

Oscar and Jan

OSCAR PETTIFORD and JAN JOHANSSON IN DENMARK FEATURING STAN GETZ

Stunt Records



Stunt Records CD
STUCD 16022



For many of the American musicians that visited Europe on their own or as members of touring bands, Sweden was the most important stop outside of Paris. In the 1950's Swedish jazz had become a brand in American music business. Visiting American musicians sat in with their Swedish counterparts and recorded with them. Titled Dear Old Stockholm, the Swedish folk tune Ack Värmland du sköna enjoyed status close to a standard. It was no surprise that Sweden was the first important stopover for tenor saxophonist Stan Getz on his 1958 European tour. Nor was it surprising that his pianist during the engagement was Jan Johansson, or that Johansson accompanied him to Copenhagen, when Getz was offered a gig there. Johansson's special lyrical and melodic approach appealed to the romantic in Getz. That was how Johansson came to Denmark.

In Copenhagen the perfect bassist was already waiting. The 36-year old musician, Oscar Pettiford, had settled in Copenhagen after a European tour. Pettiford became part of the remarkable cultural summit that marked the beginning of the jazz club Montmartre in Copenhagen. With Pettiford's arrival, the city experienced new times.

When Montmartre became a jazz club in 1959, Stan Getz fronted a unique quartet with Johansson, Pettiford and drummer Joe Harris – another American with a Swedish connection. In the States Harris had played with the Swedish trumpeter Rolf Ericson, best known for his work with Charlie Barnet and especially Duke Ellington. Harris had played in Europe with Dizzy Gillespie's Big Band in 1948, and in 1956 Ericson brought him back.

Harris liked Sweden. When he arrived at the Montmartre, he was already married to a Swedish girl, had learnt Swedish – and even insisted on speaking it! With Harris completing the quartet, it was the perfect group. They opened the new Montmartre, which became the focus point of Copenhagen as Europe's jazz capitol, Although some considered the title slightly exaggerated, it was not totally off target.

Seen with Danish eyes, the residing foreign musicians were more or less naturalized Danes. No integration problems there. The quartet also performed outside Copenhagen, but especially Pettiford could be heard in chamber settings with vibraphonist Louis Hjulmand and Jan Johansson and others - Johansson's first idol was John Lewis of The Modern Jazz Quartet. The recording industry also profited from new blood.

Today most of these semi-Danes are dead. Pettiford only had a couple of years before his sudden demise from an apparently polio related virus. In the part of Copenhagen called Amager, streets are named after expatriate Americans like Ben Webster, Ernie Wilkins, Kenny Drew and Oscar Pettiford Street. Jan Johansson became known by every Danish child for his title tune for the successful Swedish television series based on Astris Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking stories before tragically dying in a car accident only 37-years old. Stan Getz died in 1991 and Louis Hjulmand in 2008. January 29, 2016 the news ticked in that Joe Harris had died at 89 in his hometown Pittsburgh. But their music from the formative years of the Danish jazz scene lives on in the tracks of this CD. Most of the music has not been available before now.



STUNT RECORDS

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Oscar Pettiford put a lasting mark on Danish jazz during the short time he spent here. In February 1960 he recorded five tracks, on which he was the main soloist. The music presents an outstanding opportunity to focus on one of the greatest post-war bassists. He also plays cello on the recordings.

One of the huge attractions at the jazz club Montmartre in the last half of 1959 was the quartet with Getz, Johansson, Pettiford and Harris. However, they also performed at the Tivoli Gardens, which is where the music on this CD comes from.

Pettiford's last Danish recordings took place late in August 1960. It was an EP featuring two vocalists: Grethe Kemp and bass singer Lee Gaines, who performs Bobby Timmons' Moanin'. Gaines was the co-founder and lead singer in the popular vocal group the Delta Rhythm Boys, who were extremely successful all over Scandinavia with concerts and recordings of popular Swedish songs. Gaines also stayed on, but he moved farther north to Finland, where he married, learned the language, fathered a child (perhaps not quite in that order), and for a while became part of the local music scene.

The last half of this CD focuses on Johansson's and Pettiford's work with Danish vibraphonist Louis Hjulmand. In August 1959, they recorded four Hjulmand compositions. Like most of the rest of the music on this CD, these versions have not been previously released.

The trio, augmented by the Danish drummer William Schiøppfe, played a two-week engagement at Montmartre in August 1959. Fortunately, Louis Hjulmand had bought a tape recorder and made private recordings from some of the concerts. Another version of Now See How You Are comes from these tapes. Johansson plays with the fat, rich block chords that Pettiford encouraged him to use when Johansson became too sweet and "Swedish" during the solos. There are also two quartet recordings from a concert at a jazz club in Jutland.

The three last tracks on the album are sensational. Oscar Pettiford encouraged Hjulmand and Johansson to find inspiration in their own folk music. One afternoon during their stay at Montmartre in 1959, before the audience arrived, Louis Hjulmand recorded them playing three short pieces - Jan Johansson's interpretations of Swedish folk music: Ack Värmland, Emigrantvisa (Emigrant Song) and a song called Farfars Sång (Granddad's Song) - possibly the only documented version by Johansson. These folk music interpretations were recorded almost five years before Johansson's famous masterpiece JAZZ PÅ SVENSKA, the all-time best-selling jazz album in Scandinavia, and an album that continues to inspire and delight generations and still keeps selling.

This album also features not previously shown images from the archives of photographer Jan Persson, notes by essayist Jørgen Siegumfeldt and producer Ole Matthiessen, and a great sound quality beautifully restored by sound magician Jørgen Vad.

Jan Johansson (p), Oscar Pettiford (b, cello) + Stan Getz (ts), Joe Harris (dr), Louis Hjulmand (vib), Lee Gaines (voc).

*Sonny Boy / Willow Weep for Me / There'll Never Be Another You / The Nearness of You / Now See How You Are /
La Verne Walk / I Remember Clifford / Stuffy / Moanin' / Fru Brüel / I Succumb To Temptations / Dahoud /
Oleo / Now See How You Are / Ack Värmeland, du sköna / Emigrantvisan / Farfars Sång.*

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