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Ingolv Haaland

musician



Norwegian pianist and composer Ingolv Haaland, 37, is first and foremost an improviser. He mixes lounge music with Khmer lyrics by singer Ouch Savy and leads by Yun Theara to create an Asian chill-out ambience in his record *Journey*.

By Charlie Lancaster

What was a defining moment in your career as a musician?

Coming to Cambodia for the first time in 2006 was a turning point for me. The flow of the society and the culture is different to that in Norway. It is relaxing. Subsequently, in my Master's thesis, I analysed the process of recording here, so my experience with music in Cambodia is also academic. I like to know what lies behind the societal and cultural context of music.

How has your music evolved since then?

I feel as if after years of searching, I am on the right path. I feel comfortable. I have started to mix visual elements to provide a backdrop to my music; this helps make the quieter parts more interesting. Additionally, I am taking artists out of their traditional surroundings and in the process reshaping their sound. For instance, Ouch Savy is a classically trained

Khmer vocalist, but when I place her voice within an improv piece, her voice sounds completely different.

You teach improvisation in Norway, how have your students in your classes at the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh responded?

Improvisation is very much about the person and their relationship to music. Cambodian musicians are classically trained; however, this style of training does not always encourage creativity. Yet the youth are open to new ideas and concepts. Experimentation is key; you can't learn that from books – it must come from within.

How does Cambodian music lend itself to your ambient style?

I like the Asian flavour it brings to the music. Working with musicians from different cultures creates a unique style because we bring different interpretations and understanding of the music to the recording studio. When you work with someone of Ouch Savy's calibre – she is a brilliant singer by Cambodian and international standards – it's easy to create something original.

What differences exist between your audiences in Norway and Cambodia?

In Norway the audience for ambient chill-out music like Cafe del Mar is small. I have been getting good feedback and have sold songs on iTunes. My experience in Cambodia is limited, yet I believe I will be more successful with tourists than expatriates – which is a harder market to crack. For tourists it offers an Asian flavour as well as Asian visuals.

Do you work with artists from the region?

Not yet, but this is something I am working towards. I'd like to connect with at least one singer in each country to get a taste of that culture. Such compilations work well with short film clips. The visuals that I create to accompany my music represents all parts of Asia, not just Cambodia.

Tell us about your portable studio

I have rebuilt my computer to include technology I need to control all aspects of my work: video, synthesiser, keyboard etc. This way I can guarantee sound and visual quality of a high standard. I can't guarantee that people will like my music, but at least I can say with 100% certainty that my product is of good quality. ingolvhaaland.com

"You can't learn improvisation from books – it must come from within"