

 *Nuspirit Helsinki*

*Press Kit through Sept. 2002*



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## Nuspirt Helsinki "S/T"

Nuspirt Helsinki is a multi talented Finnish collective of DJ's, musicians and producers that has ascended to the forefront of the burgeoning European nu-jazz scene on the strength of their peerless singles for Guidance, Jazzanova/Compost, and Ubiquity. Following the groups inception in 1998, founding members Tuomas Kallio, DJ Ender and keyboardist Kasio enlisted a core group of Helsinki's finest singers and players to develop a dynamic 21st century big band sound fusing jazz, funk, soul afro and latin rhythms. After a series of live shows headlining nightclubs and jazz festivals across Europe, the band spent the better part of 2001 in the recording studio and the sweet musical fruits of their labor are captured on their stunning debut long player for Guidance. Smokey live jazz funk arrangements, melodic neo-soul grooves and dark undulating broken beat rhythms are interspersed with subtle electronic undercurrents and rumbling low end frequencies to create a rich musical palate that propels the blue note jazz aesthetic safely into the future. Released in May 2002, Nuspirt's eponymously titled debut album has been in regular rotation on Gilles Peterson's seminal World Wide Radio Program and is receiving maximum support from a host of taste making DJs, including: Jazzanova, Thievery Corporation Norman Jay, Patrik Forge, Kyoto Jazz Massive, Dr. Bob Jones, U.F.O. and many more. The Nuspirt DJ team of Ender, Eppu, and Lil Toni are touring North America and Europe this summer and the full twelve piece band will hit the road this August in support of the album. Nuspirt Helsinki is poised to permanently alter the urban soundscape, so do yourself a favor and sign up for the revolution now! [WWW.NUSPIRIT.COM](http://WWW.NUSPIRIT.COM)

## Praise for Nuspirt Helsinki

**MIXMAG (US)** - "An intensely beautiful and intriguing album!"

**PLASTIKS MAGAZINE (BELGIUM)** - "A release of major beauty, genius and importance!"

**MUZIK MAGAZINE (UK)** - Dr. Bob Jones - "Unmissable, totally unmissable!"

**URB MAGAZINE (US)** - "Subtle rhythms and meticulous arrangements that remind me of why I grew a goatee and bought Mo' Wax singles in the first place! Well crafted songs interspersed with Jamiroquoi-meets-Jazzanova arrangements."

**AMAZON.COM EDITORIAL REVIEW (US)** - Ken Micallef - " This ambitious collective goes where the spirit leads."

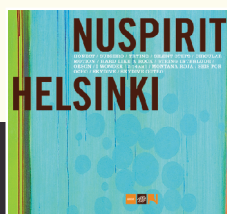
**THE WIRE** - Philip Sherburne (US) - "Finally, a Finnish group free their countrymen from the burden of meteorological determination."

**KLUBLIFE (TORONTO)** - "This is what Timbaland would sound like if he was born in Helsinki."

**BILLBOARD MAGAZINE (US)** - "NSH is well-poised to redefine soul by way of its 21st-century neo-soul/jazz soundscape"

**BBM MAGAZINE** - "An album the word awesome does not even come close to describing"

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And also along the lines of high-end dance music, **DJ Ender of Helsinki Nuspirit** makes a special appearance at the **Funky Buddha Lounge (July 27)**, fresh on the heels of the band's self-titled debut (on Guidance Records). More eclectic than band, the Finnish Helsinki Nuspirit make extremely low-key downtempo dance music, intricately spliced with jazz, dub reggae, soul and funk, and kept together by deceptively complex rhythm patterns. Tracks like "Hard Like a Rock," a reworking of the single by French reggae vocalist Daddy Ous, practically shimmers with a lightly churning roots-reggae beat, insidious dub effects and Ous' plaintive voice wailing both over the top and under the surface. Although Helsinki Nuspirit sounds destined for the chill-out room, there's a cerebral and distinguished element to the music that separates it from the pack.

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## Nuspirit Helsinki

★★★★

Lounge-ready designer jazz perfect for life's more incidental moments

[Guidance] Do they grow these multicultural collectives on trees in Europe or what? This one (from Finland, thank you very much) boasts no less than 15 members. Alongside contemporaries Zero 7, Koop and any number of acts on the Compost label, one must wonder exactly what hell Massive Attack has wrought.

In this case, an especially smooth sashay into what us critical types like to call "nu-jazz," a place where beats are often broken, Jazzanova is godhead and you can dance if you want to. Smoky-voiced femme fatales sing occasionally and there's talk of things like "fusion" and "importance." If you're not careful, you might even find yourself in an establishment where people clap after musicians take solos and people critique your clothes. Sometimes it's enough to make you want to steal your little brother's Andrew W.K. record for relief.

Still, Nuspirit Helsinki found a way to win me over. Maybe it's because the subtle rhythms and meticulous arrangements reminded me of why I grew a goatee and bought Mo Wax singles in the first place. Maybe it's because they intersperse well-crafted songs like "Honest" amongst the Jamiroquai-meets-Jazzanova arrangements. Or maybe it's just difficult for this sort of thing to be bad, considering the innate inoffensiveness of these soothing, dulcet tones. If only they played Nuspirit Helsinki in waiting rooms and grocery stores. Then our entire lives could feel like a layout in Italian *Vogue*, complete with designer soundtracks and Hilton-sisters-gone-wild cameos. Yeah, it could go something like that, really sexy and cool...

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# Nu Spirit Helsinki

Finnish producers putting the 'nu' back into jazz

**T**uomas Malm, one of Nu Spirit Helsinki's collective of five producers and DJs, insists that they don't play jazz. This certainly makes my life a bit more difficult, because jazz is the thing that springs to mind on listening to their beautiful, eponymously titled debut album for Guidance Recordings. And whatever you do, don't mention the word 'nu' anywhere near the word 'jazz' either.

"I'm glad you asked this", says Tuomas, warming to the subject. "Nu jazz is a term I like to avoid. We love many musical genres and we like to combine different elements from all of those. That term to me represents the kind of approach where you sample from old jazz records and combine this with programmed beats. All our themes and such things are composed and arranged by us. We don't play jazz, we play music."

And what music. With up to 20 players included at times, Nu Spirit Helsinki have all the hallmarks of a live band. A big string-soaked sound, lush Afro/Latin percussion, a three-piece horn section,

and guest vocalists. It has real swing, but also a skin tightness, akin to Jazzanova or Cinematic Orchestra, which comes of post-session editing.

"This is something of a Nu Spirit philosophy", says Tuomas. "These days there's not much to discover in production purely based on programming and samples. The next level for us is to find fresh ways of combining electronic elements with live instrumentation."

Mixmaster Morris once said to me that the future of music would be inherited by those that understood both live playing and technology, and Nu Spirit's album will see them take their rightful place of respect alongside artists such as Koop, Jimpster, Jazzanova, Cinematic Orchestra, Fila Brazillia, and Quantic. Artists that are taking the next steps into the increasingly populated area where dance music and songwriting ability meet.

They will also put Finland on the musical map in a way that Koop have with Sweden, and Bugge Wesseltoft and the Jazzland crew have with Norway, uncovering a hitherto largely unacknowl-

edged strong European jazz tradition.

"I think there is a scene evolving at the moment", Tuomas says. "In Scandinavia there has always been a strong jazz scene, and now that tradition is developing into something new and fresh. In Finland we have had our own stars since the '60s and '70s, like Olli Ahvenlahti, Eero Koivisto, and Pekka Streng. There are new things evolving, but it will take time until we can call it a fertile scene with lots of cross Helsinki collaboration. But it is coming."

As are the incredibly literally, but aptly titled Nu Spirit Helsinki. "Initially we didn't know how it would end up", says Tuomas of the album, "but maybe for the first time I am pretty pleased with the music we were able to create. For me, this album is the beginning, the first step towards making music, not just tracks for DJs you know? Inspiring music for people."

Steve Nickolls

Nu Spirit Helsinki is out now on Guidance Recordings



**NU SPIRIT HELSINKI 'Nu Spirit Helsinki' (CD > SCHEMA/GUIDANCE)** *If I am not mistaken this should be the first license obtained by Schema and I must say that the choice is spot on because this album is one of the most lovely things that has come out on this Italian independent label that holds dear this genre. Of the project in question that contains nu jazz and broken beats in their maximum expression I will point out the tracks entitled "Orson" and "Sub Zero".*



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## **v/a NUSPIRIT HELSINKI (GUIDANCE)**

Nuspirit Helsinki is the self-titled debut album of this five-man multi talented Finnish collective of DJ's musicians and producers. This Nordic posse is up there in the forefront of what is now identified as a burgeoning European nu-jazz scene – giving us some sharp off-dance floor beats. Nevertheless, there is more it then that. Here is a rich mix of jazz rhythms, afro/Latin beats, and soulful R&B takes that is in the same class of what we have come to associate with such crews as 4 Hero, Jazzanova. The outfit have been in studio collaboration with an all-star cast of vocalist including Naked Music's diva Lisa Shaw, Nicole Willis and Chicago spoken word artist Chuck Perkins. The fruits of their labour are fully displayed on this stunning debut. Jazz funk grooves are coupled with a mature Jazz aesthetic A soulfully accomplished offering. Sit back and enjoy.(CH)

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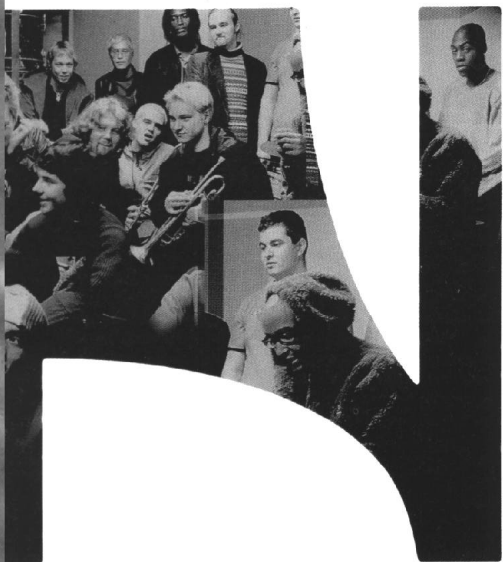
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## Jazz Lads

DANCEFLOOR JAZZ: A BAD IDEA? NOT IN THE HANDS OF NU SPIRIT HELSINKI...

All too often, jazz-house is short-hand for producers who're content with whacking a tired-out bongo trill over the four-four and scattering handfuls of jazz chords about the shop like credibility-seeking confetti. The steady slew of 12s on Guidance and Compost from Finnish collective Nu Spirit Helsinki, however, are as far from the uninspired borrowings of fake jazzers as you can get.

Instead, Thomas K, Eppu, Lil' Tony, Casio and Ender, the core members of the 20-strong Nu Spirit crew, take their inspiration from fusion pioneers of the past, melting down the dusty vinyl of jazz history and repressing it as

distinctive, downtempo almost-house grooves.

"It's not house that we make, it's kind of dancefloor jazz," says Eppu. "In the beginning, we were working within house. Now most of us are not that much into house music anymore."

"We're a lot more open-minded now," adds Thomas K, "because we trust ourselves to be able to make things outside that. So many artists out there are approaching music in a similar way, so in terms of the sound itself we are trying to be different with a live feel and being a bit more organic - that is important for us, as a way to differentiate

our music from others."

As well as crafting a live sound in the studio, Nu Spirit Helsinki take their show on the road. "There are two separate sides," Thomas K continues. "We have the live shows, and that's something we want to emphasise, but it's not a band, it's a collective of people who are all doing different things and come together to make music - there are so many jazz musicians working here in Helsinki that it's hard for us not to use them!"

**Jack Mottram**

*A single, 'Montana Roha Jazz', is out now on Compost*

## SINGLED OUT

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**Artist:** NUSPIRIT HELSINKI

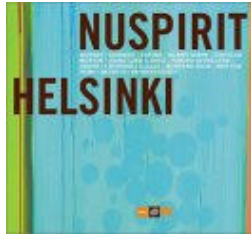
**Title:** SELF TITLED

**Label:** Guidance Records

**Link:** <http://www.33rpm.com>

**Root:** Finland/ Acid Jazz-Downtempo

It's all back to the basics with this 14 piece band comprised of DJ's, Jazz musicians, soul singers and MC's, getting busy resuscitating the funky vibes of the *Brand New Heavies* and the *Groove Collective*. More moody and beat conscious than the original, the acid jazz of **Nuspirit Helsinki** inspires conformable furniture, dimmed lights and intimate encounters. Muted trumpets and baritone saxes rule with cool under the soulful vocals of Brooklyn born **Nicole Willis** (aka mrs *Jimmy Tenor*), **Lisa Shaw** (here under namesake **Mercury**), acclaimed Chicago spoken word artist **Chuck Perkins** and Nuspirit's own **Ona Kamu**. Not retro by any means, the luscious production avoids the trappings of the current broken beat trend and would rather echo a not so distant past with a classic Jazz root, a downtempo feel and a neo soul sensibility. An afterhours high note that loves to be played low, the album exhudes the warmth and coziness of a smoky jazz club.



NUSPIRIT HELSINKI  
Nuspirit Helsinki

NUSPIRIT HELSINKI - Nuspirit Helsinki  
Guidance Recordings  
By Adam Douglas

I've never been much of a jazz head. Even the likes of Jazzanova and (dare I say it?) Kruder and Dorfmeister have left me somewhat cold. I'm a 21st-Century Boy to the core and I demand that my music be electronic. I'm exaggerating, of course, but there is a kernel of truth there. Music is just more exciting when it's bleeping and blooping rather than blatting and scattng. Nuspirit Helsinki, a collective of Finnish musicians, DJs, and producers, like it when it's all happening at the same time.

Blending traditional jazz instrumentation and soulful vocals with laptop production may seem like yet another unsuccessful glitch melding of styles, but this is no Kid606 affair. Rather, Nuspirit Helsinki rides the nu-jazz/broken beat/whatever-it's-called-this-week style of slick, zeitgeisty production while always -- and this is the key -- underpinning everything with emotionally powerful tunes. This combination works unbelievably, heart-achingly well.

"Honest" kicks off the album and it's a good indicator of what's to be found within. Smoky horns, '70s soul strings, and a slightly off-kilter beat provide the bed in which vocalist Nicole Willis lays her gorgeous song. "Trying" ups the BPM factor into near 2-step territory but never gets as jiggy as that genre is know to. Elsewhere, "Circular Motion" provides instrumental evidence that the fluegelhorn can be just as cool as the saxophone. Did I just say that?

Nuspirit Helsinki is definitely at the forefront of something special, this cross pollination of styles and sonic textures. It's an infectious and moving mixture that rarely fails to please and, I'm pleased to say, may win over a few laptop converts in the process.

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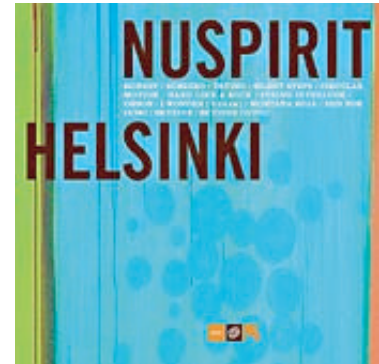
## **Nuspirit Helsinki : Nuspirit Helsinki**

Guidance, Compost, and Ubiquity -- the leading labels in the nu jazz/broken beat world community -- have all featured singles by Finnish DJ/production/musician collective Nuspirit Helsinki. The kind of spirit that the four-man corps of Nuspirit Helsinki and its multicultural compatriots conjure should then come as no surprise. For anyone hip to the Afrobeat/Latin rhythms that influence European nu jazz acts from to to , the spirit's really not all that nu. But nu or not, this Finnish group's playing is spirited.

Jazzanova Beanfield St. Germain Nuspirit Helsinki's Finnish fusion is detailed with elastic bass, round, rolling keys, and tightly wound strings as soft as fine fabric. The entire album is draped with breezy live band/brass arrangements over programmed beats that can hold solid or skitter like a tap dancer on ice, yet never feel rigid. Smokey chanteuses Nicole Willis, Ona Kamu, and Lisa Shaw (of Naked Music fame) add to an album that will attract fans of acid jazz, Afrobeat, and deep house. The Scandinavians always have been technologically advanced, and now they're producing the urban music of the future without sounding synthetic. Regardless of what the weather's really like in Finland, put on Nuspirit Helsinki and the feeling is always warm and sunny.

Tony Ware

CDNOW Contributing Writer





# all about jazz

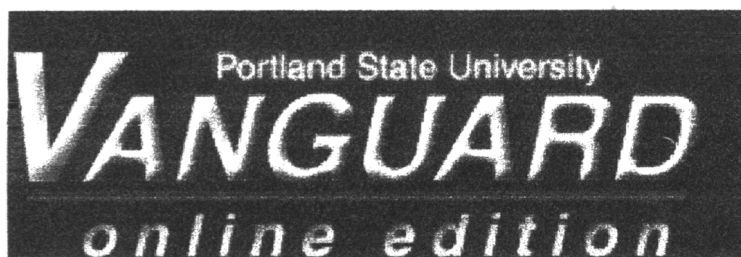
## S/T

Nuspirit Helsinki | Guidance

With any luck, this album will receive the kind of acclaim that releases from the likes of Zero 7 and 4Hero have. While it combines ingredients already well-used – soul, jazz, broken beat and more, the collective has added their own magic, making this album original-sounding and accomplished. Nuspirit Helsinki is a multicultural collective of Finnish DJs, musicians and producers. Since 1998 the group's founding members have steadily recruited an assembly of talent that play their concoctions live. Far from abstract experimentalism, Nuspirit create solid song structures, are sublimely melodic and effortlessly blend soulful vocals with jazz, funk and electronica for a completely organic sound. This is their debut album and displays how remarkably all the elements have gelled. "Subzero" is an evocative, jazz toned track perfect for setting suns and a wistful mind. A seductive haze of horns blanket a briskly fluttering beat, and simmer with atmospheric keys creating a subtle mood. "Silent Steps" moves into the realms of funk with a hip-hop-ish beat, a Rhodes organ and funky horns for attitude. These days, genres are as easily intermingled as records are sampled and beats cut and paste, but Nuspirit create organic tracks with production that is rich in depth and sonic variety. This one should have some longevity in your player.

~ Lucy Beer

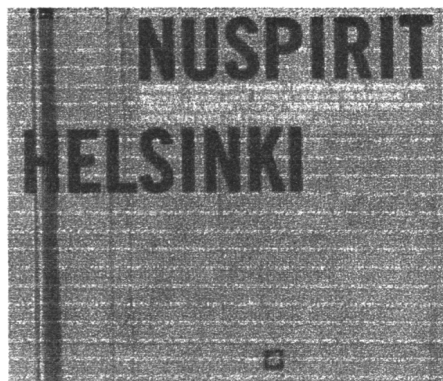
[http://www.allaboutjazz.com/reviews/r0502\\_110.htm](http://www.allaboutjazz.com/reviews/r0502_110.htm)



## Nu releases for nu dancefloors

Kai Hsing  
May 31, 2002

**Nuspirit Helsinki**  
*Nuspirit Helsinki*  
Guidance Recordings



Guidance's motto is "music is our spiritual guide through life," and if they continue with albums like this, they could definitely fill that role well. Nuspirit Helsinki's debut album is a smooth blend of nu-jazz that finds them in a slightly different mood than before, but is still a great-sounding release that harkens back more to the early '90s acid jazz renaissance than the broken beats of recent releases.

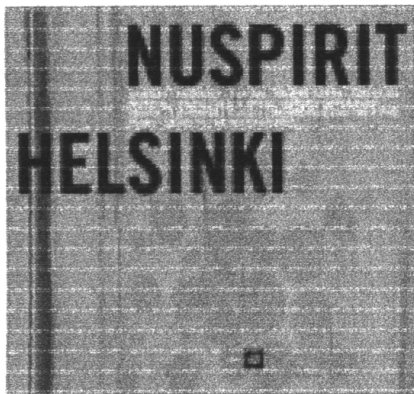
Who ever thought Finns could be so musically down? This funk-jazz collective not only includes its core based in Helsinki, but also Americans such as vocalists Nicole Willis and Chuck Perkins, who add a distinctive flavor to the mix, though sometimes one wishes we could do without Americans on an album for once.

The jazz dancefloor is still as open as ever with the breakbeat-driven "Trying," the spiritual "Orson" with its varied percussion, and the more upbeat "Skydive," but it's the quieter moments that are the most rewarding on this record. The opener "Honest" is jazz vocals with some of its best expression, and "Hard As A Rock" uses minimal but sweeping dub productions and gentle vocals.

With tracks like "Subzero" and others the comparisons are inevitable between Nuspirit and Berlin's Jazzanova, and while they share many similarities and have collaborated, Nuspirit's sound as a whole is definitely a lot less manic and eclectic. Tracks like "Circular Motion," "Silent Steps," and "I Wonder (2:14 AM)" (featuring Perkins) have a smoky downhome effect that makes you wonder what's going down in Helsinki. Nuspirit even gets Brazilian with "Seis Por Ocho" that compares with the best '70s jazz-funk, and feels almost appropriate, as Nuspirit attempts to uniquely meld sounds both past and present.

<http://www.dailyvanguard.com/vnews/display.v/ART/2002/05/31/3cf797461577a>

amazon.com.



## **Nuspirit Helsinki**

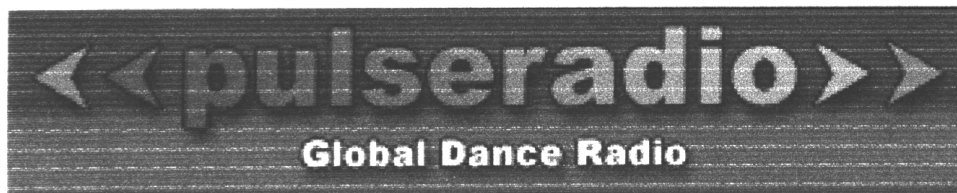
### **Nuspirit Helsinki**

#### **Editorial Reviews**

**Amazon.com**

Recalling the thriller soundtracks of Lalo Schifrin and the atmospheric jazz of Miles Davis and Weather Report, Finnish collective Nuspirit Helsinki create organic nu-jazz, in which electronica becomes something greater than simple dance-floor dynamics. Like Germany's Koop and Jazzanova, the collective sprinkles elastic jazz rhythms throughout their detailed arrangements, with orchestral strings, biting brass, and percussion adding luster, and bluster. With an emphasis on live instrumentation, NH occasionally evoke the interstellar punk jazz of Jaco Pastorius's Word of Mouth big band. But NH is also alternately funky and danceable, balancing their spitfire jazz with smooth, Crusaders-style urban soul and surreal sound pastiches. Various vocalists appear, including Brooklyn soul kitten Nicole Willis, Chicago spoken word artist Chuck Perkins, and a robotic scat singer, but NH is too broadminded to be tied down to a single esthetic. This ambitious collective goes where the spirit leads. --*Ken Micallef*

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B0000645LF/qid%3D1022184490/ref%3Dsr%5F11%5F0%5F1/103-5395302-9023813>



## **Nuspirit Helsinki - Nuspirit Helsinki**

**Label:** Guidance  
**Genre:** Downtempo/Nu-Jazz  
**Rating:** 4 - Must Have!!!

### **Review :**

Coming in from the cold, Finland's Nuspirit Helsinki have released a nu-jazz gem that propels them to the forefront of the dance music community. Nuspirit Helsinki's remixes and singles on prominent labels such as Jazzanova-Compost, and Ubiquity have drawn high praise from the Downbeat elite. Combining soul, jazz, funk, dub, and a blend of big band, this Finnish collective have released their first full-length album on Chicago based Guidance Recordings. Well known for putting out high quality House, Dub, World, and Downbeat compilations, Guidance has definitely struck gold with the signing of Nuspirit Helsinki.

Founding members Tuomas Kallio and Hannu Nieminen formed the group in '98 while drawing from the talent pool in Helsinki to add the right flavor required to produce this eclectic array of music. Spending a great part of 2001 working on this album, the guest vocalists who have contributed to this release include: NYC based Nicole Willis, Chicago spoken-word artist Chuck Perkins, and Finland's own Ona Kamu.

Having up to 15 multicultural members contribute to an album is truly amazing. You can tell right away that this album was recorded with lots of emotion. It has a sense of "freestyle" that almost sounds as if they amassed a group of artists together in a room, pressed the "record" button and came out with an amazing blend of live strings, horns, drums, and vocals.

"Trying", an uptempo tune featuring the female vocalist Mercury, is coupled with a minimal bassline, organ, and percussions combo that works exceptionally well. "Circular Motion", easily one of the highlights of the CD, has a nu-breaks drum pattern that gets you head nodding from the start. A smoky saxophone, and relentless guitar/organ weave in and out of the track creating the right atmospheric appeal. Also out on a 12" single, "Hard Like a Rock", Ghanian Daddy Ous's plea for liberation, is a Dub-inspired journey aimed at the wicked "system". Check "Orson" for some "worldly" percussion work, and the nu-jazz tune "Seis Por Ocho" to round out this eclectic broken beat release.

Every time I listen to this CD I hear something I hadn't picked up the last time. If you are open-minded enough to explore the jazz/funk/dub/soul arena, then this CD will stay in your player for a long time. It almost seems impossible to have them duplicate the tracks in a live performance, but astonishingly they have plans for a full US tour sometime this summer from Helsinki with love.

### **Highlight Tracks :**

3. Trying
5. Circular Motion
6. Hard Like a Rock
8. Orson
11. Seis Por Ocho

**Author :** Rob Roy

<http://pulseradio.net/musicreviews/showmusicreview.php3?cdid=107>



## Nu Spirit Helsinki

Finnish Jazz Hi-Fi

Despite being overshadowed by their techno-happy Swedish neighbors, Finland has long played home to a small but incredibly talented group of heavy hitting electronic musicians, most notably experimental wizards Jimi Tenor, Pan Sonic and Mika Vaino, house warrior Jori Hulkkonen, and electro titan Mr. Velcro Fastener. Surprisingly, however, way up north, one of the world's premier Afro/Cuban jazz meets electronic acts, Nu Spirit Helsinki, calls the far-from-tropical Finnish city Helsinki home.

The at times 15-member group first gained attention by unleashing a number of devastating 12"s for Guidance Records ("Take It Back," "Makoomba Breaks," "Afro-Cuban Sunshine") and Jazzanova Compost Records ("Montana Roha Jazz EP"). Their sound perfectly captured the new direction of the prodigious Chicago house label. In a recent interview with Nu Spirit Helsinki's Tuomas Kallio, he described the relationship with Guidance: "When they first offered us an agreement, we hadn't released anything, so it was a good start, a beginning for us to try to produce music. I think at the beginning, the early 12"s fell within the style that they wanted to put out at that time. They had been doing deep house, which in the beginning was really good, but that scene lost its innovation or creativity at some point. I think they wanted to do something else for a change, but now, it's a slightly different situation."

The group's change in direction stemmed from a

particularly the so-called nu-jazz scene. Tuomas elaborated, "Our future productions will see us move further away from the electronic dance floor scene. We don't want to be part of any scene, especially the nu-jazz scene. We just want to make good music. We are trying to create good songs and approach the club scene from a remix point of view. We can always get songs remixed by the very best in the different scenes."

So if the group intends to steer clear of nu-jazz, what, then, should we expect from the collective? "Our approach will definitely not be close to traditional jazz. I'm not even sure if jazz has a lot to do with the music we create. Maybe as an inspiration, an admiration towards the modern (50s-70s) jazz heroes, but I think what we're dealing with is more or less a fusion of soul/jazz/R&B/whatever produced in a post-modern way."

Regardless of how you describe them, Nu Spirit Helsinki have managed to combine all the best elements of jazzy house, soul, the Philadelphia sound, broken beats and more to create one darling of an unclassifiable yet incredibly sexy record.

- Craig Kapilow

**Nu Spirit Helsinki's self-titled album is out now on Guidance Records.**

ARTS WEEKLY JUNE 19, 2002 [www.theaquarian.com](http://www.theaquarian.com)

# NUSPIRIT HELSINKI

## Smooth & Cool

by Chris Uhl

Like a shot of chilled Finlandia Cranberry, Finnish live jazz and DJ collective Nuspirit Helsinki entice with a smooth subtlety, but also with an intoxicating allure that'll have you calling for more. Formed in '98 mainly as a house vehicle for producer/founder Thomas K (Tuomas Kallio) and DJ Ender (Hannu Niemenen), with the influence of keyboardist/DJ Kasio (of Helsinki's Giant Robot Posse), musician-cum-Paris spinner DJ Eppu and influential Helsinki club sojourner DJ Lil' Tony, Nuspirit Helsinki quickly grew into an abundantly talented nu-jazz collective with a 15-member head count.

Their arresting self-titled Guidance Recordings debut represents everything vital about Europe's genre flipping multiculturalism. Miles beyond our stale stateside fixation with matching the metal to the hip-hop, Nuspirit Helsinki diversity things to global extremes. Live Latin and African jazz rhythms, hip-hop rhyming via Chicago spoken word artist Chuck Perkins and the sultry soul inflections of Brooklyn chanteuse Nicole Willis (wife of Finnish lounge/fusion sensation Jimi Tenor), coalesce in a seamless fusion of Zero 7's chilled atmospherics and The Brand New Heavies' classic jazz mastery.

It's a diffuse rainbow of cultural influences where unique expression and creativity—the bloodline of true art—flourishes. And I met up with founders Thomas K and DJ Ender one cool Spring NYC afternoon to find out how it all came about.

**Judging from your previous singles predominated by U.K. garage, break-beat, two-step, how did this new heavy jazz sound come about for the LP?**

TK: Yeah it was just more of a house thing in the beginning. But we felt like we'd like to incorporate some live instrumentation into it. So we had some friends we just asked to—it was one of those classic things where we'd play the track and just say, 'Alright, just play something.' The rest of the core group, like the keyboard player Kasio, who co-wrote most of the tracks with me, knows practically every musician in the Helsinki scene, so it started getting a bit more professional. The musicians we were able to use were like the very best you could find in the whole country. In the Finnish music scene, the jazz scene has been pretty fertile for a good few years.

**But the jazz scene seems so far removed from the house scene.**

TK: Yeah, kind of. It started moving from doing tracks, doing 12 inches to us doing music and that's basically where I'm coming from at the moment. To be honest I'm a bit tired of this CD-R playlist culture, music as this disposable item. This idea of music being like, if it's new, it's good, if it's two weeks old, it's bad. So I don't know, I'm pretty tired of that.

I hope the album we did is to some extent timeless, ageless.

**Is that what you set out to do?**



NUSPIRIT HELSINKI.

TK: We didn't set out to do anything. The way the album shaped up was more like this modern approach, 'Okay let's use multiple guests, guests vocalists and stuff.' And then we'd think of different kinds of vocalists and then doing tracks for their needs, or to tailor it to their skills. Almost all of the tracks ended up there. It was pretty chaotic of course, but we were able to do it.

**Conceptually the record has the feel of a big band ethos, a collective with many different elements coming together. Was that the spirit behind it?**

TK: We tried keeping it as far from the classic conception of a band as possible. I think it's restrict-

ing your creativity as a band enormously.

Having this guy in the band play accordion and you have to have him in your track because he's playing, he's your accordion player. Okay, stupid example—but I think it's better to handle music as music. Then, if you need a trumpet, you call a trumpet player.

The collective with a live band that performs with a DJ isn't particularly new, but we're just trying to make it as consistent as possible throughout a whole album or show. We're just trying to keep it in some way unique something that no one else has done.

## DANCE/ELECTRONIC

## Guidance Introduces Nuspirit

BY CRAIG ROSEBERRY

Finnish collective Nuspirit Helsinki is on a mission to recapture the spirit of adventure and discovery encapsulated by the innovative “birth of cool” era in American jazz—particularly the works of vanguards Miles Davis, Art Blakely, and John Coltrane—but with a twist.

The group’s musical landscape borrows from a wealth of influences, ranging from bossa nova and samba to Afro-beat and broken-beat. Additionally, Helsinki Nuspirit draws inspiration from Helsinki’s thriving and eclectic club scene, which is firmly rooted in deep house, Detroit techno, dub, classic Philly soul, ’60’s Blue Note-era jazz, and stirring left-field electronic music.

On July 16 (one day earlier overseas), Chicago’s Guidance Recordings issues the act’s eponymous full-length debut. *Nuspirit Helsinki* is well-poised to redefine Northern soul by way of its 21st-century neo-soul/jazz soundscape.

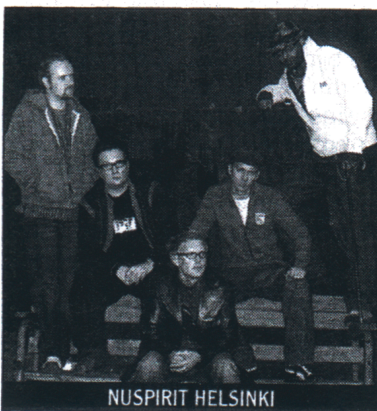
## A MELTING POT OF INFLUENCES

Comprising core members Toumas Kallio, Hannu Nieminen (aka DJ Ender), DJ Eppu (aka Eppu Helle), DJ/musician Kim Rantala (aka Kasio), and Toni Rantanen (aka DJ Lil’ Tony), the multi-cultural, big-band-styled outfit is rounded out by 11 additional musicians and vocalists, including Ethiopian percussionist Abdissa “Mamba” Assefa, Gambian singer Daddy Ous, and resident songstress Ona Kamu.

The dynamic *Nuspirit Helsinki* also features vocal contributions from clubland chanteuse Lisa Shaw (the nu-soul abstraction “Trying”) and former Repercussions front-woman Nicole Willis (the jazz-inflected “Honest”).

“Our main intention and focus with creating this album was to approach it from a band perspective,” ringleader

Kallio explains. “Our sound is a huge melting pot of influences that gets absorbed and reincarnated. Since we are such a large group with cultural and musical diversity, our main aim is to build something that is unique, cohesive, and evocative—something that feels right.”



Nuspirit Helsinki, whose songs are published by 33RPM (ASCAP), made its initial splash in 1999 with the Guidance single “Take It Back.” This was followed by “Makoomba Breaks”/“Afro-Cuban Sunshine” and the *Montana Roha Jazz EP* on Germany’s Jazzanova Compost Recordings. Such forward-thinking sonic mosaics were embraced by an international cross section of electronic and world music fans.

Already, *Nuspirit Helsinki* has garnered tremendous early support from many influential global tastemakers, including BBC Radio One DJ Gilles Peterson, Norman Jay, Thievery Corporation, U.F.O., Jazzanova, and LTJ Bukem.

“Nuspirit is bad—and I mean that in a very good way,” Bukem notes. “I’ve been playing [album tracks] ‘Honest’ and ‘Subzero’ for a while now. They’re instant classics.”

According to Guidance co-founder Ivan Pavlovich, the label will service the disc to college radio and special-

ty shows and club DJs. The label is also investigating film, TV, and advertising possibilities.

“College radio and strong DJ support has been the solid grassroots foundation of this project,” Pavlovich says. “It’s really important to give the collective as much exposure as possible. It would be ideal to have the entire band tour, but that’s not feasible at the present time, [therefore], we’re focusing on an array of mediums to highlight the group, including the Internet.” Pavlovich acknowledges that the label works closely with subscription service eMusic.com, which will soon offer the album for download.

Pavlovich says, “We’ve also been quite successful with getting our music exposed on TV shows like *Six Feet Under*, as well as in independent films, so that has become a major priority, too, for us with this album.”

At the same time, Guidance is instituting an aggressive 12”-vinyl campaign: a limited-edition full-length triple-pack set and remixes of album tracks “Trying” (mixed by Axus, Butti49, and Capoeira Twins), “Oscar” (mixed by Peshay and Circular Motion by Projections), “Honest” (mixed by Jazzanova and Only Child), and “Skydive” (mixed by Psycho on the Bus). The remixes will surface throughout the coming months.

In early May, Kallio and Nieminen embarked on a mini-DJ tour, making stops in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Later in the summer, Nieminen will resume Nuspirit Helsinki’s select tour dates as the opening act on Dego of 4-hero’s Giant Step-sponsored tour.

The self-managed Nuspirit Helsinki is booked in North America by Jason Sugars of Los Angeles-based Indepth Perception. In Europe, the collective is handled by several agents, including Martin Boragno of Barcelona-based Minifunk Booking.



**skoop**  
ARTIST PROFILES



**SPIRITS RISE**  
NU SPIRIT HELSINKI UP THE ANTE

Nu Spirit Helsinki are breathing a lot easier these days, and for very good reason. The long and arduous process of releasing their debut full-length is over and the fruits are divine. After a long wait their public can finally be treated to a fully realized vision and sound that encompasses jazz, R&B, latin and electronica. But like anything that transcends expectations, the record didn't come easy as founding member producer Tuomas Kallio tells. Sitting in the lobby of the posh SoHo Grand Hotel with co-founder DJ Ender he seems bemused at the whole process of putting together a recording of such breadth. "It took a lot of time and it wasn't easy, at least for me. There was a lot of things we had to do twice, like the mastering. There were a lot of challenges. There were things that didn't go right the first time," he says. 🗨️

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## PROFILE



## NU SPIRIT HELSINKI DROP A GEM



Nu Spirit Helsinki's cofounders  
Tuomas Kallio and DJ Ender

Of course, this is par for the course in the music industry. But for something that started out as a little fun on the side, Nu Spirit Helsinki has blossomed into a serious affair. In their three year existence, the Finnish collective of musicians, DJs, vocalists and producers have become leading members of Europe's 'nu jazz' school, resting comfortably alongside their compatriots in the scene. Getting to this level has been a growing experience. "We started out with a nice hobby, but now it's more serious. The professional level was very different then. We just asked friends to play on a track we did. Which is nice, but it's not like doing songs that are on the album. But it was a good start, it was pretty fun. It's not that fun anymore," says Kallio.

Working with over a dozen musicians and vocalists across the globe doesn't make for an easy project, as Kallio will attest. "Well, the process of producing this album was really sort of chaotic. Just trying to come up with tracks. Basically, it was pretty much influenced by the contributors: the guest musicians and the guest vocalists. We sort of tried to come up with a track which fits into their style," he said. The group's toils don't go unappreciated. The debut CD, on Chicago's Guidance records, is a sublime tapestry of mood, substance and rich musicianship. It's a milestone in the fusion of jazz with urban sensibilities and will serve as a roadmap for the future. With contributions from leading Finnish musicians and a range of vocalists and poets Nu Spirit Helsinki have bridged genres and continents.

And Kallio is very pleased with the results. "For me it's a CD. It's something you listen to. It's for the audience, it's for the people. I just wanted it to sound as good as possible so it was maybe the best studio you can find in Finland where we mixed the album. We have a studio where we recorded most of the stuff but we went to a really top studio to mix. In terms of influences on the album, the way it sounds the influences are more in the US for us. The Philly sound and the roots R&B like D'Angelo and so forth. The sound is something that I really love. The techniques, using analogue tape is very different from this electronica in Europe."

It's a long way from their first 12" recording, the deep house favorite 'Take it Back', which breathed some fresh air on dancefloors worldwide in 1999. That was followed up by the afro-beat and Latin groove of 'Makoomba Breaks' and an EP, 'Montana Roha Jazz', that furthered their credibility as jazz artists schooled in the clubscene. For those seeking the floor-raising rhythm workouts of those singles the CD may come as a surprise. Things have been toned down considerably on the full-length with a much more polished, modal-jazz-meets-urban-flavor permeating. Think Miles Davis' 'Kind of Blue' or the atmospheric jazz of Weather Report and Lalo Schifrin set to a modern tone and one gets the idea of the turf they're treading.

Considering the well-developed Helsinki jazz scene and the fact that Nu Spirit Helsinki members include some of the country's top jazz musicians it's no wonder they've come up with something great. "I think the thing that makes this unique is the quality of musicianship we had access to," says Kallio. "There's not many electronica artists that can work with such a level of musicians. Like Teppo Mäkynen our drummer and Jukka Eskola our trumpeter: they are the number one guys in the whole country," he says.

It's this unheralded musicianship that distinguishes Nu Spirit Helsinki. You can wax all you want about electronics replacing instruments but it'd be a near-impossible challenge to meet the quality of this

recording with beats, loops and samples. "We have collected many different people and everybody brought some influence," explains Kallio. "We wanted to do something unique. I have a musician background so for me it is important to be able to play the music live. The situation is so unique; it's a great feeling when it works."

If Nu Spirit Helsinki were simply another live jazz outfit there wouldn't be all that much to get excited about. It's by blending that live element with a big nod to DJ culture that the group have distinguished themselves. There's a strong DJ vibe present in their music without being derivative, i.e. house oriented. And while Kallio represents the more schooled side of the collective, cofounder Hannui Nieman (DJ Ender) represents the club side. With DJing roots that span the history of club culture as we know it, Nieman has contributed to both the Helsinki underground scene and the collective. He founded the city's legendary Club Deep, and his tastes in funk, jazz and Latin music have played a big part in shaping the Nu Spirit sound. Nieman is one of Helsinki's most prolific DJs, with residency at Kerma and regular gigs across Europe.

Three other DJs round out the collective's core team—Lil' Tony, Eppu and Kasio. "We have a sort of music Mafia under our control," says Nieman. "Two of our guys are running clubs there. They're the main clubs for eclectic dance music. Lil' Tony's place, Soda, is quite a place. Everyone knows it and for that kind of music you don't see such a fancy club in Europe. In London you get the very fancy places for the mainstream but for this kind of music it's more like smaller joints." It's this club network that keep Nu Spirit Collective attached to the rest of Europe's scene and give them a base. "It's really important for us to have this home," say Nieman.

Their other home is their Chicago-based label, Guidance records, a leading purveyor of new urban music. Nu Spirit's relationship with Guidance has been long-standing and fruitful. And, aspiring musicians take note, it all started with a demo. "We just sent out some demos of the house stuff we started with. And Nigel Hayes, the UK based DJ sent some to Guidance. It was actually the first label that wanted to sign us and they offered right away, 'let's do some singles and an album,'" says Kallio. And thus was born a fruitful relationship we can all be thankful for.

Official website: [nuspirit.com](http://nuspirit.com)

Guidance Records: [33rpm.com](http://33rpm.com)



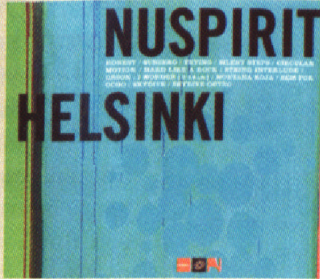
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## NUSPIRIT HELSINKI *Nuspirit Helsinki* (Guidance)



**FINNISH** collective Nuspirit Helsinki, centered around the trio of Tuomas Kallio, DJ Ender and Kasio, has developed a solid following based on their well-received releases on Guidance, Jazzanova/Compost and Ubiquity. Nuspirit Helsinki's eponymous debut full-length, finds the outfit collaborating extensively with a wide range of talents. Included among these are Brooklyn's Nicole Willis, Chicago's Chuck Perkins, their own resident vocalist Ona Kamu, plus a multitude of traditional musicians. Each brings their own unique brand of new soul to the mix—one with lazy, sultry torch singing, another with 21st century poetry, the next with pure jazz sensibility. With nods to understated funk, some Latin brushstrokes and the odd Afro rhythm, the entire project is based on soulful jazz that fuses modern studio technology with old school big-band ethics. *Nuspirit Helsinki* finds its place comfortably within the broad-minded nu-jazz crew. **LILY MOAYERI**

**For fans of:** St. Germain, Jazzanova

**Essential tunes:** "Honest," "Orson," "Skydive"

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# PLASTIKS55



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**Nuspirit Helsinki, a Finnish deejay, producer and musician collective. With remixes of Freestyle Man, Nicola Conte & Victor Davis, twelves for Guidance ('Take It Back', 'Colors Of My Mind', 'Change', 'Makoomba Breaks' and 'Afro-Cuban Sunshine' on 'Mundial Muzique'), for Jazzanova Compost (the 'Montana Roja Jazz' EP) and Ubiquity (their 'Diana Park Nights' contribution to the second volume of 'The New Latinaires') under their belt, their warm, undefinable blend of jazz, funk, soul, Afro, Latin, hip hop, soul, broken beat, 2step and d&b has made this 12-piece the darlings of the European nu jazz mafia.**

PLASTIKS55 THE NEW DIMENSIONS OF MUSIC

With their debut album ready for a world-wide release, Nuspirit Helsinki is set for the so-called 'bigger things'. The project – Tuomas refuses to speak of a band – was conceived in 1998 by founding members Tuomas Kallio and Hannu 'DJ Ender' Nieman. As the project grew, the duo was joined by Kim 'Kasio' Rantala, Toni 'Lil' Tony' Rantanen and DJ Eppu Helle, all key figures in the Finnish club scene. On a mission to fuse live organic instrumentation with warm, dubby electronic textures, they enlisted a core group of Helsinki's finest musicians. Together they produce complex music that sounds simple and can be enjoyed both on and off the dance floor, from smoky live jazz funk arrangements to melodic modern soul grooves with dark undulating broken beat rhythms. These guys are more than just good; they are the future, and the world's gonna hear it. Remember where you read it first.

I heard from our number one train spotter Philharmonix that 2 months ago, no one knew on which label you were going to release the debut.

Tuomas Kallio: 'Our deal with Guidance included a full album, so there never was any doubt. Plus, they gave us the opportunity to come out with our stuff 3 years ago. It's not a coincidence that we're on a label whose philosophy is 'music is our spiritual guide through life'. They went out of their way to give us what we needed. This kind of record isn't cheap to produce. We recorded the material in 5 different studios,

Tuomas: 'Some people say that we've got more of an American sound.'

That's bullshit. You incorporate just about anything into your music. What sounds American can be put in a little jar and labelled. NSH is impossible to define. If anything, you could call 'Nu' nu jazz, but that's another term that's just too easy and simple for the stuff you've made.

Tuomas: 'I'm glad you say this, because 'nu jazz' is a term I like to avoid. I love many musical genres and I like to combine their different elements, and jazz is just one of them. When you say 'nu jazz' it sounds as if we just stole something old, and made it new, and that's not what we do. Besides, we wanted to make a real coherent, yet varied album, with different moods and especially tempos that keep the attention. We don't play jazz, we play music.'

You share a lot of musicians with Jimi Tenor – even his wife –, and you did a great remix (of 'Que Domingo') for his Freestyle Man collaboration a while back. Are you just good colleagues, or friends, and are there any plans for further collaborations?

Tuomas: 'Jimi, well... We're sort of in-between friends and colleagues. I spent some time with him and Nicole last summer, when I was staying at his place with my girlfriend, but we don't have that much contact in general. The musicians we do share though, they're our communicators. Jukka

obvious Afro beat or broken beat references that some people might have expected.

Tuomas: 'Exactly. It's a cd, a format that creates different expectations than the twelves. Of course there will be a vinyl version, but we aimed for songs you can just listen to, something that demands your attention when you play it at a lower volume. There's a bunch of remixes though, that will hopefully bring the music to the clubs as well. Jazzanova, Peshay and Only Child have already agreed to do one, and we're negotiating with an American hip hop producer I can't name just yet, with (Norwegian producer, AM) Butti 49, someone from the West London guys and then a couple of house producers, to bring our stuff to the bigger floors, you know. The aim is to get the whole eclectic range, all the styles we love. And if we get enough quality, we can maybe do a whole remix album.'

Who is Tomi Malm, the man who wrote all the string arrangements? I'd never heard of him, but he's extremely gifted.

Tuomas: 'I know. He found the right angle for both the slower, more moody tracks and the more upbeat compositions. Tomi's a composer for movies and documentaries. We came in touch with him when we were asked by JCR to do a remix of 'Orson', a track by a band called Hubbardmen. Eventually the record company didn't need the remix – well, I think they didn't have the money. We loved the string arrangements on the track so much we wanted to do our own version, which was okay for them, so we went ahead and did so. We got into contact with Tomi, and told him about our album project and he agreed.'

I saw by his email address that Hannu works for Finnair. Do you all have what I would call 'double identities'?

Tuomas: 'The musicians are all professionals, as is our keyboard player Kasio, who co-wrote most of the tracks. He's also a club owner. As for me, I work for a new media agency, for Nokia.'

(Moses)



Forget Korva Pustis

## NUSPIRIT HELSINKI

hired a string section... We got the time and the budget to get it done the way we wanted.'

It seems that the most interesting musical developments of late are in the hands of teams of people that come together from different musical backgrounds, be it producing, playing an instrument or deejaying. Crews like the Spiritual Life/Body & Soul posse, Bugz in the Attic or Jazzanova with Sonar Kollektiv and you seem to be the ones who are strong and stubborn enough to break through to the mainstream with innovative and uncompromising music.

Tuomas: 'You're right. I can only speak for myself, but what NSH is trying to do is to work outside of the established commercial structures. Just look at our name, we're not in it for the money, man.'

Do you still see your activities as part of a bigger musical movement?

(Eskola, trumpet player, AM) and Jay (Kortehisto, trombone, AM) are very talented, especially Jukka.'

Man, I saw them with Jimi on tour, as his mini horn section, in the doctor's coats... It was absolutely hilarious. Do you also have a funny live show?

Tuomas: '(laughing) No, there are already too many humorous bands in Finland already. (One more example: Tommy Lindgren, who sings on 'Skydive', is member of the Don Johnson Big Band, AM) We're more serious.'

In the credit section Lisa Shaw referred to as Mercury. Did Naked object?

Tuomas: 'Yep, record label politics.'

There's no real dance floor-oriented material, not even 'tracks', on the album – with maybe the exception of 'Circular Motion'. You've written real songs, without the too

I'd recommend you don't get too attached to your day job. What's up next, are you going to tour in the full live setting?

Tuomas: 'Yes, well there is a bit of a problem in that field. We're going to tour the United States, but since Nicole has just had her baby, she obviously can't come with us. And Ona (Kamu) – this is really very stupid, but – she can't come, because she's not black. Americans wouldn't accept the kind of music we make, and the way she's singing, from a bunch of white Scandinavians. So we're in a bit of a problematic situation there, but we'll figure it out. We should be playing some festivals this summer, too.'

Last question: would you ever make a song about korva pustis? (thee Finnish cookie)

Tuomas: '(laughs) I think you'd better ask Jimi that one.'

'Nu' is out on Guidance, and is distributed by News.

# CHASER



## N | Nuspirit Helsinki

**The story of the Finnish collective** Nuspirit Helsinki begins in earnest with Nigel Hayes of Chicago-based Guidance Recordings (aka Charly Brown) coming to spin at Helsinki's Kerma club. Resident DJs Hannu and Tuomas at that time the only two members of the collective gave him a demo. Soon after, he gave them a record deal in return. A bunch of 12" singles later, including the excellent 'Makoomba'/'Afro Cuban Haze' and Nuspirit Helsinki are slaving away in a small cellar studio in Helsinki's buzzy Punavuori ('Red Hill') area.

According to Tuomas Kallio, Nuspirit Helsinki's principle producer, there are, despite the misplaced attentions of over-eager sample-spotters, few loops in the mix. First and foremost, this a group dedicated to the art of making something from nothing. They draw on a pool of Finland's finest musicians to produce their stirring mélange of soulful disco, dub, afro-flavoured house and sophisticated nu-jazz, a pool that includes Hannu 'Ender' Nieminen, who plays an important role in arranging the tracks, Eppu Helle and Kim 'Kasio' Rantala, who doubles as the keyboard player in the dub/hip hop group Giant Robot; also amongst the extended family is Toni 'Lil Tony' Rantanen, who promotes the Nuspirit Helsinki brand with his global DJ sets. The latest fruit of their labours is the electric 'Montana Roha Jazz' EP, a recording that encompasses cinematic string-lead funk and driving dancefloor-fillers inflected with afrobeat, future-bossa and lashings of jazzy solos. 'Montana Roha', or 'Red Hill' in English, is a translation of 'Punavuori', the area where the group are based. "Of course we spelled it wrong on our EP - with an 'h' instead of a 'j', 'cause we're Finnish and stupid," Kasio giggles. Listening to the music, however, any poor spelling of Southern European Languages is immediately excused. *Johanna Olofsson*



Nuspirit Helsinki: The posse

The 'Montana Roha Jazz EP' is out now on JCR. The Nuspirit Helsinki album is due to be released some time next year. Out via Guidance 12" Check out: [www.nuspirit.com](http://www.nuspirit.com)

ENT

STRAIGHT NO CHASER



9

# XLRRR

ACCELERATING MUSIC AND CULTURE

## REVIEWS: ABSTRACT BEATS

**NUSPIRIT HELSINKI**  
**MAKOOMBA BREAKS VOLUME 1**  
**BUTTI 49**  
**BRAZILIKUM EP**  
*Guidance/US/12*



Percussion takes center-stage on Funky Fnin's Nuspirit's latest two-track work. Imagine a cadre of amped-up musicians snatching up their mbiras, shakers, cowbells, gourds, bells, congas and trap kit and sliding into a Fela-fresh Afrobeat workout punctuated with punchy bass jabs, silky flutes

and lofty horn vamps—well here you have it, live from Helsinki! Keeping the upswing of house's famous hi-hat accent intact, "Makoomba" swerves and swings through Nigeria en-route to Congo staying well clear of musical potholes and landmines. Tracing the groove west, "Afro-Cuban Haze" simmers a steady rhythm where echoed reeds dance in the breeze. It's 12 minutes plus of exquisite jazz musicianship. Butti 49 similarly carries the live torch and proceeds to set fire to a trio of thick, dancefloor damagers. "Chattanooga Nugget" rolls like the famed steam train over slick tracks laid by bassist Per Zanussi with trumpet, flute and sax all in tow. "Kalas" is a sultry samba groove while "Brazilikum" is a slice of Bahia 'n' beats for all enamored by the work of Da Lata and Truby Trio. Guidance continue to enlighten us with fantastic grooves from around the globe. *Tomas*

# LA WEEKLY music

NUSPIRIT HELSINKI (DJ ENDER)  
at Club Sugar, May 5

So rare is it to hear such a completely fluid and perfectly balanced serving of nu-soul, broken-beat, house, two-step, trip-hop and stretched-out jazz. Nuspirit Helsinki is a collective of at least 15 players, vocalists, DJs and producers; founding member and ambassador for the group DJ Ender (or Hannu Niemine) brought some records to Sugar's Bossa:Nova, where he spun a set that both tested the waters with new material and served up some old-school house.

Since various Nuspiriters have already contributed tracks and remixes for the Jazzanova-Compost, Ubiquity and Guidance labels (the last is putting out the collective's debut), you can imagine the choice material we'll soon hear from Nicole Willis, Chicago spoken-word artist Chuck Perkins and a host of European jazz musicians. They'll probably come back with a larger-scale live show this summer, but in the meantime, we got to hear some Nuspirit dubs -- grooves laden with driving percussion, rich horns and cosmic keys, always fucking with time signatures and genre structures. DJ Ender casually helped himself to beers while fusing his abstract new music with the simplistic yet sublime house staple "Good Life." He had the crowd all the way, as the floor never thinned no matter how far he delved into artcore.

Bossa:Nova (brought to you by Jason Bentley) started off right with Jun, a local guy who has performed some fantastic sets and always seems to drop one or two disco-funk bombs from the likes of Cameo or the Dazz Band. (Daniel Siwek)



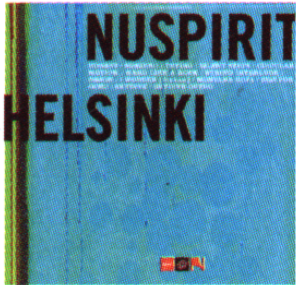
Nuspirit Helsinki  
Nuspirit Helsinki

by Robert Whiteman  
7.2.2002

Finland's Nuspirit Helsinki is a sizable crew of DJs, producers, and musicians, a veritable "Big Band" of nu-jazz. We've heard this recipe before - from Japan's United Future Organization, to Jason Swinscoe's Cinematic Orchestra, to Germany's Compost Crew, Jazzanova - an elite few the world over have been fusing hip hop, neo soul, broken beat, two step, and drum and bass with afro-latin vibes and jazz-funk instrumentation and textures. Led by Tuomas Kallio and Hannu Nieman (a.k.a. DJ Ender,) Nuspirit Helsinki's take on the genre is a focused and mellow one, less eclectic and staccato than Jazzanova, less brash than UFO, and less sprawling than Cinematic Orchestra's expansive arrangements.

"Equally at home on the deep-house dancefloor or in the sophisticate's lounge" Theirs is a warm layered sound, thick with dubbed out reverb and detached yet sultry soul. On their full-length debut guest vocal spots are handled by Naked Music's Lisa Shaw, Brooklyn neo-soulster Nicole Willis, Chicago poet Chuck Perkins, and Nuspirit's own resident chanteuse Ona Kamu. Perhaps the most affecting vocal performance is the Finley Quayesque atmospheric electro-dub lead by a man called Daddy Ous on "Hard Like A Rock (Nuspirit Emorph)." Other highlights include "Orson" with its organic percussion and 4Hero-style strings, and the horn-driven future-bop of "Seis Por Ocho (original jazz session mix)." Equally at home on the deep-house dancefloor or in the sophisticate's lounge, Nuspirit Helsinki's debut is a refined, accomplished, set of well-crafted and atmospherically consistent tunes.

# XL



## NUSPIRIT HELSINKI NUSPIRIT HELSINKI *Guidance/US/CD*

If the highly anticipated first album from Jazzanova blinds you for a while, you're forgiven. Just don't turn a deaf ear for too long. The Nuspirit Helsinki crew, like so many other like-minded musicians today, have cracked the code on jazz and electronic dance music. As they'll admit,

the pendulum has swung quite a bit away from the house music they began tinkering with four years ago. "Dancefloor jazz" is one way they've described it—ironic considering that's what jazz was all about to begin with. This eponymously titled debut is a stunning introduction to their sound. While I would hate for you to miss everything preceding it (especially the adventurous "Circular Motion"), skip to the last cut. There you'll find the spellbinding "Trying," its crisp and overtly electronic beats swimming alongside live Rhodes and Hammond keys, and vocals from Naked Music's Lisa Shaw. The jazz players have more weight here than in a lot of other current hybrids, but the balance struck with sinewy electronic grooves is damn near perfect. *Dan Sicks*



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# LOTUS



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ISSUE 37  
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**F**innish producer Tuomas Kallio and DJ Hannu Nieman (aka DJ Ender) are not fond of cars. "Urban culture is about street life," grouses Kallio, "it's not about cars. I hate cars." Ender concurs, "You can't meet new people if you are in a car." It is fortuitous, then, that we stand outside the chain link fence circling the visually pathetic pond known as the La Brea Tar Pits, where nothing moves much at all, save for the droves of school children out on field trips. Despite the rather bleak pool, the Finns are agreeable about the excursion. In fact, the conversation quickly degenerates into lap-dancing Laplander jokes and reindeer imitations.

Kallio and Nieman are core members of Finland's jazz/electronic fusion collective Nuspirit Helsinki, whose self-titled album for Guidance Recordings exhibits an elegant command over a wealth of jazz, soul, broken beat, Afro-beat, and Latin influences. The album's smooth, compelling ride is the result of consistent, polished production. Stand-out tracks include "Honest," a seductive, swingy song built around the R&B inflected vocal of Brooklyn chanteuse Nicole Willis, and "Hard Like a Rock," featuring Gambian vocalist Daddy Ous.

The band—which also includes DJ Lil' Tony, DJ Eppu and keyboard player Kasio—works extensively with live musicians of all stylistic persuasions, including top-flight Finnish jazz instrumentalists, musicians from Africa and Cuba, and vocalists ranging from Chicago spoken word artist Chuck Perkins to deep house diva Lisa Shaw. Many live in Finland, which boasts a tightly knit music scene. In fact, a number of the aforementioned African and Cuban artists have married and settled in Finland, but the musicians are drawn to Nuspirit Helsinki for other reasons. "It's very different from what they usually do," notes Kallio, which can mean anything from pop

gigs to recording for jazz labels like Blue Note. Rather than sampling their jazz elements, Nuspirit Helsinki record them live. Explains Kallio, "Samplers have been around for about 25 years and I think we've reached a point where almost everything has been done already. There's a lot to explore in combining sampling with live instrumentation."

The sun is getting beastly hot, and we seek shade under a tree. Despite their current focus on making music that is both danceable and listener-friendly, Kallio and Ender entered the music world from distinctly different angles. Ender—founder of Finland's seminal electronic music club, Deep—has been a DJ for 14 years, while Kallio studied guitar seriously for almost a decade. "If you are into music from this kind of angle," explains Kallio, "of course you are into writing songs. For me, good music is usually quite simple. On our album, we didn't focus on being experimental."

Ivan Pavlovich, founder of Chicago's Guidance Recordings, who's shepherding the Nuspirit guys while they're on tour, joins us under the tree. When he met Nuspirit Helsinki, their work was much less album-oriented. Jazzed by their musicality, Ivan encouraged their expansion of scope and scale. "This is a listener's album," he states. "You can't be too self-indulgent and be like, 'I'm inventing new chords.'" (Ender punctuates this sentiment with a playful display of atonal noises and a crazed keyboardist imitation.) We consider touring the Tar Pits museum, but bronzed woolly mammoths and stuffed snakes are no match for the lure of the record shop. Despite their previously noted aversion to four wheeled gasoline powered vehicles, Kallio is amenable to escaping the Tar Pits for sure, but Ender, like a true DJ, is positively beaming on the way to WAX Records.

**NUSPIRIT HELSINKI** forego jam band noodlings for simple, streamlined jazz. Stacia Monteith watches out for Woolly Mammoths.

"Samplers have been around for about 25 years and we've reached a point where almost everything has been done already."  
*Nuspirit Helsinki*

## GUIDANCE COUNSELORS

Calgary Straight July 2002

## **Nuspirit Helsinki**

Nuspirit Helsinki  
*Guidance/Fusion III*

It's not uncommon for DJs to develop affinities for certain record labels, instantly buying releases from their favourite imprints regardless of whether or not they've heard the music. Chicago's Guidance Recordings is one such label that constantly garners praise for its high-quality output, and the release of Nuspirit Helsinki's self-titled full-length will certainly add to its exceptional track record. Though hailing from Finland, Helsinki has much in common with the latest sounds emanating from West London and Germany. In fact, much like German counterparts Jazzanova, the group is a loose collective whose core consists of two DJs (Toni Rantanen, Hannu Nieminen), two DJ/producers (Eppu Helle, Kim Rantala), and one producer (Tuomas Kallio). The result – taking into account Scandinavia's long love affair with jazz – is a warm canvas of dance-floor jazz rendered in muted tones. In stark contrast to West London nu-jazz producers who employ fast and thunderous polyrhythms, *Nuspirit Helsinki* is a laid-back affair that never strays far from gentle, mid-tempo grooves. On "Orson," soft hand-beaten percussion is mated with sweeping orchestral string washes and plucked double-bass chords. Deeply relaxing.

• MARCO PRINGLE

/// "We don't play jazz. We play music."

So says Tuomas Malm, one of Nu Spirit Helsinki's collective of five producers and DJs. This certainly makes things a bit complex, because it's jazz that springs to mind on listening to their beautiful, eponymously titled debut album for Guidance Recordings. And what ever you do, don't mention the word "nu" anywhere near the word "jazz" around Malm, either.

"I'm glad you asked this," writes Malm about the recently coined pigeonhole. "Nu jazz" is a term I like to avoid. We love many musical genres and we like to combine different elements from all of those. That term to me represents the kind of approach where you sample from old jazz records and combine this with programmed beats. All our themes and such things are composed and arranged by us. We don't play jazz, we play music."

And what music. With up to 20 players, Nu Spirit Helsinki has all the hallmarks of a live band: a big string-soaked sound, lush Afro Latin percussion, three-piece

horn section, and guest vocalists. It has real swing, but also a skin-tightness akin to Jazzanova or Cinematic Orchestra that comes from post-session editing.

"This is something of a Nu Spirit philosophy," explains Malm. "These days there's not much to discover in production purely based on programming and samples. The next level for us is to find fresh ways of combining electronic elements with live instrumentation."

Mixmaster Morris once said that the future of music would be inherited by those that understood both live playing and technology. If that's the case, Nu Spirit's album will see them take their rightful place alongside artists like Koop, Jimpster, Fila Brazillia and Quantic—artists that are taking the next steps into the increasingly populated area where dance music and songwriting ability converge.

They will also put Finland on the musical map, in the way that Koop have with Sweden and Bugge Wessetoft and the Jazzland crew have with Norway, uncovering a

largely unacknowledged but strong Northern European jazz tradition.

"I think there is a scene evolving at the moment," Malm notes. "In Scandinavia there has always been a strong jazz scene, and now that tradition is developing into something new and fresh. In Finland we have had our own stars since the '60s and '70s, like Olli Ahvenlahti, Eero Koivistoinen and Pekka Streng. There are new things evolving, but it will take time until we can call it a fertile scene with lots of cross-Helsinki collaboration. But it's coming."

As is the aptly titled Nu Spirit. "Initially we didn't know how it would end up," says Malm of the album, "but maybe for the first time I am pretty pleased with the music we were able to create. For me, this album is the beginning, the first step towards making music, not just tracks for DJs, you know? Inspiring music for people."

Nu Spirit Helsinki is out now on Guidance Recordings. Check [www.nuspirit.com](http://www.nuspirit.com) and [www.guidancerecordings.com](http://www.guidancerecordings.com).

**JAZZ NOT JAZZ!!!**  
 NU SPIRIT HELSINKI MIGHT SOUND LIKE THE NAME OF A RELIGIOUS CULT, BUT WHILE THEIR MEMBERSHIP IS AS BIG AS ONE, THESE MUSICIANS HAVE A PURELY MUSICAL CALLING.



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## NUSPIRIT HELSINKI

Nuspirit Helsinki

CD/3xLP

Guidance 2002



Finlandia zaczyna rządzić. Już nie tylko w barze, także na parkiecie. Wymiernymi tego efektami są materiały dla wertykalnych i horyzontalnych tancerzy tworzone przez Pansonica, Jimiego Tenora, Vladislawa Delaya, Jori Hulkkonena i... Nuspirit Helsinki, które weszło na scenę w wielkim stylu. NSH to kolektyw kilkunastu Djów, muzyków i producentów. Znani dotychczas ze świetnych numerów ukazujących się przede wszystkim na wysokogatunkowych Epkach i składakach Guidance'a, Composta, czy Ubiquity teraz debiutują albumem, który krótko pisząc... POWALA. Nowy materiał NSH to płynące dźwięki nu-jazz i nu-soul, z odrobiną latin flava – takie dekadencje perełki cyfrowego wieku, które zapadają głęboko w pamięci i gdzieś tam trwają... Obok cyfrowych pojawiają się także żywe instrumenty – delikatne smyczki, saksofon, miotełki. Na płycie, oprócz muzyków NSH swoją obecność zaznaczyli m.in. Nicole Willis (jako autorka), znana z Naked Music Lisa Shaw oraz Daddy Ous, który podłożył swój wokół do chill-outowego No. 1 tego lata – numeru „Hard As A Rock”. Koniecznie trzeba też zapamiętać Ona Kamu – kiedy ją usłyszycie, będziecie wiedzieli, o co chodzi. Jednym zdaniem: przepiękna chłodna muzyka, która powstała w kraju, w którym ludzie już przy 10°C zrzucają ubrania i cieszą się z nadejścia wiosny.

Guidance znów podniósł poprzeczkę. Jeśli miałbym polecać album, to powiedziałbym, że to absolutny kiler dla fanów Jazzanowy i jazzu, Zero 7, Naked Music i St. Germain. Podobne myślenie i feeling. Kaktus z dwoma deluxami i chorągiewką. Chill-outowy wymlatacz tego sezonu.

(elch na kolanach)







# m u s i c

## NUSPIRIT HELSINKI

### NuSpirit Helsinki

(Guidance)

US release date: 30 April 2002

UK release date: 20 May 2002

by [Maurice Bottomley](#)

PopMatters Music Columnist and Critic

[e-mail this article](#)

Was it the success of Zero 7? Maybe it's the increasing impact of Gilles Peterson's *Worldwide* radio show or the après-club marketability of Lounge and various downtempo styles. Perhaps it is simply the proliferation of Cafe Bar culture as a feature of urban life (its well-heeled part, that is). Whatever the reason, various dance-jazz acts (from Jazzanova to the Cinematic Orchestra) have suddenly found themselves plucked from the review pages of *Straight No Chaser* and plonked down somewhere that distressingly resembles centre-stage.

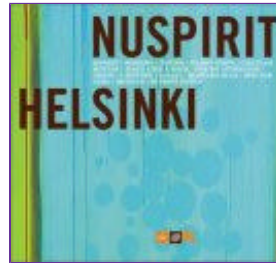
A year or so ago NuSpirit Helsinki meant little outside one relatively self-contained subculture. Various termed "West London" "nu-jazz" and "broken beats", it positioned itself as a dedicated if somewhat solemn adherent to the acid jazz ethos, a repository of the diverse and different, as all around it the beats got "faster, harder, louder". Now, along with other proponents of the new hybridity, NuSpirit's eclectic mix of neo-soul, jazz and mellow electronica can be heard everywhere. This sophisticated music has become the staple soundtrack of upmarket boutiques and bars and the more self-consciously stylish radio stations.

Good, is my main reaction. It is encouraging that, for once, the pioneers and not some watered down, commercial substitutes are themselves reaping the rewards. In fact if I were to take one act that typified the whole nu-jazz/PoMo-dance tendency, it would probably be this Scandinavian outfit. Everything about them resonates with the qualities the genre has foregrounded.

Firstly there is the geographical location. No longer are we given to even the slightest eyebrow-twitch when told that the cool sounds we are enjoying emanate from Paris, Athens, Berlin, Vienna, or Zagreb (not to mention Toronto or Nottingham). Each of those "centres" (or should that be margins -- my post-colonial theory is somewhat rusty) has become associated with similar projects to the one these fifteen gifted Helsinkians have put together.

In fact, the last sentence is not strictly accurate. Though Helsinki based, some of the contributors come from far and wide to that capital. Nicole Willis hails from Brooklyn, and spoken word artist (you have to have a spoken word artist -- usually Ursula Rucker) Chuck Perkins is from Chicago. This is important, for the link with black America is as essential to the nu-jazz as it was to their old jazz forebears. One more American-based artist also appears, the ubiquitous and never disappointing Lisa Shaw. That will keep the deep house fraternity happy as she is the unofficial "Voice" of Naked Music and other much-loved West Coast ventures.

The rest of the collective are, I think, all Finnish. But the Euro-African-American mix extends beyond the mere accident of birth. This is multi-cultural and not just multi-genre music. If you want an alternative view of present-day Europe to the one given by Le Pen, Haider, and the whole xenophobic "economic migrants" debate, then NuSpirit



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and their ilk might provide it. Not that this is at all a "political" record, but with race and national boundaries once more on certain murkier agendas such diversity and mutual exchange does no harm at all.

On to the actual ingredients. If you are at all familiar with Compost, Ubiquity, and Guidance itself, then little explication is needed. Mid and down tempo grooves, mute trumpets, lots of jazz flavours, acoustic bass patterns, melodic soft-soul vocals, dubby, digital beats, and lush orchestral arrangements. Rather sober and unsmiling (the genre's main failing) but more varied than the norm, NuSpirit can lay claim to a lyricism that lightens even the darkest of tracks. The production values are superb, with sampled and live elements impossible to separate and the balance of jazz-inflected playing and DJ/producer input just about perfect.

As to the individual tunes, Soul fans should head first to the opening track which has a very Maysa Leake/Incognito air to it and is probably the best single thing Nicole Willis has yet delivered. Willis, who appears to divide her time between Barcelona and Helsinki, has done exploratory and intriguing work with Jimi Tenor and Maurice Fulton but the poised neo-soul of "Honest" should finally bring her to the attention of the wide audience she deserves.

Female vocalists have a high profile within Spirit's tasteful aesthetic. Lisa Shaw brings her unique, folk-soul tonal purity to "Trying". Classic broken-beats shuffler and the first single, I can't wait for the inevitable re-mixes. Ona Kamu is the "resident" singer and, though a little mannered, does pretty well -- particularly on an atmospheric collaboration with Perkins ("I Wonder/2.14"). This mini-playlet is all black coffee, blue cigarette smoke, and jazz clubs and segues neatly into the "Lush Life" meets Braziliana of "Montado Roja", easily the most jazz-danceable of any of the pieces. Noteworthy sax and flugelhorns, such conventional instruments have a major role on this album. Old school die-hards will have a problem dismissing this set as mere sampled electronica (which, of course, it is not).

Some tracks are a little too ambient, in that pristine but insubstantial way that currently proliferates. The precision and clarity of the arrangements over-rides any real objection though. Even my least favourite aspect of downtempo deepness, the obligatory quasi-dub-reggae number is a pleasant surprise. "Hard Like a Rock" is eerily tender and Daddy Ous' singing authentic and emotive. Of the clutch of instrumentals, "Subzero" is destined for any number of the better *Cafe Del Mar* type compilations while the throwaway title "String Interlude" rather conceals the fact that the said item is just about the pick of a very good crop. It sounds like The Love Unlimited Orchestra re-cast for the post-Ecstasy generation. Warm and completely seductive.

Actually, nothing on the album rings false or somehow lets the standard slip. NuSpirit Helsinki thus take their place comfortably alongside names such as Koop, Rainer Truby, Jazzanova, 4 Hero, and Minus 8. Melodically they are more interesting (if a shade more delicate) than any of their contemporaries. The relaxation factor is high, but one or two numbers kick somewhat harder than the exquisite production initially suggests.

Very 21st century, not at all cloying but easy on the ear and subtle as you could wish for, this debut might well become nu-jazz' flagship album. A potential archetype for the genre that crosses many genres and a highlight among this summer's releases, it also restores Guidance, a label that has been rather quiet of late, to the forefront of creative "dance-based" music. Even if the lounge bubble bursts or collapses under the weight of its own coziness, NuSpirit Helsinki will undoubtedly survive. Tuomas Kallio, DJ Ender, Kim Rantalla, and the rest of the players have put together a striking testimony to the new interdisciplinarity, but more importantly they have, by any reasonable yardstick, made some marvelous and, I suspect, timeless music.

— 1 August 2002

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Jucifer  
Liars  
Lift to Experience  
Marah  
More Than Music Festival



DJ DEGO + DJ ENDER  
24 July 2002: New York  
by Shan Fowler  
PopMatters Music Critic

The first time I heard Dego's main project 4 Hero was via a two-cassette promotional pre-release of *Two Pages*, the group's sweeping vision of the future of dance music for this solar system and any other within earshot. One cassette was a freaky-deaky collection of spaced-out drum and bass ornamented with samples, bleeps and a monstrous low end that could only be contained by those satellite dishes built into dormant volcanic craters. In case the "Star Trek" samples didn't make the message clear, 4 Hero were out to aurally question our existence as singular beings in the universe. Message received, almost too loud and clear. The other tape was a much more earthly affair, with its frenetic standup bass weaving around a broken beat that skipped like flat stones on a glassy lake, all while velvet-voiced divas such as Philadelphia's spoken-word queen Ursula Rucker purred poetry and melodies. The mix of jazz standards and forward-thinking beat innovation is nearly the norm in house music now, but way back in the late 20th century it was a revolution in chilling things out without cooling them off. The released product turned out to be one CD with the spacey and jazzy bits mixed together so that neither was received in one fell swoop. It would have been better to keep them separated -- when two vibes go to war, there's really no way to settle the score.

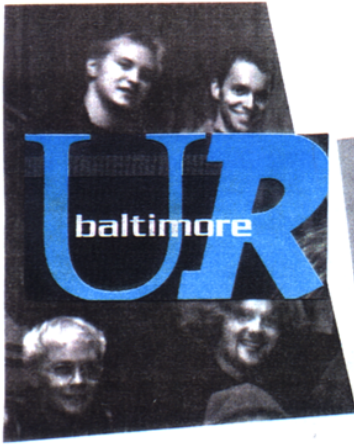
That's the (enter your personal slant here) strength/weakness of dance music: it's all about the vibe because the vibe is what it's all about. See, it's circular, just like a good DJ set. When Dego played to a packed midweek house in downtown Manhattan, he was on a mission. He just wasn't sure which mission he was on.

It was clear from the start that those on hand wouldn't be treated to a called-in set of golden oldies -- Dego's latest broken beat innovations made sure of that. It's a strange beast, this new beat. At first blink it seemed all over the place, a fumbling procession of thumps like an arrhythmic heartbeat, a high-low amalgamation of electronic ear-shatterers meant to keep its listeners perpetually on edge (or, as the case may be, on their toes). And yet, all these quick stabs fit perfectly into standard 4/4 time. It seemed shockingly new at first, but made perfect sense in the end: this is the urban tribal rhythm. It is what's been appropriated from native dance traditions around the world forever, but this latest version is a Kraftwerkian empty shell of an interpretation, appropriated first from street performers banging their own urban rhythms on plastic paint barrels and steel trash cans. It's so far removed from the original product that it's almost all the way back around. Almost.

Dego threw divas, soul masters, tribal chanters -- all sorts of melody makers into the beaty mix, but none of it ever quite converged. It was mixed well enough that you could see where he's going with it, but he wasn't there yet. At times the beat became so unnerving in its cacaphony and volume that as the soundtrack for marines fleshing out sequestered Central American dictators.

In a dance club where participation can make or break the evening, these broken beats were breaking things up in more ways than one. Many in the crowd decided it was more a set for listening than participating. A disturbing number of those who braved the dance floor anyway seemed to come from places where rhythm was not only a foreign concept, but a concept for which there was no literal translation. Hands flailed, legs kicked, heads ducked -- it wasn't pretty.

There were no translation problems for opener DJ Ender from NuSpirit Helsinki, a Gus Gus-esque collective of DJs, musicians and artists from Finland who have decided that there's strength in numbers when one's home country is not traditionally on the world dance map. Ender borrowed little from that collective's jazzy-lounge vibe for his soul- and disco-heavy set. Like Dego, he mixed all manner of divas, soul classics and worldly melodies. It was that retro-nuevo sound that's all the rage these days, and for good reason: it expands the boundaries of dance music in a nearly organic way without messing up the vibe. Yet, with all these DJs claiming the entire world as their dance-floor oyster, it's good to know that there are still DJs like Dego who are pushing the boundaries, even if occasionally the boundaries aren't ready to be pushed quite yet.



# Jazz Meets House for a Stroll Around the Dance Floor: Nuspirit Helsinki's self-titled debut

By Ann Sosnowski  
Volume 6 Issue 11



Today we are living in a strange warped world of music. Music is crossing more boundaries and become less and less distinctly labeled than in previous times. Also, music from around the globe is making its way into the hands of unsuspecting listeners. And they seem to like it that way.

A great example of cross-over music is the first self-titled effort created by a Finnish group entitled Nuspirit Helsinki. If you're looking for unique dance music that crosses lines, look no further. Nuspirit Helsinki, with its legs locked around influences of jazz, soul, ragga, dancehall, hip-hop, house, and beats, is the exact snack for a musical appetite.

Nuspirit Helsinki is a motley collective of Finnish DJ's, producers, and musicians who combine their talents to infuse a new sound for the music scene. At times feeling like soothing water and at times like harsh water-falls, Nuspirit's album takes the listener through a musical adventure, through the metaphorical ups and downs of life.

UR chatted with Tuomas Kallio, the principle producer and founding member of Nuspirit. Their core group consists of five prime members: Kallio, DJ Ender, Keyboardist Kasio, DJ Lil' Tony, and Eppu Helle. From there, they employ other musicians and vocalists for the always indispensable need for live musical instrumentation, the flesh and bone of music altogether. Not one instrumental song even had vocals in their preliminary form until vocalists were employed to write and sing for them. The amalgam group of Nuspirit Helsinki are enticingly communicative in their first finalized project: a small musical united nation of music, broadcasting jazz, soul, funk, Latin, and dance music that is quickly sweeping and leading the burgeoning European nu-jazz scene.

Nuspirit Helsinki, according to Tuomas, is not to be confused with a

more like a project, a loose collective". The live set is hard to come by since there are certain people playing certain instruments who all live in a geographical range from Helsinki to France to the UK. Keeping track of everyone for rehearsing and touring is a task in and among itself. And many of the DJ's are part of the dance club culture of Helsinki and collaborate with countless other projects. However, Kallio is hopeful about a tour in the United States which could range anywhere from the end of summer to the beginning of next year.

The influences that Kallio cited as being an impetus for their strange puzzle piece music ranges from the modern jazz tradition of the United States like Miles Davis, Freddie Hubbard, Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, and the arranger Bill Evans. They admire the sound of fifties and sixties American jazz, as well as the Philadelphia sound of The Roots, Jill Scott, D'Angelo, and Quest Love, along with Detroit Techno. In the words of Kallio, "It's more a question of sound really. We are really into the sound and the chords and the harmonies that the fifties and sixties American jazz used. I wouldn't call our music jazz as such but it is one big influence." As to Kallio's production technique, it remains primarily European.

Kallio began studying music as a child, playing classical piano and then turning to guitar to play rock. In the mid-nineties, he became frustrated and even though he didn't have experience in production, he "just started buying equipment and building this small set-up at home and started exploring and trying things. It was more like doing dance floor stuff like house." With the help of DJ Ender they came up with the idea to do house and bring some musicians

in and really produce something like an album. And that marked the beginning of project Nuspirit Helsinki.

As to Nuspirit's album, even though it sounds live, every live instrument has been edited heavily. As to whether Kallio's first production was an excitable experience: "It depends. It's kind of an obsession. I couldn't just not do it. The best moments is when you make something that really works and you find something that you say 'Ok, this is good'. Those moments are the reason I am doing it. Of course, there are hundreds of hours of shit for this kind of project. It's a pain in the ass but I hope it's worth it."

As to where the name for the project came from, Helsinki is vital for the group's name because to Kallio it emphasizes the ability for Helsinki's top musicians to be open-minded enough to collaborate with anyone and everyone. Nuspirit is a kind of

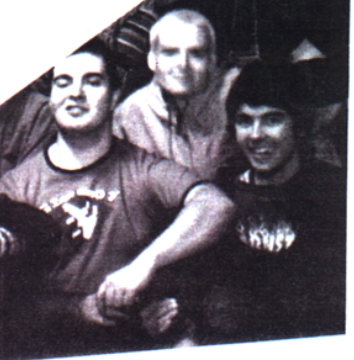
term that indicates a lack of familiarity with something, being a new type of experience in the fusion of jazz and electronic music. "We prefer to stand out rather than blend in. It's a good strategy as well."

Anyone becoming disinterested in what Kallio would call "the DJ culture, the play list thing" where what is new is best, and what is old can only be on it's way down the charts, would be the best audience for Nuspirit Helsinki's endeavor. Those looking for soul infused with jazz and electronic music, need look no further. This is where jazz meets house for a stroll around the dance floor.

Nuspirit Helsinki's self-titled album will be released July 2002 and may be found in Virgin and Tower record stores and Barnes and Nobles across America and is also part of these stores' listening polls. As to Kallio's advice to those interested: "It's like music for the soul. If you like good music, buy it."

Also, be sure to check out [www.nuspirit.com](http://www.nuspirit.com) for more information on Nuspirit Helsinki.

The best moments is when you make something that really works and you find something that you say 'Ok, this is good.'





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### **JULY 26**

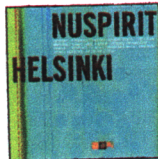
As far as collectives go, **NUSPIRIT HELSINKI** takes the cake for international musical savvy. This multi-cultural group based in Finland includes DJs, vocalists, producers and musicians culled from the front ranks of the European nu-jazz movement, and their releases for labels like Guidance, Compost and Ubiquity have gained them critical acclaim across the globe. **DJ ENDER**, one of the founding members of the group, will appear at the **FUNKY BUDDHA LOUNGE** for a special DJ set of funk-ed-out jazz, seductive nu-soul cuts, and tripped out broken beats.

# BPM

ISSUE 35 JULY 2002

## NUSPIRIT HELSINKI

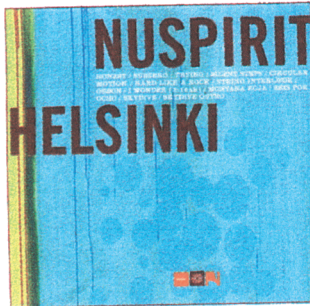
S/T (Guidance)



With any luck, this album will receive the kind of acclaim that releases from Zero 7 and 4Hero have. While it combines ingredients already much-used—soul, jazz, broken beat and more, the collective has added their own magic, making this album original-sounding and accomplished. Nuspirit Helsinki is a multicultural collective of Finnish DJs, musicians and producers. Since 1998, the group's founding members have steadily recruited an assemblage of talent that play their concoctions live. Far from abstract experimentalism, Nuspirit create solid song structures, are sublimely melodic, and effortlessly blend soulful vocals with jazz, funk and electronic music for a completely organic sound. This is their debut album and it displays how remarkably well all the elements have gelled. "Subzero" is an evocative, jazz-toned track perfect for setting suns and a wistful mind. A seductive haze of horns blanket a briskly fluttering beat, and simmer with atmospheric keys. "Silent Steps" moves into the realms of funk with a hip hop-ish beat, a Rhodes organ and funky horns for attitude. These days, genres are as easily intermingled as records are sampled and beats are cut and pasted, but Nuspirit create organic tracks with production that is rich in depth and sonic variety. This one will live long in your player. (Lucy Beer)

# REMIX

Vol. 4, No. 7, July 2002



## **NUSPIRIT HELSINKI**

*Nuspirit Helsinki* (Guidance Recordings)

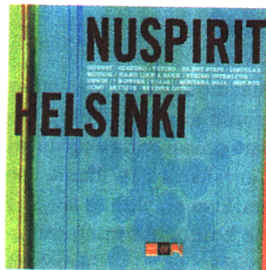
**Finnish clubbers tap into global sounds**

Finland isn't exactly a well-known hub for innovative dance music, but the collective of DJs, musicians and producers that falls under the Nuspirit Helsinki umbrella wants to change that. With this compilation, the group filters Afrobeat grooves, Latin jazz rhythms and kitschy analog keyboard effects through a distinctly Scandinavian attitude, producing music that is lively and precise. Witness the polished broken-beat spin on "Silent Steps." So fresh, so clean.—*Aidin Vaziri*

★★★★

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**NEW MUSIC**  
MONTHLY

07.02



**NUSPIRIT HELSINKI**

**Nuspirit Helsinki** Guidance

One of the glaring weaknesses of DJ culture is that it omits the concept of the band-as-gang. The members of the Clash and even U2 always seemed inseparable, bound together forever at a young age by both music and ideology. Of course, there's also not a hell of a lot of ideology in the world of house music—please, “garage” is not an ideology—but at least the successes of Jazzanova, the Nortec Collective and So Solid Crew have infused dance music with a bit of that “cultural rebel collective” attitude. Next up is Nuspirit Helsinki, an assembly of Finnish DJs,

producers and musicians, trying to overcome all the dreadful associations of Scandinavian pop music (current flavor-of-the-month garage rock from land of gravlox and lutefisk notwithstanding). Contrasting the sometimes bleak character of their native city (Helsinki Harbor can be quite dismal on a stormy day, and Finland has the world's highest suicide rate), Nuspirit whips up a sexy, exuberant cocktail of house, jazz and Afro-Cuban rhythms. The results are not earth shatteringly original, but songs like “Circular Motion” and “Tryin’g” are astoundingly soulful, and the record is brimming with irresistible grooves and inviting melodies. But the absolute highlights are the sensual vocal performances by in-house chanteuse Ona Kamu and guest soul diva Nicole Willis. Soothing enough to drop the suicide rate. >>>KEN SCRUDATO

Link

[www.nuspirithelsinki.com](http://www.nuspirithelsinki.com)

File Under

Future sound of Finland

R.I.Y.L.

Jazzanova, Zero 7,

Brand New Heavies



## ▣ Nuspirt Helsinki: Crossing the Finnish Line

**Finland's Nuspirt Helsinki collective proves with utter certainty that jazzy grooves do indeed exist in Northern Europe.**

By Peter Gaston  
CDNOW Associate Editor, Electronic/Dance

**Who:** Nuspirt Helsinki, a loose collective from Finland specializing in laidback, jazzy grooves that are a little more traditional than those of such peers as Jazzanova (whose label put out some of their early singles) and the like.

**What:** The group's self-titled debut album is stirring eardrums and cocktails stateside.

### **Why Finland makes for superb tunes:**

phone with CDNOW from Helsinki -- where else -- founding member Tuomas Kallio explains that there's a free creative spirit in his country that isn't so prevalent elsewhere in Europe. "What's different compared to the middle of Europe and the rest of Scandinavia is that we have a lot of jazz musicians, both young and old, in the country who happen to be very open-minded," he says. "I can call anybody to come and have a session with us." In other words, classically trained jazz musicians seem less inclined to thumb their noses at any project including samples and breakbeats.



**Where it all began:** Like many of his peers within the beat-driven universe, Kallio began studying piano as a child, moved on to guitar, then became

[have purchased.](#)

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bored with the generic music of the early-to-mid-'90s. Around the time he started setting up a home studio, he crossed paths with DJ Ender, another Helsinki scenester who, in Kallio's words, "is also an instrumental figure in the Helsinki club scene," having started up several club nights including the town's first Detroit techno joint. "We had this insight that there were a lot of good musicians in Helsinki, so we thought we could make house music and incorporate musicians into the mix," Kallio recalls. "At first it was more traditional things with beats. When Kasio [a keyboardist and DJ who became the final piece of the group's core trinity] came along, we got to know all the musicians here. Then we started towards making music instead of just making tracks."

**"We had this insight that there were a lot of good musicians in Helsinki, so we thought we could make house music and incorporate musicians into the mix."**

**The breakthrough:** In 1999, Nuspirit dropped "Take It Back," one of those delicious tunes that can subtly sneak its way into a wide array of DJ sets. Acclaim followed and led the group to launch another well-received release, this time an EP on Jazzanova Compost, linking them to the central European downbeat inner circle. The new record is loaded with tasty treats, most prominently the skippy, breakbeat-led "Trying," featuring hot vocalist of the moment Lisa Shaw.

**Building the collective's soul:** While Jazzanova, for example, utilizes a somewhat formulaic and regimented production process, Kallio assures that Nuspirit takes a more loosely defined path. "Our process is a bit chaotic, in a good way," he says. "There's no fixed way of doing things." That's probably a good thing, considering that aside from the three core members, there are two additional DJs and 12 contributing musicians also staking a claim in the Nuspirit name.

**Could Finland be the new Vienna?** "It's been good development since the late-'90s here," claims Kallio. "There aren't too many artists here, though. As for what we do, there's not too many artists who would do this kind of stuff. If you wait four or five more years there will be more well-known artists coming out of Helsinki. There are a lot of younger kids into producing tracks, and there's pretty good music education. I would say it's pretty fertile ground to make good music."

#### **Related Music:**

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  - [Nicola Conte](#)
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THE GLASS BOTTOM BOAT OF THE CULTURAL PRESS



# Nuspirit Helsinki

## Nuspirit Helsinki

### Guidance

Nuspirit Helsinki (or Nu Sound Collective Helsinki) started back in '98 with the humble mission of mixing African-American, African, and Latin-flavored music into a powerful elixir that could be enjoyed in clubs as well as homes. Though this Finnish collective has a core of five members (Thomas K, Ender, DJ Lil' Tony, Kasio, and Eppu), they have gathered around them an army of musicians, DJs, and producers to give us their soulful sound.

So, what exactly is the Helsinki Sound? Well, it's that deep and juicy soul sound that has seemed to caught hold of groups like Zero 7, 4 Hero, and Crazy Penis. It's luscious and smoky with chill-out hip-hop and other dance sensibilities. There are Hammonds and Rhodeses, flugelhorns and vocoders. It's an amazing synthesis of jazzy soul, soulful jazz, and soul's past and future. This is actually a very slick album that deserves everyone's attention. The group has not only produced this album for Guidance but has also released tracks for Ubiquity and Compost. If you know anything about those labels, you know what kind of quality they represent. Nuspirit Helsinki belongs comfortably within all of those amazing broods.

**Guidance Records:** <http://www.33rpm.com> • **Nuspirit Helsinki:** <http://www.nuspirithelsinki.com>

**Bill Campbell**

Nuspirit Helsinki  
Nuspirit Helsinki  
Guidance

2002

{5.8}

Reviewed by: Scott Plagenhoef



Like the better-known Jazzanova, Nuspirit Helsinki is a loose jazz-flavored collective. Unlike its German counterparts' stereotypical efficiency and precise work methods, however, the Finnish supergroup is more loose, prolific, and soulful. Unfortunately, it also takes fewer chances with its sound. With less house and hip-hop than Jazzanova, Nuspirit Helsinki wades in the murky waters of nu-soul and trip-hop making music for the head without much regard for the heart.

Although all five of the group's primary members have worked as producers and/or DJs, the album is mostly crafted from live instrumentation—with roughly 10 different guest musicians on most tracks. To the band's credit, it really shouldn't even work as well as it does. With a collective, consensus can muddle or dilute artistry. In a project with different multiple guests from track to track, the results can be uneven, sound clumsy next to one another. Neither of those things happens.

Unfortunately, the bugaboo is the sound itself. More eclecticism would be welcome. That insufferable name nearly says it all: Nuspirit. Not hyphenated (and without the cartoon menace of nü-metal's umlaut) this is a different breed of "nu" music. Without roots in a single genre, Nuspirit moves through a variety of sounds—jazz, fusion, soul, and in rare moments, house, hip-hop, and 2-step— yet, unfortunately, few moods.

The common denominator is "spirit." No matter what the musical equation, each of the band's songs is unified by the comfort of chillout compilations and tasteful CD80s filling converted lofts. It attempts many things but does few of them truly well. The avant-jazz crowd is better served by Thirsty Ear. The glitch-house set has Matthew Herbert. Ambient techno fans have Morr Music. I suppose this is sort of a starter kit for all three, downtempo with training wheels.

It's ironic then that Nuspirit Helsinki works best when the band get up off the couch and try to shake a loose a few grooves. The tangible tension between dance and jazz on "Trying," the album's highlight, is one of the few times in which there is some sort of variation of ideas within one track rather than merely muso shifts in time signatures. With a hint of 2-step, it even threatens to play with Todd Edwards-style vocal splicing, but never fully commits itself to the idea, remaining instead on safer, yet more forgettable, ground.

No doubt there will be people who are impressed— with the musicality, with the gumption, and with the genre hopping. Yet whether dallying in strings or synths, deep house or dub, Nuspirit Helsinki is still creating sounds that almost demand a distance between the music and the listener. I know there is an audience for it, but can't understand the appeal. It's very professional. It should be appreciated. But can it be enjoyed?

## CREATIVE LOAFING

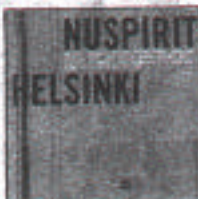
ATLANTA, GA  
WEEKLY 180,000  
JUL 24 2002

NUSPIRIT HELSINKI

### NUSPIRIT HELSINKI

GUIDANCE

The Finnish Nuspirit Helsinki collective emphasizes a live approach to its Afrobeat/Latin-influenced rhythms — familiar to fans of mostly German acts in the bossa/broken-beat scene, including Jazzanova and Beanfield. Made up of a five-man core — four DJs (one the group's keyboardist) plus a producer — Nuspirit Helsinki also features multicultural collaborations from at least 12 jazz musicians, both seasoned veterans and acclaimed upstarts. Also showcased are the vocal contributions of Naked Music's Lisa Shaw, Brooklyn's Nicole Willis, Chicago's Chuck Perkins and several of Nuspirit's own.



Living up to the promise of the group's singles for the Guidance, Ubiquity and Compost labels — the leading lights of the global nu-jazz community — Nuspirit Helsinki plays out like

updated '70s funk/jazz fusion that looks both ways. It looks back to early-'90s acid jazz and forward to a soulful skitter that draws from neo-soul and two-step — before choosing not to cross the street, but rather float by on smoky wings. Corners are as round, soft and sultry as the finest

European boutique interiors. The torch songs glow warm and low atop odd (to Western ears) time signatures. Percussion, with only a hint of programming/processing, lays the foundation, while cinematic strings, elastic bass and breezy brass slink along capriciously, occasionally with treated textures that benefit from drum 'n' bass, tech and dub.

For the most part, though, Nuspirit Helsinki are more gentle and muted than many of their contemporaries, though they play with no less conviction.

—TONY WARE

*Nuspirit Helsinki plays the MJO Concourse  
Thurs., July 25.*



DJ

Nuspirit Helsinki

when: Sat 8.3 (10pm)

where: 26 Mix (3024 Mission St, 415.826.7378)

price: \$5

links: Nuspirit Helsinki

If we say "Finland," what do you think of...? If you said cold, glaciers, or permanent midnight, then clearly you haven't heard Nuspirit Helsinki, Finland's premier future jazz collective. On tracks and singles like "Afro Cuban Sunshine" and "Makoomba Breaks" they draw on salsa, mambo, and Afrobeat to create music that confounds all geographical expectations. Their recent full-length is a deep, sun-dappled collection of downtempo, house, and even reggae ÷ which explains why labels like Guidance, Compost, and Ubiquity have helped push them to the forefront of the future jazz scene. Nuspirit's DJ Ender plays the selector at pHusion, the nu-jazz monthly from Ubiquity honcho Andrew Jervis and Spacetime Continuum's Jonah Sharp. (PS)

The first person to name two other Finnish musical acts will win a pair of tickets to the show and a Nuspirit Helsinki CD.

July '02

**DEGO + NUSPIRIT HELSINKI**

Several of those cute little sub-sub-genres of dance music over the years can be traced to 4Hero's Dego and, simply, nobody invents new sounds to groove to better than he. As a DJ, he's even more inspired, able to pull the pieces together across eras, egos, and arcane genre definitions until he's moved a crowd into rapt liberation. A rare visit to these shores in a sure-to-be profound experience. Shine, at 9. (Patel)

**Giant Step presents Dego and DJ Ender**

Shine. 10pm, \$12. Advance tickets available at *Dance Tracks* (212-260-8729), *Etherea* (212-358-1126), *Halcyon* (718-260-9299) or *Other Music* (212-477-8150). The fine folks at Giant Step are behind this evening of impeccably tasteful (and eminently get-downable) broken beat, nu-jazz, Latin rhythms and the like, with Dego from 4hero and DJ Ender of Nuspirit Helsinki on the decks. Dego has long been one of the leaders of the jazzy breaks scene, and Nuspirit Helsinki's recent eponymous album on Guidance is quite the stunner (and lushly tropical for a bunch of guys from Finland!); it should make for an ace party. Check out [www.giantstep.net](http://www.giantstep.net) for more information. See photo, below.

**the ONION®**

the ONION 18-24 July 2002



**WEDNESDAY, JULY 24**  
Nuspirit Helsinki w/ Dego, Shine,  
11 p.m., (212) 941-0900, \$12/\$15

An electronic collective from Finland, Nuspirit Helsinki plays downtempo acid-jazz and broken-beat music along the lines of Jazzanova and Gilles Peterson. Featuring a lineup of DJ/producers and countless collaborators, the group cooks up a simmering fusion stew on its new self-titled debut, released by the Guidance label. As with most acid-jazz, the album has a tendency to float toward embarrassing lite-jazz atmospherics, but a good deal of it reaches immaculate heights that showcase the mixing board as an integral jazz instrument. Opener Dego is half of the seminal jungle duo 4 Hero, whose 1995 album *Parallel Universe* remains a touchstone of the genre. On last year's *Creating Patterns*, 4 Hero did away with all vestiges of jungle in favor of stately Afro-futurist fusion, alternating overcooked Beat poetics with measured but no less stunning drum-programming moves.



**FIGHT TO THE FINNISH** The winner of the Most Colossal Jazz-Funk Collective Award goes to Nuspirit Helsinki (pictured); core member DJ Ender spins at Shine's Giant Step soiree, along with 4hero's Dego. See Wed 24.