

SWEDISH JAZZ

1943-1947



Some people in Sweden regarded jazz as a dangerous, seductive movement during the 40's. Their most famous libel was a book called *Jazzen anfaller* (Jazz Attacs), pointing at "Negro music" as a conspiracy to destroy "European culture". These attitudes were, of course, often influenced by the political movements of the times.

Although Sweden was not directly involved in World War II, it affected daily life in many ways. During the last years of the war and after "V Day", the Swedish youngsters became more and more U.S. oriented. This is clearly stated in one of the songs included on this album, *One hundred per cent (All American)*, which, despite its title, is sung in Swedish (1:9).

Up to the mid 40's, the national radio channel aimed to educate rather than to entertain. Jazz was presented two or three times a week, mostly announced as "modern dance music" and broadcast live from a studio or from different restaurants. In addition to this, eager young jazz buffs were tuning in short-wave music programs from abroad. The AFN and BFN (American/British Forces Network) stations in Europe even featured Swedish bands. Included here are recordings with Seymour Österwall (11:17-18), Malte Johnson (11:21) and Thore Ehrling (11:24) originally made for that purpose.

The release of records in Sweden was irregular. Very little was imported, and the domestic production was hampered by lack of pressing material and by union and copyright conflicts. Some popular bands were

never recorded at all, however, a few "territory bands" can be heard in this collection, thanks to radio recordings and private acetates. Sven Sjöholm (11:1) and Malte Johnson (1:21) led popular bands in Gothenburg. Gösta Tönne (11:5) and Harry Arnold (1:12) fronted long-lived and influential orchestras in Malmö. Unlike the other orchestras Arnold was recorded by a leading recording company. Bengt Thalén's orchestra, a young amateur unit from the town of Västerås, had a rare opportunity to also record for the Swedish Sonora company (1:19).

Aside from the leading professional jazz musicians of Stockholm, this album also features "Lill-Arnes sväng-gäng" (swing gang), a bunch of youngsters led by 19-year-old accordionist Lill-Arne Söderberg (1:3). Among the more advanced young musicians was also pianist Hasse Eriksson (born in 1927) (11:9, 10, 16), and Gunnar "Siljabloo" Nilson (born in 1925), who is heard in a short but very "modern" vocal (11:14). Of the up-coming musicians, born in the early or middle 20's, mention must be made also of bassist Simon Brehm, guitarist Sten Carlberg, clarinetists Åke Hasselgård (to become known as Stan Hasselgard in his short American career, 1947-48) and Putte Wickman, saxists Arne Domnérus, Georg "Jojjen" Björklund and Jan Thalén plus the trumpet section of the Lulle Ellboj big band: Nisse Skoog, Anders Swärd and Rolf Ericson – the latter also with an American career before him. Povel Ramel, who established himself during these years as one of Sweden's foremost song-writers and

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entertainers, was also very jazz oriented. In a private recording (11:22, 23), he makes a wild jazz improvisation, obviously inspired by Slim Gaillard's mixture of jazz and humour.

Seymour Österwall had one of the leading big bands and made quite a few records, although most of them in a rather popular fashion. Fortunately, some radio recordings and film sound tracks reflect the more jazz-oriented side of this fine orchestra (1:10, 11:17, 18).

The other two important big bands were led by Thore Ehrling and Lulle Ellboj. Ehrling established his orchestra in the late 30's and it was active for some 15 years on, being one of the most frequently recorded during the war years. Two versions of St. Louis Blues, from 1943 and 1947, open and close this collection, showing the development of jazz during these years. Ehrling combined swing with elegant dance band tradition of the 30's, but in 1945, the band took up modern influences such as flares and high notes in the trumpet section, exemplified in *Ridin' High* (1:18). That new way of playing had already been practised by Lulle Ellboj's band a year or so before. Ellboj led a band of skilled youngsters with a serious attitude towards jazz and an appetite for the new sounds from the u.s. Thore Ehrling remained the most popular and distinguished big band leader in Sweden for many years. His policy was to satisfy all kinds of listeners: his band played bop, dixieland, swing and also waltzes, tangos, rhumbas and the popular tunes of the day.

Bebop and traditional dixieland became popular with the young audiences in Sweden at around the same time, more precisely during the winter of 1946-47. Traditional styles, influenced by the revival-movement in the u.s., were adapted mostly by young high-school musicians, who did not record until later on. An early trace of "Swedish bop" can be found in *After You've Gone* with Simon Brehm, Arne Domnérus, Gösta Theselius & Co. (11:8). These young, modern-oriented musicians also liked to explore ballads rich, in harmony, such as *All the Things You Are* (11:10); another example is *Body and Soul* (1:22), here in well-established guitar player Sven Stiberg's version.

Although a new generation of players came to the forefront in the mid 40's, most records were still made by well-established names, especially bassist Thore Jederby and trumpeter Gösta Törner.

Swedish jazz led quite an isolated life during the war years. Not until the fall of 1946 came the first American band since 1939, Don Redman's orchestra with Don Byas, Tyree Glenn and Peanuts Holland among the soloists.

Sweden had three jazz magazines at the time, Orkester Journalen (founded in 1933 and still published), Estrad and Swing, each with a circulation of about 15,000 copies. The increasing number of local bands, amateur musicians and young talents in all parts of the country also demanded pedagogic material, which was supplied by Swedish publishers and authored by the most well-known jazz names. There was also a huge domestic production of stock arrangements.

Foreign critics and musicians were surprised and impressed by the high standards of Swedish jazz after the war. This album aims to reflect its broad quality and overall development during this short period. Unfortunately no original masters are preserved; transfers were made from 78 rpm pressings and acetate discs, except for the live version of *Lulle's Lullaby* (1:15), originally recorded by the Swedish Radio on steel tape. Aside from the musical material, we have included two short radio interviews with young swing fans (1:4, 23). It is our hope that listeners, who don't understand Swedish, will feel fully compensated by the musical and historical value of the other material included. ■