

SWEDISH JAZZ

1899-1930

SVENSK
JAZZHISTORIA
VOL.1
SWEDISH JAZZ up to 1930

V A R N I N G F Ö R J A Z Z !

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Dessa böga publikförfattare
av National utlämningslöbiller
en ledande ställning som Stock-
holms populäraste Danssalat.

Allen Hedbergs
dansorkester.

Jazz är en hemsk infektionssjukdom, som med stora steg närmar sig våra friska kuster. Den är särskilt farlig, emedan dess första symptom i akuta stadiet ej verkar på något sätt oroande utan tvärtom i viss mån stimulerande och uppiggande. Men den blir snart kronisk och det är då patienten vrider sig i namnlösa smärtor mot vilka de som åstadkommas av den av Belzebub uppfunna ultramoderna musiken äro rena bagateller.

Jazz är importerad från Amerika och har på kort tid nedsmittat alla kaféer och danslokaler i London för att så småningom sprida sig till Paris och Berlin för att nu ej tala om alla mondäna badorter.

KRISTALLEN 8.30-2 Helge Lindberg med sin egen Dansorkester

Offre för alla under
dessa böga löbiller
om de inte äro
meddelade av
Nylanseriet.

In 1919, the word “Jazz” appeared in Sweden, and the 1920’s became “The Jazz Era” for the Swedes. Yet, when you listen to Swedish recordings from this period, it is difficult to find anything that can be classified as “jazz” (as we think of it today), or which can be compared with American jazz of the same period. The genuine New Orleans jazz, and the blues music, were almost unknown by the Swedes until the 30’s; the jazz form that spread to Europe at the end of the first world war in 1918 was a second-hand white version which was built more on the popular dance music from the 1910’s (onestep, two-step and foxtrot), than on the black improvised music. It is doubtful if the American musicians, who toured Sweden in the early 20’s, knew very much about King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, or Bessie Smith. The word “jazz”, and similarly “blues” (which came to Sweden in the early 1920’s), was quite simply a “fashion concept” and not a musical form (in about the same way as the word “pop” was during the 60’s). “Jazz” was thus an indistinct term used to describe the new dance music.

Why then, have we produced an album with Swedish “jazz” from the 20’s? Because the music is interesting, and seldom heard nowadays. Today’s and yesterday’s Swedish jazz has developed as a result of impulses from many sources, not least from the USA. Undoubtedly, there are certain national individualities in every country’s jazz musicians; influences from folk music and national popular music. It could therefore

be interesting to follow the development of Swedish jazz and how it came to be: when the first improvised solos suddenly pop up in a revue number or in a corny popular song, played in a strutting foxtrot rhythm.

In this album, we want to give an account of a portion of a bygone era of Swedish jazz. The young musicians taught themselves to play jazz by buying new American sheet music and records, which they studied carefully and then imitated. It wasn’t until the late 20’s that the Swedish musicians first dared to improvise a solo, and the earliest influences on them came from the white American musicians such as trumpet player Red Nichols, saxophonist Jimmy Dorsey, violinist Joe Venuti, and trombonist Miff Mole. A good deal of impulses and ideas also came from English radio programs, while the first recordings of black jazz musicians didn’t reach Sweden until around 1930. In 1925, a black jazz orchestra under direction of Sam Wooding played for two weeks in Stockholm.

There never was any conscious producing of jazz in the Swedish recording studios of the 20’s. Something that might be interesting for the jazz enthusiast though, is the short solo-sections in the extremely commercial recordings, in which the early Swedish jazz musicians participated. The first generation of Swedish jazz musicians included names such as the trumpet players Ragge Låth, the brothers Gösta “Smyget” and Elis “Plutten” Redlig and Gösta “Chicken” Törnblad, the violinist Folke “Göken” Andersson and the saxophonists/clarinetists Tony Mason and Olle Henricson

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(all born between 1900 and 1910). Among the most important orchestras were Helge Lindberg's (1:13, 20, 11:9, 10, 21, 25) and an orchestra led by the English violinist Dick de Pauw (1:16, 19) and above all, the so called Svenska Paramount-orkesteren ("the Swedish Paramount Orchestra") which is regarded as the country's first genuine jazz orchestra. In 1926, the core of the orchestra played on an Atlantic steamer to New York, where they had a chance to listen to musicians such as Bix Beiderbecke and Joe Venuti. Unfortunately, the Paramount Orchestra made mainly commercial recordings – beside the ones we can hear in this album (11:4–7). We have also included a few tunes from a radio program in 1952 played by a temporarily resurrected Paramount Orchestra (11:1–3), which give us an idea of how the band is likely to have played 25 years earlier.

To the pioneers also belonged T.O.G.O. – The Original Green Orchestra – which was a group of young students who devoted their free-time to playing jazz, influenced by the Chicago style of the late 20's (1:22, 23).

It is important to note, that before a recording session, with its primitive techniques and no possibility for editing afterwards, it was common that the solo parts were written down as part of the arrangement. Folke Andersson (Paramount Orchestra's leader) once recalled that his own violin solos, as well as those for trumpet, alto sax, and piano, were written down by him for the orchestra's recording sessions. "But then the boys let loose a little bit anyway!" he added. And "let loose" is also what trombonist Harry Hednoff does in his solo on *He's the hottest man in town* (L13), which could be regarded as the first Swedish jazz solo on record, made in the beginning of 1926 by The Crystal Band.

The fact that no possibilities for editing existed, plus that just a few takes were allowed, overtly affected the musicians. They had to be very attentive, which certainly made for a nervous atmosphere among the less experienced musicians (small mistakes can be heard here and there); and surely the slightly fumbling trumpet player in Fagerlund's orchestra from Gothenburg never

dreamed that we would be listening to his contribution more than half a century later. But, in any case, that recording (11:20) shows that there did exist jazz soloists outside the country's capital city in the late 20's. This is also true for the piano-duo Heden-Mannheimer, also from Gothenburg, even if it is a question of a more "cocktail piano" type of jazz (1:17).

"Double piano", meaning two players at one or two pianos, was not uncommon in those days. Georg Enders and Bertil Forsberg made up one of the most famous duos. Their recording of *The Red and Blue Blues* (11:18) is not at all a "blues" but more in the "symphonic" jazz style, which was a novelty at the time.

We have thus included recordings which in a slightly superficial way have something to do with jazz. Besides the mentioned piano-duo, "symphonic" or "cocktail jazz" was also played by the academically taught musicians in "Grew's Jazz Orchestra" (11:12) and by the cafe-trio Paley-Stoupel, with their written down "hot music" (1:24). We have also attempted to give examples of the musical development which lies just before the breakthrough of jazz in Sweden. If a Swedish "ragtime" recording from 1913 (1:2) sounds more like a march, it can presumably depend on the fact that the musicians had never heard how ragtime was played in America. They had only the written music to go by and interpreted it in the ordinary European way. On a newly discovered cylinder roll from the turn of the century (1:1), we can hear a military band from the south of Sweden make an effort to play the new American music with some kind of "swing". Evidently the syncopation of ragtime and similar music could be executed in different manners even at this early stage. About 1913–14 a real "negro band" played ragtime in Sweden, so when accordionist Calle Jularbo recorded *American rag* in 1916 (1:3) the Swedish musicians knew more about how to perform this kind of music.

During the 1920's there raged a bitter debate about "jazz" in Sweden. A number of leading culture personalities, as well as the "Swedish Musicians' Union", condemned jazz and wanted the government to forbid the import of this "infectious disease". Not until 1930 did

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the official opinion soften, and the Musicians' Union even arranged “propaganda” concerts of Swedish jazz. A contributory factor was possibly that the sound movie had now come and put cinema musicians out of work. Many of these musicians subsequently went over to playing jazz and dance music.

It was on the threshold of the 30's when interesting things began to happen with jazz in Sweden. The soloists soon became more daring in their improvisations. The orchestras became larger, better rehearsed and had more well-sounding arrangements; and not least, the rhythm sections became more effective and more swinging. Listen to, for example, Lindberg's recordings from 1930 (11:21,25). What was to come during the following decade was more solo space and more pure jazz recordings.

“Big Band” music was also just “around the corner”. Håkan von Eichwald made his debut in 1930, when he was 22 years old, as leader of the first permanent big band in Stockholm. Just one or two years later, this orchestra was famous on the whole continent after an European tour. When von Eichwald, and similarly his colleague Georg Enders, put together their new orchestras, there already existed a young generation of prepared jazz musicians to turn to. How this generation developed after 1930 is presented in the second volume of this anthology.

Unfortunately, the Swedish record companies have not saved the matrixes, and not even the records. We have been referred to record collectors and the Swedish Radio and a few other archives, who have lent us their more or less wornout rarities. Also, in reference to the recording information, there are few documents, recording ledgers, and the like which have been preserved, and as a result the discographical facts about musicians and recording dates are, in many cases, lacking or uncertain. ■