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## J.D.Hive ISN'T DINNER LOVELY TONIGHT?

**Johannes Dickbauer:** violin, compositions  
**Sebastian Schneider:** piano  
**Andreas Waelti:** double bass  
**András Dés:** percussion

### J.D. HIVE - ISN'T DINNER LOVELY TONIGHT

Different than in classical music, the violin is one of the rather rare attractions in jazz, even though the great violin virtuosos of improvised music, from Grapelli to Ponty to Didier Lockwood, have set milestones of their own kind. Johannes Dickbauer, head and name-giver of the new quartet J.D.HIVE, has been active in both genres for many years. He has already celebrated several successes balancing on the tightrope between classical music and jazz.

For example, with the radio.string.quartet.vienna. The ensemble was a sensation at the 2006 Jazzfest Berlin when they interpreted pieces of the Mahavishnu Orchestra. The head of the Mahavishnu Orchestra, John McLaughlin, expressed his enthusiasm in the liner notes of the album released in 2007, and the media was also full of praise. About three years and two more productions later Johannes Dickbauer left the quartet to realise his personal ideas as a composer and bandleader.

His latest formation, J.D.HIVE, achieves this goal with outstanding elegance and unpretentious brilliance. The blending of once supposedly rigid genre boundaries alone is no longer unusual today, but the level at which J.D.HIVE's stylistic mix is performed stands out by far and can be considered groundbreaking. Especially since there are also folk elements, in addition to the jazz and classical music, flowing into the band's debut.

The music on *Isn't Dinner Lovely Tonight* thrives on the band's agile and attentive joy of playing as well as the intuitive understanding among the musicians. Also a major influence on the quartet's distinctive musical language is Dickbauer's personal style as a composer. "For me, music means evoking a feeling and reaching the soul. I want to take the audience on a journey without being too descriptive." With this motivation, he finds a perfect balance of intimacy and sophistication, of catchy motifs and beautiful melodies, surprising twists and subtle nuances. "It is about the essence of chamber music, in which quiet passages and strong dynamics are very important. Perhaps my notation is more extensive and detailed than usual in jazz. But I also purposely leave open spaces in the arrangements that we fill together."

Johannes Dickbauer sees himself as a musical storyteller, which is reflected in the longer arcs of suspense that many of his compositions have. Some ideas he draws from everyday life, other pieces reflect his thoughts and emotions on aspects of world events. The title track, for example, refers to a situation at home when he and his wife have prepared a nice dinner and the delightful idyll is shattered by one or more of their children. "The song illustrates our hustle and bustle at home, but we try to stay relaxed about it," Dickbauer laughs.

"Race Against 1.5" is devoted to global warming and the Paris Agreement. "Besides the things I can do at home, like building ecologically, eating organic sustainable products from the region, and so on, I see the track as a small contribution as it should provoke some thought." Equally political, "Lost Caravan", driven by a 7/8 beat a bit reminiscent of Eastern European music, has the refugee caravan in Mexico in mind. The former U.S. president's populist plans to build a wall and its financing concerned him particularly here, Dickbauer says, and at the same time the fact that such an important topic can quickly disappear from public awareness when it is replaced by new "breaking news". Discussions during the pandemic and their hardening fronts are the background of "Vaccine Frenzy", with its unconventional cross-rhythms, consisting of cycles of seven and five over a 4/4 time signature. Generally, metric ideas contribute a lot to the musical excitement. Like when an actually straight 4/4 is combined with an odd meter ("Broken Reflections"), when a chord comes too early (i.e. on the four instead of the one), or when polyrhythmic shifts within the measures destabilise.

The core of J.D.HIVE was formed in 2020, due to the invitation to the international Zbignief Seifert competition in Poland. Dickbauer and his fellow musicians were awarded one of the top two prizes and again received positive feedback from the media. London Jazz News, for example, described their music as "classical chamber jazz of the highest quality; ECM worthy." A while later Andreas Waelti joined the band as the last permanent member.

Johannes Dickbauer considers his quartet a new start in some aspects. "With Sebastian's piano, there is a harmony instrument for the first time, which I like very much," he says, describing a distinctive difference to his previous ensembles. Furthermore, everyone is very interested in his music and eager to work on and refine the compositions together. Also characteristic of J.D.HIVE is drummer András Dés with his unconventionally selected equipment. "I wanted András to join because I had heard his fine and yet powerful way of accompanying in his other projects," says Dickbauer. Dés does not use a kick drum but instead plays a cajon and also employs a frame drum, tambourine, bells and other similar fine percussion. This creates a delicate sound, yet at the same time Dés is able to unleash exhilarating grooves.

If you ask the bandleader about his sources of inspiration, from the jazz field he names big bands ("because of the sound"), Pat Metheny (especially his album *The Way Up*) as well as Michael Brecker. "For me, saxophonists and guitarists were more important than violinists. Except for Didier Lockwood, with his insane energy, and Mark Feldman, who impressed me with his fervour rather than a purely academic approach." From the classical context, Dickbauer points to Stravinsky (especially *Sacre du printemps*), Bartók, and violinists like Pekka Kuusisto and Augustin Hadelich (Schubert and Brahms) as inspiration.

In 1984 Johannes Dickbauer was born into a musical environment. His uncle and aunt are professionals, and his brother and sister also made careers as musicians. "It was normal for us to learn an instrument," Dickbauer says laconically. At the age of four he started with the violin, two years later he started learning the piano as well; at the age of 12 he switched from classical to jazz piano. All the while, the violin remained his main instrument. From 2002 to 2007, Dickbauer studied at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, and before that at the Mozarteum Salzburg and the University of Music in Vienna. Following his return from the United States, he joined the already mentioned radio.string.quartet.vienna. After that, his creativity flowed primarily into his nonet or octet called Dickbauer Collective. In 2014 and 2018 it released two albums in different formations, with Klaus Dickbauer, Manu Mayer, Herbert Pirker, Mario Rom, Asja Valcic, Patrice Héral and others.

The unique group dynamic of J.D.HIVE is already exhibited on the studio recordings of *Isn't Dinner Lovely Tonight*, and of course even more so live. Recently, the quartet was a highlight of the European Jazzmeeting, if not of the entire Jazzahead 2022 in Bremen. Dickbauer's "beehive" apparently functions a lot like the insect community, that is, equally precise as surprising, developing enormous intensity in the process. Dickbauer wrote some of the album's tracks specifically for the new quartet, while others were started earlier, but were never completed to satisfaction until the founding of J.D.HIVE. "Some pieces seem to have been waiting for this band," the bandleader rejoices, "they are just now reaching their full potential." With their charismatic debut album, Johannes Dickbauer and his quartet are innovatively and successfully continuing to write the history of the violin in jazz.

**web:** <https://www.johannesdickbauer.com/jdhive/>