

# SWEDISH JAZZ

## 1960-1964



**T**he situation for jazz in Sweden went through changes in very many respects when the “Golden Years” of the 1950’s passed into the 60’s. The music began to sound different, and the social environment evolved into something else. At the same time as jazz disappeared as a popular form of dance music, the methods of expression and channels for jazz became more diversified: it was played in collaboration with ballet, poetry, theatre, film, chamber music or symphony orchestra and – in Sweden, not least – folk music.

In the early Sixties the Swedish jazz magazines, *Orkester Journalen* (oj) and *Estrad*, wrote about a general crisis. The situation was similar in both USA and Europe, when pop and rock took over much of the interest in the media. Jazz records were selling less, and there were fewer being produced. Fewer jazz concerts drew fewer people, and so on. At the same time the music was developing in advanced ways, something of which many of the older jazz fans did not approve while not enough new fans came to replace them. So in 1963, after its 25th year, *Estrad* left the scene to oj – which still exists (2017) as the oldest regular jazz magazine in the world.

However, much of the jazz music that was played in Sweden during these difficult years must today be considered as very interesting, to such an extent that this decade could also just as well be regarded as the “Golden Years” – that is, from a strictly musical point of view. This is a reason why we have added a fourth

CD to this album, which also has to do with the fact that most of the tracks are much longer than before.

As Swedish jazz musicians increasingly left the dance spots, they found new venues for playing at places like the Golden Circle Restaurant (Gyllene Cirkeln) and the Museum of Modern Art, plus a number of smaller and occasional clubs in Stockholm. The music was intended for listeners only. Similar things happened in the other bigger cities in the country, like Göteborg (Gothenburg) on the west coast, Malmö in the south and Umeå in the north. The legendary Nalen in Stockholm inevitably lost its importance as a jazz stage when it changed its musical policy to pop and rock.

One of the more popular new jazz styles in the early 1960’s was “Soul”, and a couple of years later “Bossa nova”. The young modernists had idols like Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, Sonny Rollins and Art Blakey’s *Jazz Messengers*. More jazz styles than ever before were being played. That was also relevant for Dixieland and traditional groups in Sweden. Some of them, like *Imperial Band* went back to early New Orleans compositions played in the authentic style, while others, like *Cave Stompers*, *Storyville Creepers* and *Jazz Doctors*, found new ways of playing “trad”, including their own compositions and also Swedish folk tunes. They toured abroad in Europe, as did the leading modernists such as the groups of pianist Staffan Abeleen, trombonist Eje Thelin and saxophonist Bernt Rosengren. Also, two

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renowned Swedish musicians, trumpeter Rolf Ericson and drummer Nils-Bertil (Bert) Dahlander, played with leading American bands: Ericson with Mingus and Ellington to mention just two, Dahlander often with the Teddy Wilson trio. Drummer Rune Carlsson played a year in Germany with trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff, baritone sax player and composer Lars Gullin lived a couple of years in Copenhagen, and in Paris some younger Swedes, such as trumpeter Lalle Svensson, played for a year or two.

**T**wo leading American musicians had made their home in Sweden in the late 50's: trumpeter Benny Bailey and drummer Joe Harris, their presence having a very positive effect upon the younger Stockholm musicians. Similarly, in the early 60's, trumpeter Idrees Sulieman, saxophonist/flutist Sahib Shihab, and the Ellington bassist Jimmy Woode settled here for some years. In the middle of the decade, trumpeter Nat Pavone and trombonist Kenny Rupp came to be featured as section leaders in both the Putte Wickman big band and the Swedish Radio Studio Orchestra led by Harry Arnold. About the same time, composer, pianist and theorist George Russell also settled in Stockholm. Another important immigrant was trumpeter Don Cherry, who lived in Sweden for many years. Other Americans chose Copenhagen as their hometown, such as Stan Getz in the 50's and Dexter Gordon in the 60's. Both were to take part in many tours in this country together with Swedish musicians. Gordon's significance for jazz in Sweden during these years cannot be overestimated.

As before, American jazz stars appeared on the biggest concert hall stages in Stockholm, Gothenburg and sometimes other cities. Norman Granz continued the annual concert tours by "Ella & Oscar" (Fitzgerald & Peterson). Among the attractions were also artists like Art Blakey, Cannonball Adderley, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Duke Ellington, and the Modern Jazz Quartet. Great impact was made, on at least the younger modern musicians, by the visits of John Coltrane 1960-63, the first time as a member of the Miles Davis quintet, as well as the Sonny Rollins quartet with Don Cherry in 1963 and the Charles Mingus

sextet in 1964. Even if the Swedish "folk parks" did not employ jazz bands as in the 50's to play for dancers, they organized some remarkable one-month tours with the big bands of Quincy Jones in 1960, Count Basie in 1962 and 1963, Duke Ellington also in 1963 and Woody Herman in 1964. These bands played all over Sweden, both concerts and for dancers – and it was successful!

A phenomenon new to our country was jazz festivals held over two or three days, often out of doors. One of the first took place in Landskrona in the south in the summer of 1963, with the Count Basie orchestra, an international big band directed by Quincy Jones, the Arne Domnerus band, Monica Zetterlund, Lars Guilin, Bernt Rosengren and many local musicians – a real jazz feast in other words!

**E**ven if jazz was regarded as only of minority interest, it could still often appear in our most important media, seen in the daily papers and heard on the Swedish Radio with its three channels. Live concerts were broadcast during lunchtime once a week for school kids. These were called "Schoolways" and featured our leading jazz men. Another weekly broadcast was called "Jazz vid midnatt" (Jazz at Midnight), live from The Golden Circle, Nalen and other places. For TV viewers there was still just one channel (black and white), which meant that most Swedes could see the jazz spectacular "Trumpeten", 30 minutes at prime time produced almost every month during 1962-65. In that program all kinds of jazz were presented, from traditional and swing right up to the most avant-garde, performed by well-known names and promising newcomers, both Swedish and foreign musicians. The Swedish tv also produced some special features, like a one-hour Duke Ellington show in Stockholm with Alice Babs as guest vocalist, and one Louis Armstrong show with Monica Zetterlund as guest.

This may give the impression of quite good times, but compared with the teenage rock scene it was close-to-nothing-cold winds were indeed blowing over Swedish jazz. Forgotten were the opportunities of being able to play more or less nightly, even if it was primarily for dancers. Many leading musicians

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could not perform jazz regularly, and some of them began to rent cheap premises for the sake of having the chance to play – with or without an audience. One of them was the foremost young tenor saxophonist Bernt Rosengren, who sometimes had to survive on the money he received from the social security system.

**R**eflecting upon the new musicians during the 60's it seems as though most of them played tenor saxophone. Besides Rosengren, there were names like Nisse Sandström, Bosse Wärmell, Börje Fredriksson, Björn Netz, Ulf Andersson, Lennart Åberg in the Stockholm area, Leif Heilman in Umeå, Gilbert Holmström and Thomas Fehling in Gothenburg, all of them born around 1940.

Many of the musicians in this album were born in the middle of the 1930's and thus still in their twenties when these recordings were made. Only a few of them were older, such as Arne Domnérus, Putte Wickman and Alice Babs, all three born in 1924. But the real senior was trumpeter Gösta Törner. In Sweden it was regarded as almost a sensation that such a "veteran" musician, turning 50 in 1962, still could play jazz!

Of the many new styles that appeared, the most controversial was "free form" or "free jazz", which turned away from many of the traditional structures and guidelines. The wayward saxophone player Bengt "Frippe" Nordström was regarded with mistrust by the establishment, but today, some years after his death, he has a reputation as a free jazz pioneer, even internationally. Nordström was also the first to discover Albert Ayler, at that time an unknown American saxophonist visiting Sweden, and in 1962 he took the initiative to produce the first Ayler LP (today a much sought-after collectors' item).

**J**azz made in Sweden during the 60's was, as always, influenced by American music, but profiles like Lars Gullin, Nils Lindberg, Lars Färnlöf, Börje Fredriksson, Bengt-Arne Wallin, Bengt Hallberg, Georg Riedel and Jan Johansson had ideas of their own and a musical language that was personal. Pianist Johansson probably had the widest spectrum and was curious about many

different kinds of music, popular, classical, old and new, European, African, American – for instance the Dixieland tune *The Chant* (111:6), initially recorded by Jelly Roll Morton in 1926.

"Cross-over" or fusion between different styles was another innovation.

Nils Lindberg and Bengt Hallberg created interesting mixtures of symphonic or chamber music and jazz (111:10 and 1v:8). Some groups tried to mix jazz and rock, but in Sweden the most successful fusion came to be that of jazz and folk music. When Jan Johansson recorded a collection of old fiddlers' tunes, he called the album "Jazz på svenska" (Jazz in Swedish). It became a big seller, as did trumpeter/arranger Bengt-Arne Wallin's LP "Old Folklore in Swedish Modern". This development was to have a profound influence on much of the music in Sweden for decades to come. ■