KIMMO POHJONEN
BIO 2012

Finnish accordion adventurist Kimmo Pohjonen’s singular mission is to expand the capabilities, sound, scope, performance and experience of the accordion to levels never before attempted, seen or heard. Accordion, voice, effects, surround sound and light show combine to make a unique and captivating performance event.

A visionary of boundless energy, Pohjonen’s roots go back thirty years in all forms of accordion music including folk, dance, classical, rock, experimental, theatre music and more. His studies in the progressive and innovative Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department were a critical factor in Pohjonen’s transition to the boldly creative and versatile musician / performer he is today. Currently, Pohjonen is simultaneously involved in numerous projects:

-Kimmo Pohjonen and sampling master Samuli Kosminen meets Kronos Quartet in the Uniko project featuring music composed by Pohjonen and Kosminen. Successful Uniko performances took place in Helsinki, Moscow and Molde Jazz Festival plus three sold put shows at BAM NEXT WAVE festival in New York. The Uniko album with Pohjonen, Kosminen and Kronos was recorded in New York and Helsinki from 2007-2010, produced by Iceland’s Valgeir Sigurðsson and was released worldwide by Ondine label of Finland in February 2011. The Uniko DVD with Kronos was released worldwide by CMajor. Uniko is also performed with Finland’s Proton String Quartet and have had successful concerts in Finland, Estonia, Germany, Portugal, Turkey and Macau. Pohjonen, Kosminen and Proton will perform Uniko in December 2011 at Ancienne Belgique in Brussels.

-KTU (pronounced ”K2”) is the band featuring Pohjonen with Texans Pat Mastelotto and Trey Gunn from King Crimson. The second KTU album, entitled Quiver, was released in February 2009 in Europe, Japan and America. Concert successes include Helsinki, Moscow, Tampere Jazz Happening, Tallinn, Moers Festival, Jena, Tokyo, Wien Accordion Festival, Ljubljana, FIMAV in Victoriaville (Canada), Nattjazz (Norway), SPOT Festival (Denmark), Pohoda Festival (Slovakia) with the highlights being the 2005 FMM Festival in Sines (Portugal) for an audience of 7000, their 2007 North American tour featuring two nights in Mexico City and Etnosur Festival (Spain) for 20000 people. KTU returned to FMM, Sines and performed on the same bill with Patti Smith and Keith Emerson in Kazan, Tatarstan 2008. The first KTU album 8 Armed Monkey (also featuring sampling genius Samuli Kosminen) was released in 2005.

-Kimmo Pohjonen performs in duo formation with sampling master Samuli Kosminen (also known from Icelandic band MuM) or Juuso Hannukainen (who also plays with Sami singer Winme). Accordion samples and voice samples combine with live electronic accordion and voice to produce what has been described as “like being inside an accordion tornado”.

K Cube trio features Kimmo Pohjonen – accordion, Sami Kuoppamäki – drums and Timo Kämäräinen – guitars. The K Cube focus is on instrumental solo, duo and trio compositions, improvisations and explorations. They have toured Finland, Belgium and Netherlands.

-Kimmo Pohjonen’s Accordion Wrestling project featuring Pohjonen and ten Finnish wrestlers, is a revival of Finnish wrestling tradition from early to mid-1900s where accordion was included as musical accompaniment for wrestling matches. Accordion Wrestling expands the tradition into a theatrical sport, dance and music performance art piece with direction / choreography by Ari Numminen, light design by Mikki Kunttu and sound design by Heikki Iso-Ahola. Finnish wrestling group: Helsinki Nelson. Twelve performances took place in Finland in 2010 and again at Kampnagel, Hamburg in February 2011 at the Rantakala Festival. Accordion Wrestling will be performed in UK and NYC in 2012. Pohjonen collaborated with K Cube, Proton String Quartet, director Kari Heiskanen and Ari Numminen for the performance called Battle at Turku Cultural Capital 2011 events, Aug 31, Sept 2 and Sept 3 at Paavo Nurmi Stadium.


-Pohjonen meets visual performance artist Ville Walo in the project called Rautakeuhko "Iron Lung" The hour long music theatre performance art piece features Walo and Pohjonen and over one hundred accordion bellows and music composed by Pohjonen. Its premiere was at Verkatehdas, Vanajasali in Hämeenlinna, Finland in December 2009. It was also performed in Szczecin, Poland at the Kontrapunkt festival April 2011 and again in Helsinki May 2011.

-Pohjonen works in an improvisation duo with French drummer, Eric Echampard. Their album Uumen was released by Rockadillo and Westpark and they have performed in Finland, France, Estonia, Norway and Netherlands.

-Pohjonen has composed and performed music for three films: the British short film Flickerman and the Ivory-Skinned Woman, the Russian full length feature film, Majak and, with Samuli Kosminen, the full length Finnish feature film Jade Warrior where they won the Finnish Jussi Award for Best Film-Score. They have also composed music for a Finnish "new circus theatre" performance, Keskusteluaja.

-A full length documentary film about Pohjonen, entitled Soundbreaker, was completed in 2011. Directed by Kimmo Koskela, the film is a portrait of Pohjonen from early years to the present including archive and current material, interviews, concert video and more.

-Pohjonen’s soló show continues to tour regularly worldwide. He will tour Australia, New Zealand and Singapore in March 2012.

-Pohjonen enjoys a high profile UK with performances at The Proms at Royal Albert Hall London, Jazz Festival at the Barbican, Kalmuk and Kluster at Queen Elizabeth Hall and solo in the Purcell Room. Pohjonen has performed at two Meltdown Festivals in London. Pohjonen / Kosminen Kluster at David Bowie’s Meltdown performed one set of Bowie music followed by their own show. At Patti Smith’s Meltdown at Royal Festival Hall 2005, Pohjonen and drummer Sami Kuoppamäki participated in the Songs of Experience concert performing music of Jimi Hendrix. Pohjonen was nominated for BBC Radio 3 World Music Awards in 2002 and 2005 for the BBC Radio 3 Planet Award.

-Kimmo Pohjonen has received two consecutive five year artist grants from the Finnish state. He was Named "Accordionist of the Year" for 2000 and 2001 in Finnish Jazz magazine Jazz Rytmit and received the Nordic Council Music Award.

-Past projects include:
-Kalmuk, featuring fifteen piece Tapiola Sinfonietta orchestra plus Samuli Kosminen, a second percussionist, light show and surround sound. Kalmuk premiered in Helsinki 2000 then toured UK in 2002 with a simultaneous DVD release featuring extra video effects and archive film footage.
-Animator featured Pohjonen with live computer designs by multimedia artist / designer Marita Liulia and live video mix by Antti Kuivalainen. Successful concerts took place in Helsinki, Wien, Dusseldorf and in the late 2005 tour of Portugal.
-The Manipulator project, 2002, featured multimedia artist Marita Liulia and buto dancer / choreographer Aki Suzuki and was performed in Helsinki, Sweden, Belgium. In Helsinki, the show was six hours of improvised performance on each of three days, total eighteen hours. Folk music groups included the side project Pinnin Pojat with JPP fiddler Arto Järvelä and Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department group Ottopasuauna.

Discography:
Kielo 1999 (Finland: Rockadillo, Japan: P Vine, France: Harmonia Mundi World Village)
Kluster 2002 (Finland: Rockadillo, Germany: Westpark)
Kalmuk 2002 (Westpark)
Kalmuk DVD Symphony 2002 (Lilith)
Iron Lung 2004 (Russia: Soyuz) (compilation from Kielo and Kluster)
Kimmo Pohjonen and Eric Echampard – Uumen 2005 (Finland: Rockadillo, Germany: Westpark)
KTU – 8 Armed Monkey 2005 (Finland: Rockadillo, Germany: Westpark, North America: Thirsty Ear, Japan: Besection)
KTU – Quiver 2009 (Finland and Europe: Rockadillo / Westpark. Japan: Disk Union. America: 7dMedia)
Kimmo Pohjonen / Samuli Kosminen / Kronos Quartet – Uniko 2011 (Ondine)
Kimmo Pohjonen / Samuli Kosminen / Kronos Quartet – Uniko DVD 2011 (CMajor)

“Pohjonen, ... proved himself, in the course of that hour, to be truly an innovator on his instrument and in his conception of improvised music. Layering chords upon chords and building to crescendos of melodic and harmonic extravagance by means of a seamless production of gradually mounting orchestral body from his instrument, pedaled special-effects such as loops, sampling, and playback, and guttural vocalizations, moans, and insect-like buzzes via a tiny mic resting upon his left cheek, Pohjonen rocked back and forth demonically on his stool, his face often contorted in emotional pain. So distraught did he appear in his final ten minutes or so onstage, as he hurled himself forward onto his feet into a crouch several times, pumping the accordion and manipulating its keys and buttons as though possessed by a spirit (as well he may have been -- the program parenthetically included as among his musical styles "shamanistic trance"), I thought that he would wrest the accordion from his shoulders by its straps and smash it on the stage...... .......Kimmo Pohjonen’s performance proved to be a riveting musical and surreal theatrical experience, a multi-dimensional display of totally original, astonishingly eccentric, and unabashedly uncompromising artistic genius. I can't think of any performance of recent years that has so moved me” (www.jazzhouse.org)