



# Rolf Ericson

A Swedish Ellingtonian

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## Vet vi nu vart vi är på väg?

I min förra ledare ställde jag frågan "Vart är vi på väg?" och inbjöd samtidigt till en diskussion om hur vi skall få fler medlemmar att komma till våra medlemsmöten. Den diskussion som vi hade vid senaste medlemsmötet var livlig och många framförde sina synpunkter. Mycket av diskussionen kretsade kring lokalfrågan. Många tyckte att Franska Skolans lokal var trist, medan några menade att den var helt acceptabel. Man måste i sammanhanget konstatera att man får vad man betalar för. Trots sin spartanska karaktär har lokalen vissa fördelar; den är centralt belägen, den är billig, akustiken är superb och vi har tillgång till en utmärkt flygel. Förslag framfördes om alternativa lokaler och vi kommer att undersöka vissa av dessa, men vi kommer i varje fall att använda oss av nuvarande lokal året ut. Vi har själva diskuterat om vi skulle få fler besökare om vi lade våra möten mitt på dagen, men Franska Skolan kan endast ställa lokalen till förfogande på kvällstid.

Flera förslag har inkommit via brev och mejl och vi skall försöka ta till oss många av dessa förslag i den mån vi kan.

En viktig detalj som också nämndes är frågan hur vi marknadsför oss och våra medlemsmöten. Att bara annonsera i vår egen Bulletin och ett mejl med en påminnelse är inte tillräckligt. Vi måste hitta vägar för att göra våra sammankomster kända för en större publik. Vissa förslag härom framfördes och vi kommer att följa upp dessa.

Entréavgiftens storlek var också föremål för diskussion. Vi har tidigare debiterat 200:- när vi haft levande musik. Musiker kräver ett gage och vi har tvingats konstatera att kvällar med dålig anslutning har inneburit en icke oväsentlig förlust för föreningen. Många menade att en entréavgift om 100:- och ett möte utan musik men endast, som just denna kväll, med ett bra kåseri och filmvisning är idealiskt. Vi kommer därför att fortsätta på denna inslagna väg, men tanken är att vi skall bjuda på musikalisk under-

hållning åtminstone vid varje årsmöte.

Vårt nästa medlemsmöte den 17 september kommer således inte att bjuda på levande musik, men jag vill påstå att vi kommer att bjuda på ett mycket intressant föredrag. Även om vi är ett Ellingtonsällskap är vi ju alla ändå intresserade av jazz i största allmänhet och rakt inte främmande för att lyssna på annan musik och fördjupa oss i dess utövare. Till mötet har vi inbjudit en internationellt uppmärksam författare, Bo Lindström, som kommer att berätta om den forskning han lagt ner för att skriva sina böcker om trumpetaren Tommy Ladnier och den något obskyre trombonisten George Brashear. Själv ser jag fram emot hans kåseri med stort intresse och jag önskar er alla välkomna.



Leif Jönsson, ordförande i DESS

## Musikmöte med prat och frågetecken



Så var det alltså dags för vårterminens sista medlemsmöte den 7 maj. Men var någonstans fanns medlemmarna? Den frågan var alltså mötets första punkt. Om diskussionen och vad som eventuellt skall komma har vår ordförande ägnat större delen av sin krönika idag.

Som kvällens andra punkt ställde vår mångårige medlem och musikspecialist Thomas Eriksson från Uppsala upp med en kärleksfull och fullständig beskrivning i ord och ton om Ellingtontrombonisten Lawrence Brown. För de som har datorer och internet är det lätt att följa



Thomas Eriksson.

Ellingtonsällskapets verksamhet, men för alla er, som inte har denna möjlighet, följer här lite fler detaljer:

Förutom alla fakta om Lawrence, som levde mellan 1907 och 1988 och tillbringade 29 av sina levnadsår hos Ellington, spelade Thomas upp en representativ följd av trombonistens musikaliska avtryck i historien.

Listan av musik inleddes med *I'm a Ding Dong Daddy*, 21 juli 1930, då Brown medverkade i husbandet på Sebastians New Cotton Club i Culver City, Kalifornien. Bandet backade upp Louis Armstrong på bl a denna inspelning. Sedan följde i löpande ordning: *The Sheik of Araby* (1932) med Ellingtons Orkester och sedan *Yearning for Love* (1936), *Jitterbug's Lullaby* (1938), *Little Posey* (1939), *Blue*

*Light* (1938), *Serenade To Sweden* (1939), *All To Soon* (1940), *Golden Cress* (1947), *Creole Blues* (1960) och slutligen *Feed The Birds* (1964).

Melodierna speglade Lawrence musikaliska utveckling och hans olika roller i den Ellingtonska gemenskapen. Väl valda musikstycken och väl presenterat som vanligt av Thomas Eriksson.

Slutligen var det dags för Anders Asplunds filmkrönika. Det är märkligt vad denne fingerfärdige entusiast kan hitta på nätet! Det är lika spännande och roligt varje gång han får programplats under medlemsmötena. Kvällens program bestod av Ellingtons *Symphony In Swing*, *On A Turquoise Cloud*, Kay Davies, sång (1949), *Frankie & Johnny* (1964). Woody Hermans orkester spelade *That's Where It Is* med Nat Pierce, piano (1952). Därefter Ellington och *Caravan* från Snader Telescriptions (1952) samt Jimmie Lunceford med *Rhythm Is Our Business* (1936), en Vitaphoneinspelning. Och som final en inspelning från ett av Count Basies besök i Sverige.

Thomas Harne

## Brooks Kerr in memoriam



Den blinde pianisten Brooks Kerr gick bort den 21 april 2018 i en ålder av 67 år.

Han var känd för oss alla för sina stora kunskaper om Duke Ellington, hans produktion och karriär. T.o.m. Ellington själv refererade till Kerr som den som visste mer om hans musik än han själv. Redan i mycket tidig ålder

började Kerr fördjupa sig i Ellingtons musik och i slutet av Ellingtons karriär hade han mycket kontakt med denne. Ellington omnämner Kerr i sin *MIMM* med mycket uppskattande ord. Kerr deltog i flera Ellingtonkonferenser på 1980-talet och han blev ofta konsulterad av olika Ellingtonforskare för sina insikter om Ellingtons musikaliska verk.

Brooks Kerr studerade för Wille "The Lion" Smith, vilket framgår med tydlighet i hans sätt att traktera tangenterna. Hans spelstil var klart influerad av stride. Under 1970-talet var Kerr engagerad på en klubb i New York, där han uppträdde tillsammans med framför allt Sonny Greer och Russell Procope men även med Ray Nance. Han har producerat ett antal LP, bl.a. en tillsammans med Paul Quinichette.

Bo Hauffman

## Nya CD-skivor och bok på gång?



DESS blev i maj kontaktad av en organisation i Holland, som kallar sig Dutch Doctor Jazz Foundation, som leds av Ben Kragting. Anledningen till kontakten var att organisationen har för avsikt att ge ut en CD med huvudsakligen utgivet Ellingtonmaterial. Doctor Jazz påstod sig ha acetat från Ellingtons konsert i Kungliga Tennishallen i Stockholm den 4 november 1958, men det visade sig vid ett närmare studium att det i realiteten rörde sig om den andra konserten i Göteborg den 6 november, som redan getts ut kommersiellt. Emel-

lertid säger organisationen sig ha material från Duke Ellingtons framträdande i Meadowbrook Gardens Café i Culver City den 24 september 1947. Vi ser med stort intresse fram emot att få ta del av denna CD.

På nätet har man även kunnat notera att på skivmärket "Sounds of Yesterday" har utgivits en dubbel-CD betitlad *Duke Ellington Live At Ciro's Los Angeles 1947* och på ett skivmärke som kallar sig "Kipepo Publishing" har utgivits en CD kallad *Duke at Town Casino, Cleveland, 1952*. Materialet på båda utgåvorna verkar vara nytt och vi återkommer till dessa i vårt nästa nummer av Bulletinen.

### Ny biografi om Hodges

I ett inlägg på nätet i "Duke Ellington Society" kan vi dessutom notera att en författare vid namn Con Chapman förbereder en biografi om Johnny Hodges, som skall få titeln *Rabbit's Blues: The Life*

*and Music of Johnny Hodges*. Den beräknas bli publicerad under 2019 av Oxford University Press. Likaledes något att se fram emot.

Anders Asplund

## Nya medlemmar

DESS hälsar våra nya medlemmar välkomna i vår illustra förening:

Lennart Johansson, Varberg  
John Richmond, Cleveland Heights,  
USA

DESS behöver fler medlemmar.  
Inspirera Dina vänner och bekanta att också vara med!

# The career of Rolf Ericson

By Göran Wallén



Rolf Ericson is probably Sweden's internationally most recognized jazz musician during the 20th century. When Rolf left Sweden to start working in USA his dream became a reality. Already as a youngster he fantasized about becoming a musician in USA. He early adopted the typical jazz idioms of the time like wearing jazz inspired clothes, sunglasses and took up smoking cigarettes. He left Sweden the first time in 1947 and after a while he became the international jazz musician he remained for the rest of his life. In USA Rolf became a much appreciated big band musician and he was over the years a member of several well known US Big Bands. Later in his career he worked occasionally in USA and oc-

asionally in Europe. During his many brief visits to Sweden he played with our foremost musicians, but would always return to USA.

Rolf was born on August 29, 1922, in Stockholm. He was christened Rolf Nils Börje Eriksson, but would always be called "Roffe". When he later came to USA he changed his surname to a more American way "Ericson". His uncle Ragnar Låth, who was a recognized trumpet player in the 1930s playing a.o. in The Paramount Orchestra, once brought Rolf to attend a concert by Louis Armstrong back in October 1933. Rolf was much impressed by Armstrong and decided at that moment that he would like to be a trumpet player like Louis. Later on he

got to hear Roy Eldridge on record, whose wild and temperamental playing likewise impressed Rolf, and Roy became his idol.

## The 1930s and 1940s

In the 1930s, Rolf formed a small band together with the violinist Hasse Kahn and the accordionist Leppe Törnqvist. Soon Rolf acquainted the two brothers Hans and Gösta Theselius, both capable arrangers, Arne Domnérus, the alto saxophonist of later international reputation, and Simon Brehm, bassist and jazz promoter. Arne lived close to Rolf and they would play together in different orchestras during the 1940/50s. Both Rolf and Arne started to work at the daily newspaper Dagens Nyheter. Rolf worked at the advertising department and he showed a talent as illustrator and drawer and his employer wanted him to develop this ability. Simultaneously he also played in an amateur band operated by his employer. His ability as a drawer was later to be seen with a sketchy drawing of himself on his business card. But Rolf felt the call from the music and gave up drawing and his job. He got acquainted with a drummer by the name of Ove Kjell. He was working at the Stockholm department store NK and was the leader of their jazz band and was also leading an amateur band and both Rolf and Arne started to work with him. In 1941 Ove Kjell's band took part in an orchestra competition and they came out as the winner in competition with the Embassy Orchestra with Povel Ramel at the piano. Rolf and Arne were the main soloists in the band and they were recognized as such in a review in the jazz magazine Orkester Journalen. Unfortunately there exist only two privately made recordings of the band now included in the CD-box Swedish Jazz History. The Ove Kjell band lasted until 1943.

Later on we find Rolf and Arne and several other members from the Kjell band in Lulle Ellboj's orchestra. Ellboj and his band started a long engagement



Rolf Ericsons kvintett.  
Fr v: Rolf Ericson, Carl-Erik Lindgren, Robert Edman,  
Bengt Wittström och Rune Öfwerman.  
Tuschteckning av Rolf Ericson 1952.

at the Vinterpalatset (Winter Palace). Ellboj had a good trumpet section consisting of Nisse Skog, Anders Swärd and Rolf. As the name of the venue may indicate, they were free for other jobs during the summer. During the summertime Rolf played with bands like Håkan von Eichwald, Sam Samson, Arthur Österwall, Thore Jederby and Seymour Österwall, all well recognized Swedish band leaders.

During the 1940s, the name of Rolf Eriksson was well known by the Swedish jazz fans and he was often selected as a top name amongst the trumpet poll winners. In the Estrad poll 1943 he was placed as number twelve. The year after he had advance to number five and in 1945 he was appointed winner. He was included in Estrad's Elitorkester 1945 and in the Expressen's Elitorkester 1946, 1947 and 1952. (Estrad was a Swedish jazz magazine competing with Orkester Journalen and Expressen was a daily newspaper).

In April 1946 both Rolf and Arne became members of Thore Jederby's newly formed orchestra. They toured the Folkparkerna and played at the Nöjesfältet that summer. The following winter he played with the Seymour Österwall orchestra at the Nalen. He stayed with that band until it was time to go to USA.

### Going to USA

Rolf had a dream of going to USA

and make a career there. Together with his friend the pianist Lasse "Bob" Laine, who already had an experience of working in USA, they boarded a ship on November 21, 1947, heading for New York. Things were tough and money was lacking and Rolf had to start as a dishwasher in order to make a living. But with the help of some friends like Stan Hasselgard, Frank Bode and Bob Laine, he got to California and things began to happen. Even though conditions were difficult in the late 1940s for jazz musicians Rolf landed jobs with Benny Carter's big band and even auditioned with Benny Goodman's septet. Unfortunately Goodman didn't use a trumpet in his sextet, but he welcomed Rolf to join the big band he was about to form later on. During the next few years we find Rolf playing with several local bands lead by Red Norvo, Sonny Criss, Billy Eckstine, Jimmy Rowles and several others. Later on he was engaged by Charlie Barnet and got paid 160 dollars a week, which certainly was a good pay at the time. Rolf recalled that the orchestra had a fantastic trumpet section consisting of Rolf plus John Howell, Doc Severinsen, Ray Wetzel and Maynard Ferguson. According to Rolf, Ray Wetzel was a fantastic high note trumpeter, who unfortunately died in a car accident only 27 years old. In 1948/49, during a break from Barnet's band, Rolf toured with Art Mooney's orchestra for eight months. Rolf didn't

like the music but the salary was good. He eventually returned to Barnet but after his time with him Rolf played with bands under leadership of Roy Stevens, Charlie Ventura, Elliot Lawrence and Woody Herman. On one occasion Rolf appeared together with Bud Powell at The Three Deuces before it was time to return to Sweden in 1950.

### Return to Sweden

Rolf's first return trip to Sweden took place on August 25, 1950. Soon after his arrival he made a few recordings under his own name before he together with Arne Domnérus formed the Nalen Band. Topsy Lindblom, the owner of the dance club Nalen, rather preferred to call the band "The Dreamband". The recordings made by that band belong to Swedish jazz history. In addition to Rolf and Arne the band consisted of Lars Gullin (bs), Rolf Blomquist (ts), Gunnar Svensson (p), Yngve Åkerberg (sb) and Jack Norén (dr). The joint leadership by Rolf and Arne lasted for about a year. Arne eventually left, but Rolf kept the band going until April 1952.

In November 1950 Charlie Parker spent a week in Sweden. Rolf knew Parker since his time in New York and was a member of the group that accompanied Parker during his tour of Sweden. After Parker's visit Rolf made some recordings with sidemen like Lars Gullin and Bengt Hallberg.

## Back to USA

The jazz life in USA was still tempting to Rolf and in October 1952 he returned to USA to take up an engagement with Charlie Spivak and his orchestra. That job lasted for six months when Rolf decided to settle in California. In August 1953 he was a constant guest at the Lighthouse Café with the Lighthouse All Stars. The club was often guested by stars like Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie and Chet Baker. The next few years Rolf was engaged by Stan Kenton, The Dorsey Brothers, Jack Costanzo and he also spent time in Florida working for the mambo king Perez Prado. In 1955 Rolf spent eight months as the prime soloist in Les Brown's orchestra and later on he worked with the Dorsey Brothers in Las Vegas before he joined Harry James's Musicians. When James didn't feel like taking a solo, Rolf was given the solo spot. Then he had a short spell with Howard Rumsey's band before it was again time to return to Sweden.

## The American Stars

By now the name Rolf Ericson had a good reputation and with the assistance of Claes Dahlgren (Swedish radio representative in New York and an "ambassador" for Swedish jazz) he put together a band for a tour of Sweden. The group was called The American Stars and included Cecil Payne, Duke Jordan, John Simmons, Art Taylor and Ernestine Anderson. However, the tour didn't start out that well. Several of the members had drug problems and had to be sent home. The group had to be reorganized and the tour was completed with the following members: Rolf, Lasse Gullin, Freddie Redd, Tommy Potter, Joe Harris and Ernestine Anderson. Performances of this group have been recorded and are available on CD.

After the tour Rolf returned to California. He needed a rest after the problems he had been facing with the tour, but over the Christmas period he played for three weeks with Dexter Gordon in Seattle. Then he formed a temporary group consisting of some Swedish expatriates like Berndt Pihlgren and Rune Eriksson before he took a well paid job with George Hernandez and his rumba



Rolf Ericson and Charlie Parker 1950.

orchestra. Rolf then played with various small bands in and around Hollywood. In July 1958 he was engaged by orchestras led by Jack Millman and Maynard Ferguson. In the fall of 1958 he joined Stan Kenton's band that had just got an engagement at Birdland in New York. Rolf stayed with Kenton for almost three years and said that he found Kenton to be a very sympathetic and good orchestra leader. Rolf was often featured as a soloist with the Kenton band, but found the constant travelling tiresome. They seldom played for more than one week at the same venue.

In the fall of 1961 he toured the Middle East for five months with the Buddy Rich Sextet. After the tour was finished Rolf went directly to Sweden, where he would be staying for the next few months. During this period he played with Arne Domnérus at the Nalen Club and guested the Montmartre Club in Copenhagen. He made recordings with Bosse Wärmell and Monica Zetterlund.

He also appeared at the Gyllene Cirkeln Jazz Club and was featured in various TV- and radioprograms.

During 1961/62 he made a tour of South America with Frank Rehak's orchestra and he also made stints with Benny Goodman and Woody Herman. He also played with Herbie Mann at Birdland.

Late 1962 Rolf was hired by Charlie Mingus. The Mingus concert at Town Hall 1962 was a disaster. Mingus didn't have time enough to finish his work *Epitaph*. According to Rolf the musicians didn't know what to play. Mingus never recorded *Epitaph*. During the Ellington Conference 1994 in Stockholm, Andrew Homzy, an Ellington scholar from Canada, happened to meet Lars Göran Ulander, responsible for the Swedish Radio Channel P2. Homzy had found the *Epitaph* chart in Mingus's remaining papers and on March 19, 1996, the complete *Epitaph* was recorded with a total of thirty Swedish musicians and with Rolf as the

soloist. The playing time of the recording was 150 minutes and it was broadcasted in full by Swedish Radio P2.

### Engaged by Duke Ellington

Duke Ellington and his orchestra made a tour of Sweden June 1-23, 1963. Rolf was hired as a substitute, but when the band returned to USA he was permanently engaged and he remained with Ellington until April 1964. Rolf has confirmed that his time with Ellington was the greatest in his career. He was a.o. given the solo responsibility in *Perdido*, which earlier was Clark Terry's feature number. The reason for Rolf's leaving the band was the small money. He once got a raise from \$40 to \$45 but that was not good enough considering the fact that he had a family with three kids to support back in California. Rolf found the music fantastic, but money talks as well. He once said that sometimes the band would start up with only eight men, but still the sound was like that of fifteen, despite the lack of half of the band. Duke's men could make the music sound powerful despite the absence of several of them. Once the Ellington band was sharing the scene with Gerry Mulligan's big band but their sound was not of the same caliber as Duke's band, at the time consisting of only eight men.

Rolf would on occasion return to Duke Ellington in 1969, 1971 and 1973. It may be interesting to note that Rolf together with Åke Persson are two of the probably seven white musicians to have played with Duke Ellington.

In November 1963, Duke Ellington and his orchestra made a State Department tour of the Middle East, but during the tour president John Kennedy was assassinated and the tour was suddenly terminated. The band returned to USA but no engagements were lined up so members were free to seek other employment awaiting Ellington's further program. Paul Gonsalves worked for a month with Woody Herman and Rolf went to Stockholm and played with Leo Wright at Gyllene Cirkeln (Famous Swedish jazz club) in December 1963.

After his time with Duke Ellington, Rolf returned to Charlie Mingus in the fall of 1964 and thereafter he played with

Gerry Mulligan's orchestra. About this time Rolf was considering to start his own big band to be based in Europe, but it would take several years before it came about. Much because several European musicians didn't believe in the project. So instead Rolf made recordings with others like Rod Levitt. A trip to Cologne to join Kurt Edelhagen was cancelled and instead Rolf went to Stockholm to play at Skansen (Stockholm's folk lore park) with Eddie Mc Andrew's orchestra.

Rolf remained in Sweden and played in the Emanon orchestra at Gyllene Cirkeln under the leadership of George Russell. Over the next few years Rolf stayed in Sweden and played at various clubs

March 24 they started a tour of twenty-seven Swedish cities and thereafter they spent close to two months at the Grand Hotel in Stockholm. The band was subject to several changes during its lifetime but the mainstays were Gunnar Medberg and Lars Olofsson (tb), Ulf Andersson (ts), Bertil Löfdahl (as), Sture Nordin (sb) and Rebecca Show (vo). After the Grand Hotel stint the band toured the Swedish Folkparkerna (Amusement Parks available in most every Swedish city.)

In the meantime Duke Ellington was back in Europe and Rolf was called in as a substitute. Rolf was offered a permanent place in the orchestra and to join Duke for a tour of the Far East. Rolf was



Chet Baker, Miles Davis and Rolf.

in various constellations, often together with Lars Gullin, Merit Hemmingsson or Östen Warnerbring. He was also playing with his own quintet at the Grand Hotel in Stockholm and also appeared at the Umeå Jazz Festival together with Dexter Gordon.

### The Rolf Ericson Big Band

Rolf had a dream of starting his own big band. In 1969 that dream became a reality. Rehearsals started at the Stampen, a club owned by Sten Holmqvist who also sponsored the project. On

positive to the idea, but other alternatives were coming up and Rolf turned the offer down. He had to consider his big band.

Early 1970 Rolf and his big band played at the "Kronprinsen" in Malmö for an audience of only seventy people and that seem to have caused the end of the band. Rolf's dream of a big band turned out a financial disaster. Disappointed with the situation for jazz in Sweden he played a lot in Denmark with luminaries like Brew Moore, Phil Woods and Dexter Gordon. He also subbed for

a few days with the Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland Band when they appeared at "Swing Inn" in Malmö.

### In Germany

Rolf now started to consider working in Germany. Åke Persson was already stationed there and recommended Rolf to join him. Jobs in Germany were plentiful and better paid whereas the opportunities in Sweden were diminishing. The consequence of this was that Rolf would spend the next ten years based in Germany. He was disappointed with the failure of his big band, but the idea of a big band never left his mind.

In 1971 Rolf started out with Max Greger's Radio Band, but soon he got engaged by Süddeutscher Rundfunk's band under the leadership of Erwin Lehn. That job lasted for two and a half years. Then he moved to Berlin to work with Paul Kuhn's orchestra and he was to stay there for eight years. In the meantime he made short visits to Sweden to sit in with Lars Gullin for a tour. He also played with The Danish Jazzarmy at the newly opened "Montmartre" in the fall of 1976. He would later return to that venue to play with Kenny Drew in 1980.

Rolf left Germany early 1981 and returned to Sweden, but after four months without the right engagement he decided to go to USA in the hope of finding a lasting job. His first engagement was with Mel Lewis at Village Vanguard. Then he made short stints with Mercer Ellington, Count Basie and the Glenn Miller ghost band. But the American jazz climate had become tougher and Rolf decided to return to Germany.

In 1982 he was back in Paul Kuhn's orchestra where he met the orchestra's vocalist, Evelyn. Rolf moved in with Evelyn, but they would not marry until 1993. Evelyn said, "once when I was up front I heard a fantastically beautiful trumpet sound. I turned around and saw Rolf in the trumpet section, oh, what a sound". Rolf and Evelyn lived for several years in Duisburg. Rolf would often go to USA for occasional jobs and Evelyn would go with him. Unfortunately she got some problems with the US Immigration and was prevented from entering USA for several years. This meant Rolf had to do



Evelyn and Rolf. Photo: Olle Lindholm

a lot of travelling between Duisburg and USA and "that cost me a lot of money" he said.

### Rolf in the 1980/90s

Over the next few decades Rolf spent a "nomading" life. In 1984 he was back in Stockholm and started to work with Gugge Hedrenius and his orchestra. He made several recordings with Gugge, often together with Willie Cook. He also appeared with Sandviken Big Band. In 1985 he was again back in Germany to play with Paul Kuhn and sometimes he sat in with Peter Herbolzheimer and his orchestra. In 1985 Rolf was awarded Orkester Journalen's Golden Record for his recording of *Stockholm Sweetnin'*. He received the award when he appeared at the Stockholm Jazz & Blues Festival. In 1986 Rolf joined Gugge Hedrenius' band for a trip to New York where they played at Bryants Park for an audience of 1500 people.

By the end of 1989 Rolf and Evelyn moved to Stockholm. After some engagements Rolf found playing opportunities too few and they decided to go to USA as Evelyn was now allowed to enter USA. They settled in Los Angeles and Rolf's old friend and neighbor, Benny Carter, assisted him in finding work, just like he did back in 1948. Rolf got to play with Harry "Sweets" Edison and sat in

with Bill Berry's All Star Band.

But like so many times before, Rolf made occasional trips to Europe and in the summer of 1991 he played with Arne Domnérus at Castle Hotel in Stockholm. Later the same year he toured Europe with a group of Ellington alumni like Britt Woodman, Jimmy Hamilton and Harold Ashby. Regrettably they never showed up in Sweden.

Rolf took part in the Ellington '92 Conference in Copenhagen and later that year he toured Sweden together with Cecil Payne. An interesting reunion from 1956 well remembered by the audience. In 1993 Rolf and Evelyn moved to Sweden and they settled in a Stockholm suburb which allowed for Rolf to take part in the Ellington '94 Conference in Stockholm. The orchestra put together for the occasion included in addition to Rolf, Clark Terry, Willie Cook, Jimmy Woode, Louie Bellson, Joya Sherrill, Alice Babs and Nils Lindberg. In 1995 Rolf together with Willie Cook was awarded the DESS scholarship of SEK 5000 each.

The author met Rolf and Evelyn for the last time at the city of Örebro in 1997 when Rolf took part in a TV-program. At the dinner after the show I noticed that Rolf had problems to eat and he showed signs of ill-health. Rolf passed away shortly thereafter, on June 16, 1997, after having spent five weeks in hospital. The cause was cancer, probably due to extensive smoking. He is buried at Katarina Kyrka in Stockholm. Evelyn returned to Germany.

Rolf Ericson managed to fulfil his great wish, viz. to work as a jazz musician in USA. He became recognized as a great soloist and improviser and much appreciated by such leaders as Duke Ellington, Stan Kenton and Woody Herman. Musically Rolf was an idealist, but for financial reasons he often had to accept gigs of commercial nature. He sometimes decided to leave orchestras because of too many "one nighters", as the constant travelling was very tiring. He preferred to spend time with his family and get some rest and then he played at the small jazz clubs around Los Angeles. Rolf had a very positive attitude. He was kind and loved by all musicians both in Sweden and USA.

# Rolf Ericson interview

By Martin Westin and Lars Westin

Rolf Ericson started his stint with the Duke Ellington Orchestra in May 1963.

– I got an offer from Duke already a few years before, but at that time I was committed to go with Buddy Rich on a tour of the Far East. After the Rich tour I joined Maynard Ferguson for a while. But then I got a renewed offer from Ellington and of course I accepted immediately.

At that time Rolf was forty years old and had been living in USA for fifteen years. During these years he had played with many well established orchestra leaders. In 1963 he spent time in New York playing with Charlie Mingus and several other orchestra leaders.

– I had met Ellington and his sidemen many times in the past. When I played with Stan Kenton we once shared the scene with Duke's band and I used to hang around with Ray Nance, Russell Procope, Willie Cook and Clark Terry. We enjoyed spending leisure time together. So Duke got to hear me a few times and he recognized me. But I think it was Clark Terry who recommended me. I got to know Terry when I first came to America by the end of the 1940s.

## First performance

Rolf's first performance with the Ellington band took place in Philadelphia.

– I will never forget it. I didn't know the repertoire. So I was given two giant folders of music weighing five or six kilos. And it was all more or less shredded, small notifications with no numbers, nothing really. There were no real arrangements. When I was playing with other bands everything was well noted and catalogued. When opening your part you knew right away what to play. But here it was all just fragments.

The trumpet section included, in addition to Rolf, three legendary Ellington veterans.

– I joined in the evening when we were about to start playing and I said hello to everybody. To my right I had Cootie Williams and to the left I had Ray



Nance and beyond him sat Cat Anderson. Duke announced "A-train", and so it started. I found no "Take The A Train" in the folder, and I looked and browsed. When I eventually found the fragments of "A-train", and it was not the correct part, they had already started on the next tune. So I sat there browsing the folder all night.

It was quite frustrating and Rolf had to turn to his colleagues for some advice.

– I asked Cootie Williams but he just turned his back on me and grunted something. So I asked Ray Nance what the last tone was supposed to be. He said: "Anything, you'll hear what it shall be". Then I asked Cat Anderson, who gave me a great smile and said: "B-flat". Then Cootie suddenly said: "Don't listen to

that asshole, it should be Ess!" So things were not exactly easy.

## Writing his own book

The only way to work things out was to construct my own book, Rolf said.

– I sat in the evenings and wrote out my own parts, made my own music out of those notes and fragments. So after about a month I had a good grip of everything. But the situation within the trumpet section was still the same. When I showed up in the evening and said hello to Cootie he would turn his back on me and grunt and Cat just smiled and showed his white teeth. It went on like that night after night. When we started and when we closed it was always the same procedure. But then we went on a tour to



Duke, Åke Persson and Rolf – November 10, 1971. Photo: Kenneth Olsson

the Middle East. Suddenly one evening Cootie turned to me and said: "Hey Rolf, let's go get the girls". With those words it was like the ice broke up and we have been the best of friends since then.

### Strong personalities

The musicians in the Ellington band were strong personalities of different characters. Cootie Williams started with the band in 1929 and stayed until 1940, when Ray Nance replaced him. Nance was still in the band when Cootie returned in the beginning of the 1960s.

– Cootie was very conscientious and hated alcohol. He had been running a band of his own and made a lot of money. But he lost everything on horses and drinking. So he became a fanatic teetotaler and hated all kinds of gambling. He never drank but always had a bottle in his luggage in case he would meet some

girls in the evening. Ray Nance was a wonderful and kind human being. But he had problems with narcotics and drank heavily. It was during the Middle East tour in the fall of 1963 that Nance was fired after having spent twentythree years with Ellington. While in Amman in Jordan we played for King Hussein and the entire diplomatic corps and people from the American Embassy. Ray Nance could not get hold of what he needed and he drank too much so he was totally destroyed. We played the Jordanian and the American national anthems and people were standing with their hands to their hearts. Ray just sat on his chair shouting dirty words. Then he went away waving his fiddle and shouting and swearing at the King and the ambassadors. Ellington was not known for firing people but Ray went too far. This was a diplomatic insult so the next day Ray was sent home.

Duke had to send for a replacement and first there was Patrick Blake and later Herbie Jones.

Cat Anderson, Ellington's high note specialist, had been with the band since the 1940s and he was the difficult one amongst Rolf's trumpet colleagues. He had grown up at, and learned to play at Jenkin's Orphanage in Charleston, South Carolina, which also fostered many good brass men like Jabbo Smith and Peanuts Holland.

– He was fantastic with what he did. But he had problem due to his background. He had no parents and his orphanage time influenced his future life.

### Being black or white?

How was it to be the only white musician in the band?

– Others had been there before me. Louie Bellson, Bill Berry and Juan Tizol. The latter came in already in 1929. I had no problem with being white in the band, except sometimes from outsiders. When we toured the South I was not allowed to stay in the same hotel as the others. They were accommodated into black hotels and I was not accepted there so I had to move to the white section of the town. I felt a bit bitter about it because I didn't want to. But Duke said: "Ok, that's the way it is. Show up tomorrow morning."

The life as a musician in the Ellington Orchestra was hectic. Playing every day, constant travelling. Shortly after Rolf joined, the band started a tour of Europe including five days at Gröna Lund in Stockholm. The year after Ellington played one-nighters around the USA and on July 9 they appeared at Newport Jazz Festival. On July 18 Rolf took part in his first recording with the band in a series of so called "stockpile recordings" produced by Duke himself in order to document his music. Most of this material has been released after Ellington's disease as The Private Collection.

– We had almost no rehearsals. It was during the recording procedure that we rehearsed. Duke brought in new music all the time. But not when we were out playing for the audience. We never played the old repertoire. We just had to hang on. Suddenly he would bring up music we had never heard before or old

tunes that I had never played for a long time. Then we had to try to find it in the book. Some things were never put down on paper and there were no parts. You had to listen and open your ears.

### The Middle East Tour

As from September thru November 1963 the Ellington Orchestra performed their extensive tour of the Middle East. Billy Strayhorn took part in the tour.

– Strayhorn was a part of the Ellington image. He fitted in perfectly. He composed almost exactly like Duke. Sometimes one could not tell the difference. Both of them were very observant with what was going on around them. I remember once when we were sitting at a café in Hyderabad in India and a bird was twittering in a bush. Strayhorn said to Duke: “Hey, you hear that?” The bird was twittering something and they put out a piece of paper and wrote it down. That became the idea to The Far East Suite.

### Tom Whaley

One of the most important collaborators around Ellington from the 1940s and onwards was Tom Whaley. A name seldom mentioned.

– He was an orchestrator and composer. He wrote for choirs and all kind of things. On the many recordings we made Duke was sitting at one piano and Strayhorn at another and Duke would tell Billy what to do. They shared the job. And their sketches were thrown over to Tom Whaley. The sketches were actually only ideas for the right and left piano hand but Whaley knew how to orchestrate the sketches and write out parts for the entire orchestra. It was all done in the studio while we sat there waiting.

Rolf took part in two LPs recorded in the spring of 1964 under such conditions. *Ellington '65* and *Ellington '66* (Reprise RS6122 and 6154 resp.). The idea was that Ellington should play popular melodies of the day in his own way. Among the tunes were Beatles-melodies arranged by Duke and Strayhorn. It was all done in the studio and with the assistance of Tom Whaley. Shortly before

these recordings, in February and March 1964, the Ellington Orchestra toured Europe and also paid a visit to Sweden.

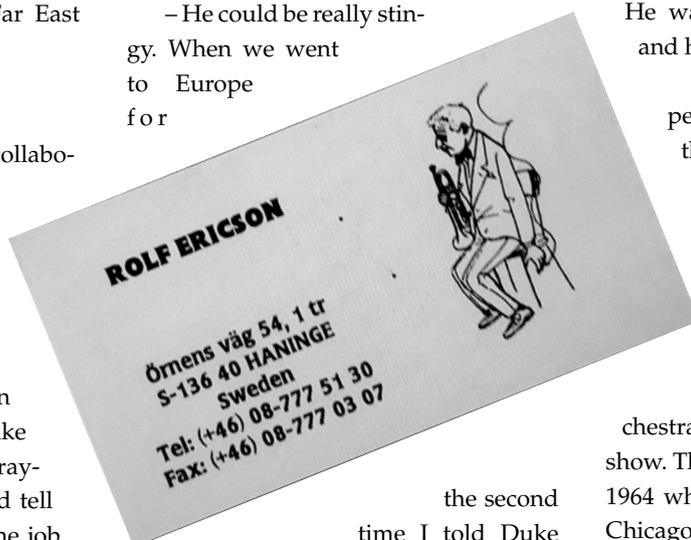
### Ellington the womanizer

Ellington himself didn't fraternize too much with his musicians away from the scene or the studio.

– On the tours he used to bring along a countess from South America. He always surrounded himself with women. He always bought expensive furs and jewelry for his ladies. He was extremely extravagant. He always stayed in the largest hotel suites and saw to it that it had a piano. At four o'clock in the morning he ushered all visitors out because it was time for him to start composing music. He locked himself in with the piano and was sitting at it until six or seven in the morning.

But when it came to the orchestra Ellington was far from extravagant.

– He could be really stingy. When we went to Europe for



the second time I told Duke that I needed a little more money. He said: “Rolf, you are an artist. Artists need no money. But we do love you madly!” And he kissed me. I waited a few weeks and walked up to him and asked again for some more money. The same thing happened. “Rolf, we do love you madly” and off he went. The third time I told him frankly that I wanted to leave. And when he asked me why, I told him I needed some more money, he said: “How much do you want?” Then I got a raise! I earned \$40 a day at the start but would eventually reach \$45.

It was not exactly a good pay. Most of the Ellington sidemen were poorly paid except the key persons who earned more

than the others.

– Cootie Williams, Johnny Hodges and Harry Carney earned most money. They were also paid when we had no booking. A few others were partly paid but the rest of us were only paid when we were working. I remember once in Chicago when we had only two performances over two weeks. We signed the hotel bills which were paid by Ellington and the cost was deducted from the salary later on. So you were always in debt to the Orchestra. Almost everyone in the band had to ask for an advance from the road manager. He was a real gangster and tried to cheat everybody. It could be about 50 cent one week and 300 dollars the next. So when we left Chicago we were all in great debt to the Orchestra and it became worse due to the road manager's calculations. Johnny Hodges had a habit of walking around in front of us counting rolls of hundred dollar bills. He wanted to make us feel envious and he enjoyed it.

Lay off periods of this kind happened when there were gaps in the touring schedule and when Ellington had engagements as a soloist or with minor groups. August 1963 was such an occasion when Ellington took part in the recording of his show “My People”, which was performed by a special orchestra put together especially for the show. This was also the occasion in April 1964 when Duke appeared at a club in Chicago together with a small group from his orchestra.

### Ellington's finances

– The entire band was financially built on Ellington's royalties from his compositions. He would never had the possibility to run the band without those royalties. He had tax problems as well. But he was unbelievably hard-working. He always wanted to work and I remember once during a European tour when we had one evening free. Still he booked us into a concert for almost no money just to keep us going.

Ellington always let his musicians appear as soloists.

– It became so that I took over Clark

Terry's parts in the trumpet section and I also had to take over his solo spots. Like *Perdido* and *Lullaby of Birdland* and I also took over something from Ray Nance. Duke could sometimes surprise us by unexpectedly calling someone to the mike for a solo. It happened quite often when we played dances for a black audience. Those dance sessions started at midnight and lasted until seven o'clock in the morning. We played long solos and I remember that on several occasions I had to play for maybe half an hour as the only trumpet player. Duke built up the band with riffs and similar things that enhanced the atmosphere. On such nights I almost cried because it was so good. It was the most fantastic thing I ever experienced.

### Some veterans

Harry Carney, the baritone saxophonist, was the real Ellington veteran. He joined the band already in 1927.

– He was the most wonderful person, warm and pleasant and a real gentleman. He always drank whiskey which not many knew about because he hid it so well. Lawrence Brown was likewise very nice. He was called 'Sweetie'. He consumed lots of ice cream, his only affection. Jimmy Hamilton was very strict and a perfectionist, almost like a teacher. Russell Procope was also very serious



Rolf also played the didgeridoo.

minded. He never drank, was a man of few words and handled his own matters. Johnny Hodges was a funny and wonderful guy. He and his wife had a little monkey and that monkey loved Johnny. They lived at Sugar Hill in Harlem. When he went on a tour he had to send post cards to the monkey and when he returned home he used to bring along small toys for the monkey. Once when he returned home without any present the monkey got mad and bit him!

Something of 'problem childs' in the Ellington Orchestra – except for Ray Nance – were Paul Gonsalves and the drummer Sam Woodyard.

– Paul was a wonderful human being, but he had great problems with alcohol and narcotics. That's what killed him in the end. His solos were fantastic. It was much thanks to him that Duke got back on the map after the Newport Jazz Festival 1956 when he played *Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue*. That started a new and successful era for Ellington. Sam Woodyard I think is the best drummer Duke ever had. He put his flavor on everything. He didn't do many extras but what he did fitted the band perfectly, and he kept to perfection.

### Leaving Ellington

Because of financial reasons Rolf left the Ellington band in May 1964.

– I had a family and the economic ends didn't meet. We didn't get paid for a lot of things we did and that irritated me. Nothing extra for recordings, no extra for TV-shows, no extra for anything. And sometimes there were a gap between gigs causing my economy to burst. Hadn't it been for things like this I would have stayed with Duke for the rest of my life. Musically it gave me an unbelievable experience.

About five years later, in the beginning of 1969, Duke Ellington and his band gusted Stockholm and a.o. appeared at the Vasa Church together with Alice Babs, Eric Ericson and the Swedish Radio Choir. Rolf was called in as an enforcement.

– Duke suggested I should join the band for the rest of the European tour. I had a gig for a few days in Norway, but the manager gave me an air ticket so I

could connect with them in Paris. In the meantime Duke went to Berlin for a TV-show and there he hired Benny Baily and Åke Persson as additional musicians. When the TV-show was over Åke went up to Duke and said: 'Mr. Ellington, I refuse to leave this orchestra'. Duke grinned and Åke was allowed to come along. The following day they went to Malmö and Åke's wife called all papers informing them about the arrival. So there were a lot of photographers at the airport primarily photographing Åke who emanated from the Malmö area. They asked Duke to stand beside Åke and Duke got mad wondering who he had hired. A few days later I am outside a hotel in Paris awaiting the band bus. When they arrive I see Åke with his arm around Duke and with a bottle in his hand, laughing and telling jokes. Johnny Hodges walked along with them laughing as well. Åke was very popular with the band.

### Ellington's Birthday

On April 29 that year Duke Ellington was reaching his 70th birthday and it was celebrated at a great party in Paris.

– Maurice Chevalier was acting as Emcee and all celebrities were there. Brigitte Bardot and the entire French film colony, the Lido ballet and all the French musicians. It was a fabulous party. We arrived late and were dead tired. We dressed and shaved in the bus. When we arrived we got to know that we didn't have to play until a few hours later. Instead we got a room with a fantastic service. Everything was available including a bartender. There was lobster, caviar and ribs for Cootie and ice cream for Lawrence Brown. We had a party and how they drank. Those guys could drink a lot. Åke got drunk and sat crying because he had a studio job in Berlin which he had to return to so he was forced to leave the band. When we entered the stage the people were in ecstasy. When the curtain went up all were screaming and down came a giant cake together with confetti and balloons and out of the cake comes four naked girls! In the meantime Åke is crying. He is not playing and the trombone is on its stand. I am sitting right behind him and he turns to me and says: 'Oh, listen, wonderful. What



Photo: Olle Lindholm

shall I do. I have to leave tomorrow.' Duke looks at Åke and understands the situation and says: 'Åke, no solo'. And then we reach that number where Åke usually played his solo during the tour, Duke again turns to Åke and repeats what he just said. Åke turns mad, starts screaming and swearing. Runs forward, turning down a couple of music stands on his way, up to Duke and swears at him and plays his solo. Duke walks off the stage and Åke continues to play and he plays like hell. When Duke returns he says: 'Åke, you are fired'. Åke says 'I'm quitting!' The next day at the airport Åke walks up to Duke looking like a little dog saying: 'Forgive me, Maestro.' And Duke replies 'Ahh, forget it'.

Rolf went along with the band for the

tour, first to Spain and then to England where they recorded the album 'Duke Ellington's 70th Anniversary Concert' in Manchester. Then the band went back to USA without Rolf. But Rolf would eventually sit in with the Ellington orchestra on a few additional occasions – 1971 and 1973 – when also Åke Persson took part.

### The Ellington style

What was so special with the Ellington Orchestra?

– Everybody in Duke's band were creators and individualists. They were grown up people who played like grownups. Duke's greatness was his ability to utilize every sound around him. There were so many tremendously colorful individuals he had to deal with. And

everybody who has played with Duke Ellington have been influenced by him. They cannot get rid of that influence. It applies to me as well. There was a typical Ellingtonian style that I adopted and which I have incorporated in my own way of playing. It is not a matter of copying as I still try to play in my own way. The most important thing for a jazz musician is to find his own profile and I have tried to stick to my own over my entire life. But the profile will of course develop and change. And so it did especially after my adventures with Ellington, who gave me an enormous inspiration.

*This interview was originally published in Swedish in the May 1994 issue of the Orkester Journalen.*

# Roffe Ericson, 58 – siktar på USA igen

Detta var rubriken på en artikel i *Expressen* 28 januari 1981 författad av Hans Fridlund med anledning av LP:n *Roffe Ericson/Kenny Dorham: 'Scandia Skies'* (SteepleChase/Al Lib). Vi återger artikeln här:

– Snackat och längtat har jag gjort länge. Men snart blir det USA igen. Kanske för gott.

Så säger Roffe Ericson, en av den svenska jazzens mera outslitliga mästare. Och en av de mesta veteranerna i gamet. Roffe blev 58 i somras. Trumpetare Ericson har för all del bara varit sporadiskt synlig här hemma under 70-talet. Sedan 1971 har han uppehållit några välbetalda med tråkiga studiojobb i Tyskland. Först hos Erwin Lehn i Stuttgart. Därefter med SFB-radion i Västberlin. Men när ryktena började gå att SFB tänkte lägga ned sin storbandsverksamhet för gott skyndade Roffe att säga upp sig.

– Hellre förekomma än förekommas, resonerade jag. Det visade sig vara ett klokt drag ekonomiskt. Fick en större avgångsersättning på den kuppen.

Rastlös har Roffe alltid varit. När an-

dra betydligt yngre musikanter börjat tänka på trygghet och ATP har Ericson under det senaste året knåpat med dusintals blanketter. Allt för att återfå det amerikanska arbetstillstånd, som gick ut redan på 60-talet. Roffe har dessutom sammanställt en meritlista. Ett imponerande aktstycke, som inleds borta i 40-talet med jobb hos folk som Charlie Barnet, Benny Carter, Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, Charlie Ventura m.fl. Plattor med Charlie Parker och svenska folkparks-turnéer, eller åren med Duke Ellington på tidigt 60-tal inte att förglömma.

Den här skivan från december 1963 på Montmartre-klubben i Köpenhamn tillkom då Roffe var tillfälligt spelleddig från just Ellingtonbandet. En förträfflig dokumentation av två stora lirare, varav Kenny Dorham givetvis är den jazzhistoriskt viktigare, det skulle Roffe vara den förste att erkänna. Men de två kompletterar varandra utsökt här, exempelvis i medium-balladen *It Could Happen To You*. På skivans längsta spår *Woody'n You* kan Roffe påminna om Clark Terry både rytmiskt och melodiskt. Men helheten har



Willie Cook och Rolf. Foto: Olle Lindholm

ändå omisskännligt Ericsons egen profil. En god LP men 17 år "gammal". Roffe lever i nuet.

– Mitt sista "tyska" jobb var med Caterina Valente för TV i Los Angeles i november i höstas. För min del första USA-besöket på över tio år. Det kändes som att komma hem igen

– Om jag har några jobb på gång där? Nej inte än. Men desto fler kontakter. Jag är inte rädd att ge mig ut som frilansare på gamla dar. En kappsäck med tandborste och trumpeterna är allt jag behöver.

– Resten av mitt liv ska jag ägna mej åt riktig musik!

Right on, Rolf. Och lycka till!

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## Rolf Ericson's engagement with Duke Ellington

It is interesting to note from Göran Wallén's and the Westins's articles that Rolf seemed to have been constantly unsatisfied with his salary. A salary of \$40/45 a day was probably on the low side considering that he had to cover meal- and hotel expenses on his own. Moreover he had to repay his loan from Ellington.

There is certainly an explanation to Rolf's low salary which has to do with how he came to be engaged by Ellington in the first place. According to Steve Voce the story goes: "Rolf had got his girlfriend into difficulties at a time when he was penniless in New York. He went to Ellington and asked him if he could help with a loan. Duke opened his wallet and asked 'How much do you need?' 'I don't know how or when I'd be able to pay

you back' said Rolf. 'Join my band and work it off,' said Duke. Trumpeter Roy Burrowes was coincidentally leaving Duke, so the seat was still warm."

From a 1963 salary sheet we can see that Rolf was credited with a salary of \$250 a week. Still on the low side. Only Sam Woodyard was paid less. Johnny Hodges got as much as \$660. Harry Carney, Lawrence Brown and Cat Anderson earned \$500, Jimmy Hamilton \$420 and Paul Gonsalves \$400.

When Rolf received the DESS scholarship in 1995, I had a chance to chat with Rolf and of course we came to talk about his time with Ellington and also about the money he was paid. Rolf explained that he was constantly asking Duke for a raise and told the story that

the Westins are telling in their interview.

A similar incident is told by Bill Crow in his book *From Birdland to Broadway*: "Trumpeter Leo Ball told me he was travelling in Europe during the 1960s and had just cleared customs at Amsterdam Airport when, as he started down the stairs to the street level, he saw his old friend Rolf Ericson talking to someone whose face wasn't visible, but as he rushed down the stairs and threw his arms around Rolf, greeting him warmly, the other man melted into the crowd. Rolf said, 'Leo, I love you, but I'm not so glad to see you right now. I've been trying for a year to get next to Duke to ask him for a raise. I finally had him cornered, and because of you he got away!'"

Bo Hauffman

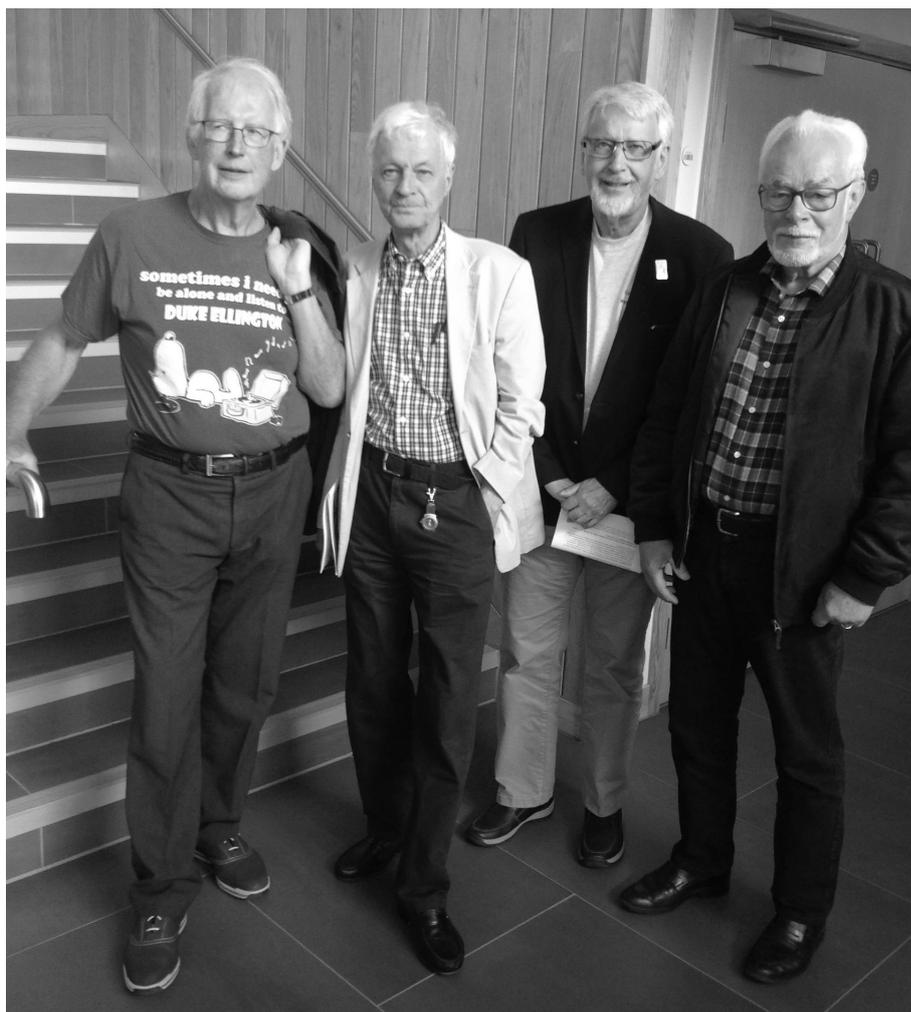
# Duke Ellington-konferens i Birmingham

I oktober 2017 fick vi höra ryktet att det skulle anordnas en konferens i Birmingham, England, men från arrangören Birmingham City University kom inga meddelanden eller någon form av bekräftelse. I januari fick vi genom det engelska Ellingtonsällskapet, DESUK, vissa bekräftande uppgifter på att en konferens verkligen skulle komma till stånd, men fortfarande inga detaljer från universitetet om program, deltagaravgift, hotellrekommendation m.m. Senare meddelade DESUK litet knapphändert om keynote speakers, men på universitetets hemsida fanns inget att läsa och de svarade inte på mejl. Så småningom meddelades kostnaden för att delta och hur avgiften skulle betalas, men först 10 dagar före konferensens början fick man genom DESUKs försorg ett detaljerat program för konferensen. I uppriktighetens namn måste sägas att sämre marknadsföring får man leta efter. Med stor säkerhet måste man anta att flera potentiella deltagare undvek att anmäla sig pga den bristfälliga förhandsinformationen.

Någon deltagarlista tillhandahölls inte, men uppskattningsvis uppgick deltagarantalet till cirka 40 personer. Konferensen hölls i universitets fantastiskt fina lokaler, som var nybyggda sedan ett år tillbaka.

## Fick välja mellan föredrag

Men vad bjöds vi då på? Ur programmet noterar man till att börja med att av de 16 annonserade föredragen hölls 13 av akademiker från olika universitet. (Två av de annonserade anförandena genomfördes inte). Konferensen fick således en tydlig akademisk prägel, något som vi redan kunnat konstatera från de senaste Ellingtonkonferenserna. Dessvärre hade man lagt upp programmet på ett typiskt akademiskt sätt med s.k. "workshops", vilket innebar att "workshop nr 1" omfattande tre föredrag gick parallellt med "workshop nr 2" likaledes innehållande tre föredrag. Vi delegater tvingades således välja mellan föredragen innebärande att vi missade flera anföranden. Många uttryckte sin besvikelse över detta sätt



Svenska kontingenten: Peter Lee, Jan-Olov Isaksson, Bo Hausman och Ulf Lundin.

att arrangera konferensen. Nedan följer en mycket kort redogörelse över de presentationer man kunde ta del av:

**Harvey G. Cohen** (King's College London), författare till boken *Duke Ellington's America* kåserade på ämnet *Duke Ellington in His Own Words*. Med citat från intervjuer och uttalanden av Ellington gjorde Cohen klart för oss hur tydlig Ellington kunde vara om olika samhällsfrågor som race, civil rights, black history och sin egen fascination av att komponera musik.

**Jeremy Price** (Royal Birmingham Conservatoire of Music) valde som titel på sitt anförande *Duke Ellington: Uomo Universale?* Detta innebar att han talade på temat hur Ellington samarbetade med sina side men och därmed skapade flera av sina odödliga kompositioner. Han gjorde därvid flera jämförelser med Leo-

nardo Da Vinci och hur denne på sin tid samarbetade med sina elever.

**Vic Hobson** (National Jazz Archive) hade valt som sitt ämne *Ellington: Collective Composition and Arranging*. Han hade haft tillfälle att bevittna hur Ellington, vid en repetition inför en gramofoninspelning, tillsammans med sina orkestermedlemmar kunde arbeta fram ett slutgiltigt arrangemang, som vid färdigställning kunde avsevärt skilja sig från det första utkastet. Tyvärr fallerade den tekniska utrustningen så föredraget kunde inte illustreras som det var tänkt.

## Celebration – okänt verk

**Jack Chambers** (University of Toronto) berättade om en okänd Ellingtonkomposition *Celebration, Duke Ellington's Lost Symphony*. 1971 komponerade Ellington ett långt verk med anledning av

staden Jacksonvilles 150-årsdag. Kana- densaren Ron Collier fick i uppdrag av Ellington att orkestrera verket och med icke obetydliga svårigheter lyckades han få Ellingtons intentioner nedtecknade och i maj 1972 uppfördes *Celebration* av Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra. Col- lier framförde verket senare i Toronto på Dukes 75-årsdag.

**Mike Fletcher** (Birmingham City University) hade förberett ett föredrag på ämnet *Examining the "Ellington ef- fect": a reappraisal of composition processes in jazz*. Författaren var förhindrad att närvara varför hans kompendium rabb- lades upp av hans kollega Nicolas Pillai. Det konstaterades bl.a. att Ellington inte komponerade sin musik för sin orkester eller ett visst instrument utan mera för den person som trakterade instrumentet. Ett känt faktum för de flesta av oss.

**Michele Corcella** (G.B. Martini Con- servatory/Adriano Buzzolla Conser- vatory) valde som sitt ämne *Beyond the Blues: Duke Ellington's experimentation techniques in the New Orleans Suite*. För- fattaren fördjupade sig i Ellingtons *New Orleans Suite*, som han ansåg var Elling- tons främsta verk efter Billy Strayhorns bortgång. Föredraget var mycket notori- enterat, d.v.s. det illustrerades med åt- skilliga notskrifter, som endast de notlä- sande åhörarna kunde tillgodogöra sig.

**David Stuart Emmerson** (DESKUK) fördjupade sig i ett ämne som han gett titeln *The music of Duke Ellington and African-American civil rights, with parti- cular reference to his Shakespearean suite Such Sweet Thunder*. Föredragshållaren betonade bl a att sviten var från början avsedd att innehålla fler avsnitt, men LP-skivans begränsade kapacitet förhin- drade detta.

**Katherine Williams** (University of Plymouth). Såsom annonserad keynote speaker talade hon på ämnet *Historio- graphy of a Hit: Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue Revisited*. Hon behandlade nämnda Ellingtonnummer från Newport 1956 i skenet av övriga framträdanden av numret och de olika melodier Ellington använt sig av för att separera de två de- larna. Det var inte bara *The Wailing In- terval*. Beklagligtvis läste hon upp sitt intressanta föredrag på en mycket snabb och otydlig engelska, vilket innebar att



Jack Chambers.

många av oss icke engelsktalande, mis- sade mycket av innehållet.

### Monk-skiva var promotion

**Brian Priestly** (Independent scho- lar) kåserade på ämnet *Monk and Duke*. En gängse uppfattning är att Duke och Monk inspirerade varandra, men Brian bevisade att så knappast är fallet. Den skiva som Monk spelade in med Elling- tonmelodier var en promotion från skiv- bolagets sida för att popularisera Monk.

**Frank Griffith** (Brunel University). Självt en erkänd klarinettist kåserade om klarinettens roll i Ellingtons kompositio- ner och koncentrerade sig på olikheterna mellan Bigard och Hamilton.

**Patrick Olsen** (University of Cam- bridge) valde ett ämne som han kallade *Recognising specific challenges from UK pe- dagogical culture for performing Ellington's big band repertoire*. Detta föredrag kunde tyvärr inte avlyssnas eftersom det place- rats i fel workshop.

**Alyn Shipton** (Royal Academy of Music) valde att kåsera på temat *Elling-*

*ton and synaesthesia: to what extent did Duke Ellington hear sounds as colours?* Hans kåseri gick ut på att försöka förkla- ra hur Ellington förknippade vissa toner, och även sina musikers sätt att uttrycka sig, med färger. Han gjorde därvid jäm- förelser med andra kompositörer bl.a. den ryske kompositören Scriabin.

**Tim Wall** (Birmingham City Univer- sity) höll ett anförande betitlat *Duke El- lington, Radio Remotes, and the Mediation of Big City Nightlife, 1927 to 1933*. Med detta kåseri ville föredragshållare förklara vil- ken betydelse tidiga radioutsändningar hade för Ellington och alla andra orkest- rar. Utsändningarna från Cotton Club nådde endast de angränsande staterna och inte coast to coast, som man lätt kan få intryck av. Detta skedde först senare in på 1930-talet.

### Teknisk djupdykning

**Matthias Heyman** (University of Antwerp) har vid en tidigare konferens talat om sin specialitet – Jimmy Blanton. Denna gång hade hans presentation ti- teln *Plucked Again: Ellington's bassists and the mediation of technology*. Han talade nu om hur basen varit placerad i förhål- lande till övriga instrument vid olika tid- punkter vid Ellingtons inspelningar. Hur mikrofoner varit placerade och liknande tekniska detaljer. Matthias har nyligen doktorerat på ämnet Jimmy Blanton.

Utöver dessa presentationer bjöds delegaterna på tre konserter med musik framförd av the Conservatoire Elling- ton Orchestra under ledning av Jeremy Price. Orkestern består av ungdomar som studerar vid the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire of Music. Enbart Elling- ton- och Strayhorn-musik framfördes och det gjordes på ett alldeles utmärkt sätt. Kanske var det en av konferensens större behållningar, för som helhet vill jag med tvekan ge konferensen godkänt. Mer om konferensen kan läsas på vår hemsida [ellington.se](http://ellington.se) med kommentarer och bilder tagna av Ulf Lundin. Slutli- gen skall nämnas att The Eddie Lambert Gavel (ordförandeklubban som vandrar från konferens till konferens) saknades och ingen vet var den finns, kanske i New York. Universitetet kände troligen inte till dess existens.

Bo Hausman

# Nya skivor: D.E.T.S. Vol. 25 och Coventry 1966

Glädjande nog ges det då och då ut CD-skivor med nytt material av Duke Ellington och hans orkester. Denna gång har vi att redovisa den sista delen av "The Treasury Shows", d.v.s. DETS nr 25 samt en upptagning från katedralen i Coventry den 21 februari 1966, med delvis sakralt innehåll.



## D.E.T.S. Vol. 25 (Storyville 903 9025) 2 CD

När nu denna långa serie kan anses som avslutad, kan vi konstatera att en kulturgärning utöver det vanliga har gjorts, och att vi alla är mycket tacksamma att detta kunde genomföras av de som i huvudsak stått bakom projektet, Jerry Valburn och skivbolaget Storyville Records, ursprungligen med Karl-Emil Knudsen som initiativtagare.

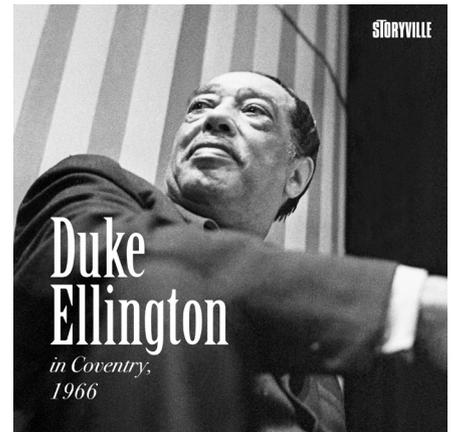
Denna gång är materialet hämtat från LPn DETS-Bonus record (DETS-49) från Blue Note i Chicago, juni 1953, samt från Hurricane Restaurant NYC 1943-1944.

CD 1 innehåller alltså en aircheck från radioprogrammet "All Star Parade Of Bands" med följande nummer: *Take The A Train (intro)*, *Boo-Dah*, *What More Can I Say*, *Frustration*, *Basin Street Blues*, *Duet*,

*Ballin' The Blues*, *Satin Doll*, där vi bl. a. kan höra tidiga versioner av *Boo-Dah* och *Satin Doll*, samt en trad-jazz sättning med Clark Terry, Britt Woodman och Russell Procope som ackompanjemang till Ray Nance i *Basin Street Blues*. Resten av CD 1 består av en MBS Broadcast från The Hurricane den 6 juni 1943. Ben Webster och Juan Tizol finns fortfarande kvar i orkestern och kan höras i *You'll Never Know* resp. *Nevada*. I övrigt får vi höra följande: *Moon Mist*, *Lady Be Good*, *Tonight I Shall Sleep*, *Subtle Slough*, *I Don't Know What Kind Of Blues I Got*, *Don't Get Around Much Anymore* och *Moon Mist*.

CD 2 innehåller tre olika airchecks, alla från The Hurricane: Från den 23 september 1943 med följande innehåll: '*At's In There*, *Design For Jivin'*, *Jump For Joy*, *Solid Old Man* och några takter från *Sentimental Lady*. Nu är Taft Jordan, Nat Jones och Elbert Williams nya medlemmar i bandet. Nästa air check är från 22 april 1944 och nu är Otto Hardwick tillbaka samt Claude Jones som ersätter Tizol. Särskilt hörvärd här är kanske *Perdido*. I övrigt spelas *Now I Know*, *Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me* och *Suddenly It Jumped*. Till sist får vi höra en upptagning från den 5 maj 1944. Här spelas *Indiana*, *How Blue The Night*, *Stomp, Look And Listen*, *Jumpin' Frog Jump*, *Perdido*, *Concerto For Cootie* och *Blue Skies*. Intressant är att kunna jämföra Ray Nance's version av *Concerto For Cootie* med den ursprungliga, samt att lyssna till Mary-Lou Williams' delikata arrangemang av *Blue Skies* (aka *Trumpet No End*).

Ljudkvaliteten är lite varierande beträffande inspelningarna från The Hurricane men fullt acceptabel. De flesta av dessa nummer finns inte utgivna tidigare på skiva utom i några få fall.



## Duke Ellington in Coventry 1966 (Storyville 1018448)

Ellington turnerade i Europa januari-februari 1966 och mot slutet av turnén hölls en konsert i katedralen i Coventry den 21 februari. Innehållet i konserten är blandat, delvis med sakralt eller lite djupare innehåll. Det inleds med att Duke, ensam vid pianot, spelar sin *New World A-Comin'*, i en mycket hörvärd version.

Därefter kommer två utdrag ur "Black Brown And Beige", nämligen *Come Sunday* och *Light* (aka *Montage*) samt en nyskriven lågmäld komposition kallad *Come Easter*, som här förekommer enda gången på skiva. Därefter spelas *Tell Me It's The Truth* med en funkigt festlig duell mellan Johnny Hodges och Lawrence Brown. Efter detta spelas en 20 minuter lång version av *In The Beginning God*, sedan Ellington i sin presentation antyder att man därmed kommit till själva andemeningen med konserten. Det hela avslutas med *West Indian Pancake* och *La Plus Belle Africaine*, vilka var två av de mest spelade numren under denna turné. Utmärkt ljud.

Anders Asplund

## The Savory Collection

Genom Loren Schoenbergs försorg har det på iTunes hittills utgivits tre samlingar med underbar musik ur Bill Savorys efterlämnade radioupptagningar. Bland annat har vi fått avnjuta en underbar längre version av *Body And Soul* med Coleman Hawkins, mycket Count

Basie och Lionel Hampton. Mosaic har även gett ut en box med delar ur samlingen. I Savorys samlingar lär även ingå mycket Duke Ellington-material från hans tid på Cotton Club 1937. Enligt vissa rykten skulle detta material ges ut på en separat CD, men det är

tveksamt om vi kommer att få avnjuta denna musik. Anledningen sägs vara att The Duke Ellington Estate, det vill säga dödsboet, inte ger sitt samtycke härtill. Mycket beklagligt. Kanske vågar man hoppas på en bootleg-utgåva?

# Trumpet in Spades

Duke Ellington komponerade vid flera tillfällen s.k. "concertos" för flera av sina namnkunniga solister. Den mest kända torde vara *Concerto For Cootie*. Men han skrev även ett concerto för Rex Stewart, nämligen *Trumpet In Spades*, med undertiteln *Rex's Concerto*. Den rönt emellertid inte samma framgång som Cootie's version. Senare skulle emellertid Rex Stewart få stor framgång med sin *Boy Meets Horn*.

*Trumpet in Spades* spelades in för Brunswick den 17 juli 1936, (tillsammans med ett annat concerto för Lawrence Brown, *Yearning For Love*). Rex får naturligtvis allt soloutrymmet och briljerar med snabba passager och sin "half valve" teknik. Men numret tycks inte ha rönt någon större uppskattning och det tycks inte ha framförts av Ellington särskilt ofta. I programmet inför Ellingtons konsert i Carnegie Hall den 23 januari 1943 finns numret listat men det tycks inte ha framförts. I programmet har varje annonserat nummer beskrivits och om *Trumpet in Spades* kan följande läsas: "In his career as a brilliant brass-man with Ellington, Rex Stewart has developed a unique technic on his instrument which is exemplified in this piece. By depressing the valve of his trumpet halfway, Stewart produces a strangulated, expressive sound which is usually associated with mechanical mutes or a plunger. Many trumpeters have imitated without real success, the effects that Stewart produces in such a piece as this."

Vid Ellingtons nästkommande konsert i Carnegie Hall den 11 december 1943 får Rex emellertid presentera sitt nummer. Framförandet är i stort identiskt med Brunswickinspelningen men Duke inleder numret med en presenta-

tion där han förklarar att numret skildrar trafiken i korsningen 47th and Parkway i Chicago en lördag klockan tolv. Tro det den som vill? Konserten finns utgiven i sin helhet på Ember 2001 (LP).

Sista gången vi hittar numret i Ellingtons diskografi är från en radioutsändning den 28 juli 1945 från State Theatre i Hartford, Ct. Sändningen ingick i The Treasury Shows och finns utgiven på DETS Vol. 9 (Storyville 903 9009). I och med att Rex Stewart senare lämnade bandet så har naturligtvis numret försvunnit ur Ellingtons repertoar.



Gunther Schuller är inte alltför imponerad av numret. I sin bok *The Swing Era* skriver han: "*Trumpet in Spades*, a rather empty display piece for Rex Stewart, based on the old *Tiger Rag*. With its mindless virtuosity, akin to the florid cornet solos popular in concert band park concerts, it manages upon almost every cliché of the genre. It is no wonder André Hodeir called it "detestable". Besides,

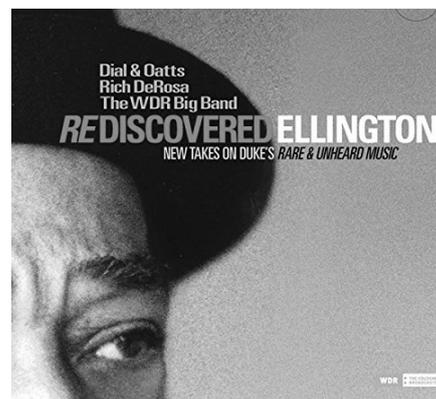
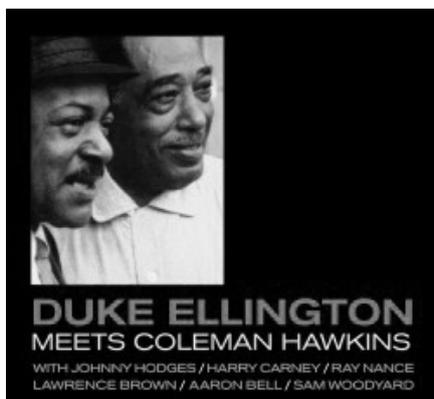
the pun in the title is truly unforgivable."

Precis om Schuller antyder finns det en intressant aspekt på numrets titel – *Trumpet in Spades*. Uttrycket har många bottenar. I ett amerikanskt slanglexikon finner man att begreppet "spade" är ett nedsättande uttryck för en mycket mörk afroamerikan. Samtidigt innebär "in spades" något i högsta grad förstklassigt. Spades betyder även spader, en av kortlekens svarta färger. Vi vet att under de många resorna Ellingtons orkester gjorde under åren fördrevs ofta tiden med kortspel. Ett populärt spel var Tonk men troligen spelade man även Bridge. I Bridge kan man välja en trumffärg, på engelska "trump". *Trumpet in Spades* kan således alludera till "Trump in Spades". I

det segregerade amerikanska samhället ansågs en person med en droppe afroamerikanskt blod för afroamerikan oavsett hudfärg. Därav kom uttrycket "call a spade a spade". D.v.s. en afroamerikan är alltid en afroamerikan och i vidare mening att saker skall alltid kallas för vad de rätteligen är. "Spade" betyder också spade på svenska och i svensk vokabulär har uttrycket direkt översatts till "kalla en spade för en spade", men det är ändå en viss förenkling av uttryckets egentliga mening. I svenskt språkbruk förekommer även uttrycket "få spader" i betydelsen "bli tokig". Om det har någon anknytning till engelskans "in spades" är emellertid oklart.

I sammanhanget kan det vara intressant att notera att Ellingtons komposition *Merry-Go-Round* hade två alternativa titlar, nämligen *Ace of Spades* och *King of Spades*. Man kan även notera att det tidigt i jazzens historia fanns orkestrar där uttrycket "spades" förekom, t.ex. Louis Mitchell's Seven Spades.

Bo Hausfman



## Några intressanta skivor

### Boom-jackie-boom-chick

Efter att Duke Ellington avslutat sin och orkesterns Europaturné i februari 1963 stannade Ellington kvar i Paris och gjorde ett antal inspelningar för Reprise, bl.a. med Alice Babs. Orkestern fick ledigt och man tog sig på olika vägar hem till USA. Paul Gonsalves gjorde ett stopp i London på vägen hem och gjorde där en inspelning med några lokala musiker. LP:n gavs ut 1964 på märket Vocalion, troligen i en begränsad upplaga och med begränsad distribution. Undertecknad har sökt skivan i alla år, men aldrig lyckats finna den till acceptabelt pris. Jazz Messengers kommer nu med en återutgivning kopplad med Fantasy-skivan "Gettin' Together!". Paul Gonsalves var en underbar tenorist, särskilt när han fick spela ballader. I "Boom-jackie-boom-chick" (ett underligt namn) får han allt utrymme och får verkligen tillfälle att visa sina färdigheter. En helt underbar platta för den som gillar Paul Gonsalves och det gör vi väl alla.

### Duke Ellington Meets Coleman Hawkins

1963 gav Impulse ut LP-skivan med ovanstående titel. En fantastisk skiva med Coleman Hawkins enda framträdande tillsammans med Duke Ellington. När CD-skivan gjorde sitt inträde på

marknaden återutgav Impulse-skivan, nu med ett extranummer tillagt. I februari i år gav Jazz Messengers ut skivan igen med hela fem extranummer, alla Ellingtonrelaterade kompositioner. Självklart fick man intrycket att det fanns hittills okända extratagningar från Impulse-inspelningen och gladligen beställer man skivan. Man blir dock en aning besviken när man får hem den och konstaterar att de fem extranumren inte härstammar från Impulse utan är Coleman Hawkins i andra sammanhang. Falsk varubeckning kan man säga, men man kan alltid njuta av Hawkins i alla situationer så pengarna var ändå inte helt bortkastade.

Extranumren var: The Star-Crossed Lovers, 26 oktober 1969. *Just Squeeze Me*, 10 december 1962. (med bl.a. Clark Terry). *Perdido*, December 1955. (med bl.a. Rex Stewart och Tyree Glenn). *Satin Doll*, 15 augusti 1962 (med bl.a. Roy Eldridge och Johnny Hodges). *Take The "A" Train*, 5 februari 1962.

### Dial & Oatts, Rick Derosa & WDR Big Band

Den här CD:n (Zoho Music ZM201707) har jag inte avlyssnat, men har observerat den pga titeln "Rediscovered Ellington – New Takes on Duke's rare and unheard Music". WDR står för West Deutscher Rundfunk och är ett modernt inriktat

storband, där bl.a. svensken Johan Hörnlén ingår. Det är intressant att notera vilka melodier som spelas; *Hey Baby*, *Let the Zoomers Drool*, *I like Singing*, *Just a Gentle Word From You Will Do*, *Introspection*, *Kiki*, *Love Came*, *Kcor*, *I Must Be Mad*. Flera av dessa titlar är okända för de flesta av oss, men vi vet ju att både Ellington och Strayhorn komponerade åtskillig musik, som de aldrig framförde eller spelade in. Den som vill veta mer om skivan får all information på [http://zohomusic.com/cds\\_detail.php?cds\\_id=176](http://zohomusic.com/cds_detail.php?cds_id=176).

Bo Hauffman

### Department of Useless Information

Vår systerförening i Toronto använder sig av denna rubrik i sitt mars/april-nummer för en notis med följande innehåll:

"According to the Tom Lord on line discography the Ellington/Tizol composition Caravan has been recorded 1801 times by many different bands and orchestras including Ellington's. Mood Indigo 1312 times.

There are 3427 (or so) jazz compositions based on the form and harmonies (Contrefacts) of George Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm*. What would jazz musicians have done for material if Gershwin hadn't written *I Got Rhythm* and *Lady Be Good*? (Source: RiffTides blog by Doug Ramsey, March 13, 2018)".

Jazz Humour

Duke arrived late at one of his concerts. The Orchestra had started to play without him. He went

up to the microphone and apologized with the words:

– I'm sorry, but if you had seen her, you would understand.

# Posttidning B

Duke Ellington Society of Sweden  
c/o Leif Jönsson, Anbudsvägen 15  
187 50 TÄBY

## KALLELSE!

Duke Ellington Society of Sweden hälsar sina medlemmar välkomna till medlemsmöte måndagen den 17 september.

### PLATS:

Franska Skolans aula,  
Döbelnsgatan 3, Stockholm.  
Portkod för kvällen: 1709.  
Entrén öppen från kl. 17.00.  
Entréavgift: 100:- i kontanter.



### PROGRAM:

**17.30-18.30** – **Bo Lindström**, internationellt känd författare, berättar om bakgrunden till sin uppmärksammade bok om Tommy Ladnier och om sin nya bok om den tidige Fletcher Henderson-trombonisten George Brashear. Tillsammans med sin medförfattare Dan Vernhettes har Bo lagt ner ett imponerande



forskningsarbete kring dessa musikers levnad och verksamhet. Hur det gick till berättar Bo om.

**18.30-19.00** – **PAUS** med möjlighet till mingel och inköp av öl/vin 30:- och wraps 40:-. Obs! Endast kontanter eller Swish.

**19.00-20.30** – **FILMTAJM**. Diverse olika jazzfilmer kommer att visas. En del kända, andra mindre kända.

Tidsangivelserna är ungefärliga.

### NÄSTA MÖTE:

**Nästa gång vi ses är den 26 november på samma plats.**

## Duke Ellington Society of Sweden, DESS

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DESS

c/o Leif Jönsson  
Anbudsvägen 15, 187 50 TÄBY  
08-510 503 14, 0706-22 88 16  
leif.jonsson14@comhem.se

### Redaktionsgrupp:

Bo Haufman, Thomas Harne,  
Lars Björkman, Claes Brodda,  
Andreas Andersson (layout)

### Hemsida:

[www.ellington.se](http://www.ellington.se)

### Facebook:

Duke Ellington Society of Sweden

### E-postadress:

[ellington.sweden@telia.com](mailto:ellington.sweden@telia.com)

### Bankgiro:

211-3207

### PayPal account:

[ellington.sweden@telia.com](mailto:ellington.sweden@telia.com)

### International Bank Account

IBAN: SE95 6000 0000 0002 8408 3992

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### DESS medlemsavgift

Per kalenderår inom

Norden: 250 kr

Membership outside of

Scandinavia: annual fee USD 40