



Tord Gustavsen Trio

The Other Side

ECM 675 1618 ★★★★★

Tord Gustavsen (p, elec), Sigurd Hole (b) and Jarle Vespestad (d). Rec. 8-10 January 2018

This album had me at hello, which in the case of *The Other Side* consists of the rolled, bluesily meditative opening notes of track number one, 'The Tunnel'. Like the title number, it has a lovely case of the 'Nordic blues', a style that Tord Gustavsen first expounded and explored on the trilogy of trio

albums he released with ECM in the first decade of the new millennium (*Changing Places, The Ground, Being There*). Since then the Norwegian piano man has expanded his palette – recording albums with his Ensemble (featuring sax and vocals), Quartet (sax) and 2016's *What Was Said*, with singer Simin Tander and regular drummer Jarle Vespestad – so that *The Other Side* represents Gustavsen's first piano-trio disc as leader in 10 years. The playing is spare and highly sensual, the approach being derived from the blues and gospel traditions so that, as Gustavsen himself has noted in the past, the tunes have the character of 'wordless hymns': indeed, along with the originals here, are settings of Bach chorales. The results are deeply romantic and sweetly hypnotic. **Robert Shore**