1967 with some of the woolliest music in the world at that time, the band changed its name a few times and finally settled on the Swedish for "trees, grass, and stones." Happier playing airstrips than auditoriums, more comfortable cooking meals for crowds rather than indulging in princely tour riders, the band maintains an anti-commercial ethos that means they'll be comfortable sprawling out in small venues until Judgment Day. And on *Träden*, they take us deeper than ever into their hermetic world.

They're called Träden ("the trees") now, which rolls easily off foreign tongues. Between that

and the self-consciously Swedish joke of calling their new album's opening track "När Lingonen Mognar (Lingonberries Forever)," you'd be forgiven for seeing this as a party favor for international fans, a way of capitalizing on the momentum of recent reissues of their epochal live material and their late-'60s work as International Harvester. If so, it's less a concession to new audiences than a nifty preview of the live Träden experience. This music resembles nothing so much as what appears on their 2016 box set of live material.

That means 10-plus-minute jams on which the lead guitars spiral in all directions while maintaining fealty to the overall sound rather than the ego. Guitarist Jakob Sjöholm is the sole original member, but it's not like there are any individual instrumental personalities that are sorely missed—even that of the departed Bö Anders Persson, probably its best-known member. The instruments sound like themselves: the guitars never do anything weird, the bass sounds like a bass, the drums keep steady time. It's almost ambient, the rare variety of rock for which the best approach for listening is to zone out and drift away.

Sjöholm must have hired the most tasteful and restrained musicians he could find, so comfortable are they shifting, weaving, and slowly building rather than simply taking up space. Even the songs that are ostensibly pop have a way of becoming something more: "Hoppas Du Förstår (Hope You Understand)" is a love song that more closely resembles the icy ambient drift of a band like Labradford. And when they decide to rouse themselves to sing, it's not rock singing but the kind of chanting you might expect from Tolkien's dwarfs. It's easy to imagine the musicians falling into a trance as they play this music, and it's contagious.