

SWEDISH JAZZ

1937-1939

SVENSK
JAZZHISTORIA
VOL. 3

SWEDISH JAZZ 1937-39

2 CD

RYTM OCH SWING



Rytm och swing är vår stora hobby.
Utan swing är livet ingenting.
Rytm och swing kan vi ej försaka.
Tag allting men låt oss ha vår swing.
Alexanders Ragtime Band gav oss rätta stilen.
Sedan dess gå hand i hand.
Ellington, Gene Krupa, Benny Goodman.
Rytm och swing kan vi ej försaka.
Tag allting men låt oss ha vår swing.

Text: Folke Erbo (efter idé av Sam Samson)




Waltz Fall

DANS

I AFTON 8.30—2
SÖNDAG 8.15—1

Malte Johnsons orkester

Obs! På grund av märklagning söndag kväll säljer biljetter till denna danslokal i kväll samt söndag middag kl. 2-4

Håkan v. Eichwald

och hans nya, härliga orkester... den största orkester... och hans nya, härliga orkester... den största orkester... och hans nya, härliga orkester... den största orkester...

The latter half of the 1930's saw a new period in the history of Swedish jazz. The watchword in many senses was "swing". The word was repeated in song lyrics, advertising, in daily speech. It became the rage. In the beginning the word "swing" was the American jazz musicians' way of describing a musical feeling when the music did swing, actually a rather subtle and ambiguous musical term. But in the second half of the 1930's the word increasingly became a commercial cliché to describe a brilliant, sometimes virtuoso music, often in a fast tempo. At the end of the decade it even happened that jazz critics complained that there were too many swing records – the public couldn't assimilate everything and musicians didn't have time to develop artistically.

In Sweden, swing was to a great extent the music of teenagers, with an effect that can only be compared with the breakthrough of rock music around 1960. Many young people began to play and hundreds of young musicians took lessons from experienced teachers, at, among other places, the "dance music schools" that existed in the major cities. In this album we can hear a number of musicians in their debut, when they just turned 20. There are also some teenage musicians, but the most renowned vocalist was without doubt the 15-year-old Alice Babs (11:21–22), who had an explosive effect on the Swedish world of swing. Even if Sweden had previously had a few vocalists influenced by jazz now for the first time the nation had a singer who approached American swing music with the right

feeling. Initially, however, her English pronunciation was not the very best (she had only studied English a couple of terms in school). She was to become the great teenage idol of the 1940's in Sweden and in the 1960's she began what was to be a long collaboration with Duke Ellington.

However, the leading soloists, particularly in Arne Hülphers' and Håkan von Eichwald's big bands in Stockholm, still had the greatest influence on Swedish jazz music at the end of the 1930's. These soloists often belonged to loosely formed groups under the collective name of the Swing Swingers, which the bass player Thore Jederby organized for the Swedish label Sonora. In a couple of years the Swing Swingers recorded nearly 50 record sides of small band music in an improvised jam session style, which was for that time an unusually large jazz recording frequency, even by international standards.

The musicians in Sonora's Swing Swingers series soon became idols for amateur musicians throughout the country. The tenor saxophonists in provincial orchestras did all they could to imitate Zilas Görling's style of playing, even if Zilas' own influences came, of course, from the United States. Other favorites were the multiinstrumentalist Charles Redland and the trumpet players Gösta Törner, Thore Ehrling and Gösta "Smyget" Redlig.

Redlig, whose timeless trumpet playing can be enjoyed in *Honeysuckle Rose* (1:3), belonged to the first generation of Swedish jazz musicians, those who

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appeared in the middle of the 1920's. Several of his generation were also popular at the end of the 1930's, e.g. the violinist Folke "Göken" Andersson (1:5), the pianist and accordionist Nisse Lind (1:7, 1:21-22, 11:2, 22), the trumpeter Gösta "Chicken" Törnblad (1:19), and the drummer Anders Soldén, who is heard in several of the recordings in this album.

Törnblad was trumpet soloist in the 14-man dance and entertainment orchestra that the Swedish Broadcasting Company employed full-time, beginning in 1936. Sune Waldimir was appointed conductor and arranger for the orchestra, whose model was at the BBC in London (where the conductor was Henry Hall). There are only a few recordings preserved where Waldimir's orchestra plays music of the swing type.

The Maid's Night Off (1:19) is unfortunately an incomplete acetate disc recording made from a dance broadcast in 1938 on a homemade machine. But it shows a fairly swinging Waldimir band with a nice trumpet solo by "Chicken" Törnblad.

Arne Hülphers was the leader of what is considered the most prominent Swedish big band of the 1930's. In the last years of the decade the orchestra was more active in Germany than in Sweden. This may explain why Hülphers made relatively few recordings at that time.

In Sweden Håkan von Eichwald assumed the position of leader of the nation's most prominent big band. But that orchestra did not make many jazz recordings either. Between 1936 and 1938 von Eichwald made more than 130 sides for the Sonora record company, which evidently expended the greater part of its jazz interest on the Swing Swingers, since only eight of von Eichwald's recordings can be regarded as jazz. Like many other orchestras in Sweden of the 1930's, von Eichwald's was a "combined orchestra", that is, it was supposed to be able to play both dance and light entertainment music. As a rule the restaurants could not have more than two evenings of dancing per week. The rest of the weekdays these musicians had to play Viennese waltzes, operetta medleys and so on. It was almost obligatory for the musicians to be able to double on some instrument. Many in the wind section could, for example, also play string instruments.

In von Eichwald's recording of *Whispering* (1:23), an accordion suddenly makes its appearance, handled by the trumpet player Rune Ander. The orchestra leader and/or the record company believed that a few measures of accordion music were necessary if the record was to be sold.

The accordion became something of a symbol for Swedish swing music, especially on small dance floors across the country. There were many jazz accordionists, but few were in the same league as Nisse Lind and Erik Frank (1:5, 15, 11:8, 9, 11).

The trumpeter Thore Ehrling, who played with von Eichwald for a couple of years, formed his own orchestra in 1938, which was to be very successful. In the beginning he used an ensemble consisting of a trumpet, three saxes and rhythm. And even if there were other bands with the same group of instruments, Ehrling's orchestra became something of a model for many Swedish dance bands for years to come. *Royal strut* (11:6) is a good example of the orchestra's perfect style of playing and Ehrling's well thought-out composition and arrangement. In a unique private recording with the vocalist Mabel Albins (11:4) the band shows more of a jam session orientation, with several fine solo performances.

Sam Samson was another orchestra leader with the same kind of ensemble. But the style of playing was different from Ehrling's. Since one of the musicians doubled on the alto sax and valve trombone, Samson could vary the sound in the band, which preferred to play Ellington music (as in 11:16-17) or pieces inspired by John Kirby.

Åke Fagerlund's orchestra (11:14) from Gothenburg, among others, had the same combination of instrument (in 1:12-13 they play with a slightly larger group). In the nation's second largest city on the west coast there were several well-known jazz orchestras, but only Fagerlund's could make regular recordings. We have, however, included an acetate with a young amateur group from Gothenburg: the Waller inspired pianist Staffan Linton's quartet (11:13). Linton made recordings and broadcasts for Decca and BBC in London around 1950.

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In this album we have also included a couple of samples of the best provincial amateur bands, both from central Sweden: Whispering Band from Örebro (11:17) and the Rialto Orchestra from Ludvika (11:12), in two technically imperfect recordings which are nonetheless filled with enthusiasm.

The lengthy tours of Sweden made by three leading American big bands were of great importance, not least for the provincial bands. In 1937 Jimmie Lunceford came, Edgar Hayes toured in 1938 and as a culmination – before the outbreak of war - Duke Ellington toured in 1939. The influence from England, which had been very strong at the beginning of the decade declined in favour of the American influence. Count Basie became well known around 1938 and as soon as his records reached Sweden one can discern a clear influence on many pianists, who simplified their style à la Basie. Elements of Basie's music are present in one way or another in the album's 1939 versions of *Corrine Corrina* (11:14), *One O'clock Jump* (11:19) and *Out the Window* (11:26).

One O'clock Jump performed in a private recording by a group called Svenska Hotkvintetten, with guitarist Sven Stiberg and the violinist Emil Iwring as the leading soloists. The model for the group was the Quintette of the Hot Club of France, which had an enormous influence on jazz musicians in many European countries, not least through the guitarist Django Reinhardt. The Swedish equivalent functioned only as a studio group for a couple of years and made a large number of excellent recordings.

In this album there are also some recordings of popular songs with swing elements. In *Swing mamma, swing pappa* (11:1) there is a big band as yet unidentified, probably a studio orchestra, with a number of outstanding soloists. In *Ferdinand, Ferdinand* (11:7), we hear excellent trombone playing by Charles Redland, one of the most prominent jazz soloists of the decade – on the alto sax! He can also be heard in well formulated solos on the vibraphone (11:8) and the marimba (11:9). In both these numbers he also plays the clarinet. Redland is even heard in a rare soprano sax solo (11:10). His alto sax playing can be heard in his own compositions *Sax-cobble* (1:6) and

Slow Darkness (1:16), known as *Snöfall* (Snowfall) in Swedish. In the latter number he also plays the celesta. In fact, he played all the instruments in the orchestra. He was also active as a composer of film music.

When we looked for material for this album we came across a rather large number of privately recorded acetate discs. Before the time of tape recorders there were several recording studios, not only in Stockholm where anyone could go and immortalize “his own voice”. Many professionals and amateur musicians took advantage of the possibility of making their own records. These records were made in a single copy. The examples included in this album are valuable complements to the recordings issued by the commercial companies. No Swedish record company of that period would have been interested in even trying to sell a recording such as the lovely ballad interpretation of *I Surrender Dear* (11:23) with the young pianist Allan Johansson. We can only regret the poor sound quality of that record.

Many of the Swedish jazz musicians at the end of the 1930's probably led a rather pleasant life. They did not worry very much about the clouds of unrest gathering over Europe. Most of them were completely uninterested in politics. Although there was unemployment among Swedish musicians, and although on one occasion they gathered for a large protest against the long-term appointment of foreign musicians at one of Stockholm's most elegant dance restaurants, one has the feeling that most of the Swedish jazz musicians took life in their stride. At least up until September 1939. Even if Sweden was not involved in the Second World War, no one could avoid being affected by the international political situation, that changed everything. ■