

Dear music enthusiast: get awkward with Painted Romans!

I formed **Wallpaper Silhouettes** in the '90s and later went solo with **PAINTED ROMANS**. There have been a few collaborations too, notably with **Antipole** and **Patrick Wray**. But THIS HERE is about **Painted Romans** (and Wallpaper Silhouettes).

..... EARLY DAYS .....

Well, I fell in love with post-punk, new wave, goth and other 80s stuff as a kid in the late '80s. Very soon I began making my own, forming what we could call a childrens version of Wallpaper Silhouettes in '93 and thus becoming the coolest kid on the block (disputable). During the heydays of 1999 to 2006 the young adult version of WS garnered critical acclaim as one of the more distinct post-punked (new) new wave acts in Norway and elsewhere at the time, but after years of live activity, two albums and going nowhere we became disillusioned and fell apart. I carried on with the new moniker and have since put out many low key and eclectic solo albums, singles, and EPs, most of which differ from how we sound today, but all of them informed and shaped by the same distinct identity. Why shouldn't they be?

..... 2020 ONWARDS .....

The story of Painted Romans is one of much fumbling in the dark. However, as late as 2020 I was still pretty unaware of the post-punk revival in recent years. It took off after we had disbanded as Wallpaper Silhouettes in 2006 and I drifted into an isolationist existence. Anyway, I returned to roots and made the minialbum **Heart** (16 Oct 20) which spawned the gothic darkwave single **Formation** (28 Aug 20) and landed a couple of spots on best of the year lists. By October that year I had a small band of men with me. The men were Jan Ottar Nystad (synth/guitar) and Thomas Sejnæs (bass). Both had played with Painted Romans on a few occasions in the past, Jan Ottar also with Wallpaper Silhouettes. Then, in February 2022 Thomas left the band forever, I think.

Modern era Painted Romans can possibly be described as post-punked with heavy goth rock and darkwave leanings; always rooted in a punkish attitude and sometimes revealing a slight pop appeal. Why, of course we're a pop band! Very recent developments has also led me into more goth-folky terrain (not the first time though). I like to use the term *goth-dripping post-punk* because it has a ghastly ring to it. This I easily get away with because we're not very well known. On the other hand, more people are aware of us now than ever before, so in that sense one would be excused to think of us as a *new* phenomena. Singles such as **The Cold Delight** (15 Jan 21), **Memento Mori** (14 May 21), and **The Begging Existence** (25 Feb 2022) have also made impressions and reinforced the sentiment. But don't be fooled: we are a wee bit late in life to be considered *the new kids on the block!*

Following below are the important links and some recent press quotes. Further down you will find a few press extracts from old times. They are a good read and give a little perspective on the musical journey, so do have a look at them. There are pictures too! Plus handy bullet points at the bottom! Could you ask for more? – Yes! Thanks for your attention!

<https://www.paintedromans.com/> a garden of delight?

<https://paintedromans.bandcamp.com/> the raw material, a right mess, most of it good, in fact all of it good

<https://www.facebook.com/paintedromans> unfortunately my favourite platform

<https://www.instagram.com/paintedromans/> my other favourite platform, damn Zuckerberg with his nasty tools and habits of conquest

<https://twitter.com/PaintedRomans> who cares

[https://open.spotify.com/artist/4Dz1G42wieVAEpf0EkEpYO?si=OJSYQYsCSrio3g-3rzbTg&dl\\_branch=1](https://open.spotify.com/artist/4Dz1G42wieVAEpf0EkEpYO?si=OJSYQYsCSrio3g-3rzbTg&dl_branch=1) evil stuff, probably conspired by Zuckerberg

<https://www.youtube.com/paintedromans> video nasties

All best

Mats Davidsen

aka Painted Romans

E-mail: [post@paintedromans.com](mailto:post@paintedromans.com)



# Painted Romans

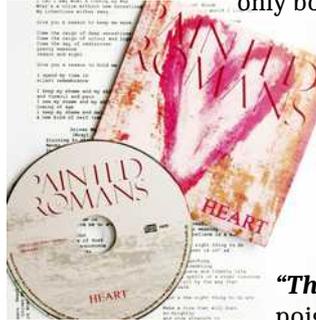
A FEW LOVELY WORDS...

... of late

“Formation” has everything we like in post-punk tune [sic] [...] When you start listening for the first time to a band like **Painted Romans**, you only lament that there are only 24 hours in a day.

*François Zappa, EL GARAJE DE FRANK  
(8 Sep 2020)*

After the fantastic *Heart*, released last year (one of our best albums of 2020 according to El Garaje), **Painted Romans** are back with a new single, entitled *The Cold Delight* [...] In this new song, **Painted Romans** approach Goth Rock territory, and Mats deep voice [sic] wears an elegant black dress. The music of this new single is as dark as the cover, marked by the overwhelming sound of the drum machine and some abrasive guitars that have gained prominence. Is this the new sound of **Painted Romans** or just another side of the band? Either way, we are looking forward to listening to new music from the band.



I have to say I rather enjoyed this a little too much. It's dark and morose just like all good goth songs can be and yet full of movement and life at the same time. There are hints of The Cure, Clan of Xymox and March Violets. Could easily be played at a goth club mixed in with older classics [...] **Painted Romans** are developing a rich, flavoursome sound and that only bodes well for the music to come.

*Adele Sinnamon, ONYX MUSIC REVIEWS  
(5 Feb 2021)*

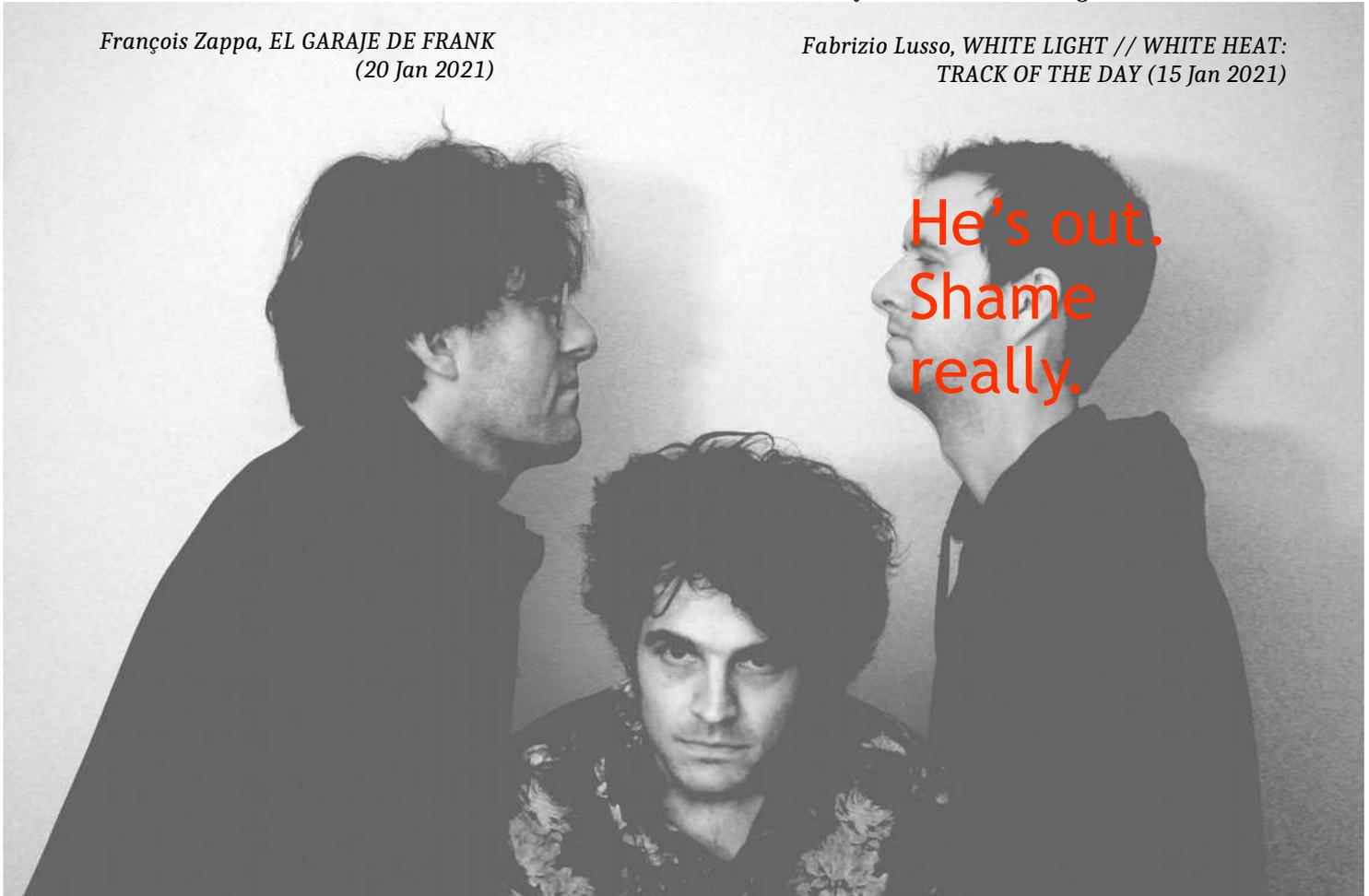
\* \* \* \* \*



*“The Cold Delight”* [...] veers towards intense and poignant gothic rock leanings ala Fields of Nephilim [sic], with martial rhythmic drive, abrasive neurotic guitar on the forefront, shrouded in a veneer of lush goth romance infused by the baritone alluring vocalizations.

*François Zappa, EL GARAJE DE FRANK  
(20 Jan 2021)*

*Fabrizio Lusso, WHITE LIGHT // WHITE HEAT:  
TRACK OF THE DAY (15 Jan 2021)*



When painted Romans become photographed Norwegians, you have what is known as ‘a band portrait’: Jan Ottar, Mats and Thomas. Photo: likely a ghost (2021)

\* \* \* \* \*

# For fun... reference... and posterity

## long ago...

*(sad)*

smooth synth pop, indie guitars and quivering vocals are each given equal billing on one of the most fascinatingly original albums I have heard in quite a while [...] even though Davidsen does conjure up influences on this and many other tracks, they draw from unexpected and unfashionable sources [...] 'Evil Wigs...' has a refreshingly original sound; the kind which can only be discovered from independent releases and these highly melodic, flab-free songs benefit from lush and imaginative productions. For me, this record is definitely one of the highlights of the year so far.

*Jonathan Leonard on 'Evil Wigs and Bedroom Moments', LEONARD'S LAIR MUSIC REVIEWS (7 Apr 2009)*



Photo: Vind Skaret (2015). Here also with ex-Cybele drummer Monica Ruud

Some slow burning delights here in 'A Safe Haven' and 'She Plays Rough' hold the highlights on the album and accordion work on the latter is as pleasing as it is unexpected. The gruff vocals of singer Mats D. are pleasing in their very uniqueness and solidly consistent lyricism is a tool he wields with great effect. Possibly too left-field to make any real impression upon a modern music industry renowned for its safety in mediocrity 'Painted Romans' may remain within their cult status for a long time yet but for fans lucky enough to discover Norway's new hopes then word of mouth alone may find this group a new found fan base soon.

Mats Davidsen recalls UK influences so accurately, he ends up performing them more convincingly than those he tries to emulate. Yet he certainly doesn't choose the obvious artists; rather a cornucopia of British eccentrics from the last thirty years. [...] To demonstrate his peculiar reference points, 'Age Took Us By Storm' employs the most awkward keyboard melody and when that's matched with Davidsen's heavenly accented vocals, he sounds like the Scandinavian answer to early Prefab Sprout. On a more approachable level, the acoustic-based 'I Love Money' operates in the ironic territory of The Divine Comedy, whilst instrumentals 'The Long Hour' and 'Soundless Diving' will have people digging for their old Simple Minds and Blue Nile albums respectively. [...] Indeed, despite hailing from Trondheim, this gentleman deserves an award for being an honorary eccentric Brit; the kind you don't hear much from nowadays, probably because they don't fit in with record executives' ideas for maintaining profit margins. Needless to say, there's more creativity in one song here than there is in a whole albums' worth of many big name, so-called "alternative" releases.

*Jonathan Leonard on 'Painted Romans ...and Time!', LEONARD'S LAIR MUSIC REVIEWS (11 Nov 2010)*



Photo: Tomte (2007)

*Joe Ward on 'Evil Wigs and Bedroom Moments', SUBBA-CULTCHA.COM (late 2008)*

*Blac!*

**Mats formed WALLPAPER SILHOUETTES in the 90s and today's PAINTED ROMANS is reminiscent of early WS ♡ ♡ ♡ Amazing! And a bit pathetic too!**

This year, the retro-new wave trend has exploded with bands like Kaiser Chiefs and many others. 80's new wave/post-punk is trendy (or at least it was a couple of months ago, - trends move fast...). Wallpaper Silhouettes are very much inspired by this decade of great popmusic, and if I hadn't known that this album was released in 2005, I would have been willing to bet money that it had been made somewhere between 1980 and 1985. They do not sound like all the other new-new wave bands that are around these days. They do not sound trendy. In the 80's inspired 2005, very few bands make music like this.

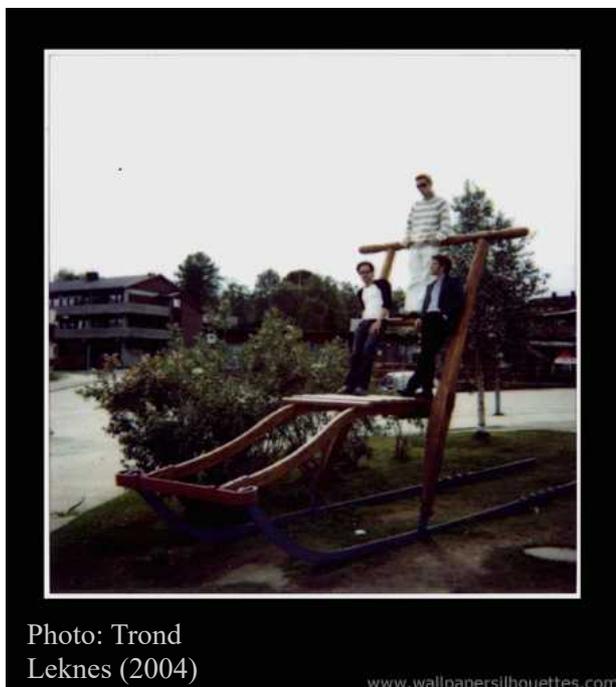
*Knut on Wallpaper Silhouettes' 'Echo the World (We Live In)'; NORWEGIAN EARDRUMS (19 Jun 2005)*

This is a welcome oddity [...] Strange as it may seem their thing is to proudly and skilfully resurrect the soul/funk/punk sound of Postcard Records, the kitchen sink glamour of The Associates and the urbane epic flourishes of The Chameleons. It's a delightful and engaging cocktail that succeeds in reaffirming my enthusiasm for this music of 20+ years ago by actually creating an album that could be a long lost gem resurrected by the archivists at LTM Publishing. [...] Luckily the lack of coherency only increases the charm [...] and if anything serves to reinforce the DIY ethic that Postcard propounded all those years ago. This is as much a celebration of making music on your own terms as it is of the influences that have informed it. [...] Great music is always about possibilities and new directions and WALLPAPER SILHOUETTES have recaptured that musical spirit from the early 80s. Fortunately they've done it in such a way that demonstrates that history and changes in taste have failed to bring anything remotely approaching closure to that spirit and inventiveness. Once again so much of today's music seems sterile and unimaginative by comparison.

*Different Drum on Wallpaper Silhouettes' 'Echo the World (We Live In), WHISPERIN & HOLLERIN (2005)*

**On their second album, Wallpaper Silhouettes show the posers a thing or two, and deliver a beautiful slice of Scandinavian pop...** Kicking off with a Steely Dan-esque piano intro, the first song, 'Your Weary Eyes' kicks off with a bass like that PIL would have been proud to call their own [...] lots of murky, claustrophobic layers of reverb and feedback, plaintive piano arrangements, and gloomy lyrics decorate the album with a sweet sadness [...] Hollow Earth is certainly anything but hollow, and despite being undeniably derivative of bands like Duran Duran or Simple Minds, they are not mere posers or pretenders, indeed, they show most other eighties-revivalists how it should be done. Not one to stick on if you're down in the dumps, but nonetheless a beautiful slice of Scandinavian pop.

*Chris Bell on Wallpaper Silhouettes' 'Hollow Earth', SUBBA-CULTCHA.COM (17 Apr 2006)*



(Largest 'spark' in the world, true!  
Built in Norway. FOR TROLLS??)



Photo: Nadia Frantsen (2005)



**Painted Romans performing at Celebrata Hindrheimr festival, July 2021.** Here we see Jan Ottar with a slightly disheartened look on his face while having a go at the latest electro tech on which bum notes seemed to thrive for some reason. Apparently, the band was expecting further anomalies as the tech gear had a misfortune involving beer later in the evening. Mats in the middle is busy avoiding eye contact while possibly and unwarily spreading communism through the means of his cheap, noisy, and very red Soviet-manufactured 'Lead Star' guitar. Thomas, on the other hand, is sporting an Adidas sweater and groovy New Balance shoes, properly displaying him as the neat and modern man he is. We should think that he was grateful for playing in front of such a forgiving crowd. Together these chaps were Painted Romans, though a better name would probably have been Mats In The Middle and the Silver Spoons, but this, they say, was "regretfully never on the table".

(Photo courtesy of Nina Beate Holden)

## Here are handy bullet points.

- Wallpaper Silhouettes up to 2006, with Mats, Tony Jacobsen, Jo Henning Dahlø, and Jan Ottar as a live member.
- Went onto the local web forum for musicians in 2002, insulted and infuriated the entire local scene and turned everyone against us, resulting in more than 200 shitpost comments and possibly contributing to the evolution of the nasty social media debate climate we are witnessing in recent times.
- Got a full 2-page feature in one of the biggest national newspapers to promote a petty gig. Cancelled the gig.
- Booked a lighthouse (for free!) in 2005 to record the third WS album. Split up instead and regretted it ever since.
- Painted Romans 2006 to present day, mostly solo, occasionally with others.
- Released albums in 2008 and 2010, then the **Heart** mini-album in 2020. EPs and singles inbetween. But Heart is the best. They all are.
- Working on new music, likely the best so far.
- Feeling like (just) another petty singles group lately, although the best among them.
- Called the first album 'Evil Wigs and Bedroom Moments. 40 rare mins of unsettling Painted Romans' and released it as a digi-physical package involving a fine poster, unique login codes, and multi-format downloads, not unlike the strategy later popularised by Bandcamp. Found that this was causing more confusion than sales in 2008.
- Released the criminally underrated global smash hit (to be) post-punked fleshy compilation album 'Dirt Wages/Slight Hipness. Wholesome Moments from Painted Romans and Beyond (1999-2017)'. Due to madness.
- Looking forward, not backward, and with good reason! (Probably not true).
- See you!

## Notes:

---

*ie. "Terrible bio", "Never heard of 'em, wankers", "What's wrong with communism?", etc.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

This EPK Copyright 2022 Mats Davidsen aka Painted Romans. [www.paintedromans.com](http://www.paintedromans.com)

Write to: [post@paintedromans.com](mailto:post@paintedromans.com)