

Factsheet Denmark

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JAZZ, ROCK, POP AND TECHNO

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From an international point of view, the Danish rock and pop scene has primarily made its mark with individual hits in the struggle for visibility on the international hit lists. Thus the classically-trained Safri Duo among other things became 'dance act of the year' in Germany in 2001 with its fusion of dance, electronica and analogue percussion. However, international hits are not the only yardstick for the extent and quality of the Danish music environment within pop, rock and techno. The current local scene is fortunately far too active and broad for that, both in terms of genres and idioms.

JAZZ

Unlike pop and rock, Danish jazz has had a strong international profile for a long time. When the tourist authorities marketed Copenhagen as the 'Jazz Centre of Europe' in the 1960s and 1970s, it reflected that the exclusive genre of jazz had successfully been made a popular form of music in Denmark and that the city had one of Europe's most important modern jazz venues, Jazzhus Montmartre.

Rock and pop have long ago supplanted jazz as the common and popular form of music and Copenhagen has got competition as Jazz Capital of Europe, but Denmark is still unique as a jazz country in one respect: proportionally it has far more musicians in the European elite than other European countries. The generosity with which the Danish public received



The percussion ensemble Safri Duo during a concert at the Skanderborg Festival 2000. Photo: Polfoto/Johnny Fredriksen.

jazz in the 1960s and with which the public authorities have since supported music training and venues can now be measured by the large concentration of highly qualified musicians.

It is generally said that jazz came to Denmark in 1925 when the pianist and band leader Sam Wooding visited Copenhagen with his orchestra. For many prominent Danish music people, these concerts became the first introduction to the genre. It is characteristic of the early Danish jazz history that it was shaped by three classically trained musicians: the band leader Erik Tuxen (1902-1957), who later became chief conductor of the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the composer Bernhard Christensen (b.1906) and the writer Sven Møller Kristensen (1909-1991).

Tuxen took the initiative in establishing one of the first Danish jazz bands, Christensen wrote a number of works inspired by both jazz and classical music, and Møller Kristensen wrote the lyrics for Christensen's scores as well as the first Danish theoretical books on jazz.

The popular breakthrough of Jazz in the 1930s

From the 1930s, Danish jazz experienced

its 'golden age' and first popular breakthrough. The dominant figures of the period were the charismatic pianist and band leader Leo Mathisen (1906-1969) - a Danish counterpart of Fats Waller - and the more sophisticated violinist and talented improviser Svend Asmussen (b.1916). Also prominent were band leaders such as the trombonist Peter Rasmussen (1906-1992) and the saxophonist Kai Ewans (1906-1988) as well as instrumental soloists such as the pianist Kjeld Bonfils (1918-1984) and the double bass player Niels Foss (b.1916).

During the German Occupation in 1940-1945 jazz functioned as a kind of political protest, as it was frowned on by the occupying power because of its American roots, but after the Occupation the music had to succeed on its own merits. Its popularity decreased during the 1950s, where musicians and audience split into two fairly irreconcilable camps: those cherishing jazz music which sounded as it originally did in New Orleans and those oriented towards Charlie Parker's and Dizzy Gillespie's modern bebop music, which had emerged in 1940s New York.

However, Denmark continued to produce excellent musicians: the New Orleans camp saw the breakthrough of among oth-





Jazz pianist Niels Jørgen Steen as an outdoor concert in the park *Kongens Have* during the Copenhagen Jazz Festival 2002.

Photo: Polfoto/ Jens Dresling.

Jesper Thilo (centre) with the orchestra at the Copenhagen Jazz Festival 2002.

Photo: Scanfix Nordfoto/Niels Meilvang.



ers the pianist and band leader Adrian Bentzon (b.1929) and the Louis Armstrong inspired trumpet player Theis Jensen (b.1938). Bebop jazz was represented by among others the saxophonist Max Brüel (1927- 1995), the double bass player Erik Moseholm (b.1930), who also, with the composer Børger Roger Henrichsen (1915-1989), developed the jazz department of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, and the trumpet player Jørgen Ryg (1927-1981), who subsequently became an actor.

The Heyday in the 1960s

The renaissance of Danish jazz began in the early 1960s, when the first Jazzhus Montmartre opened in Copenhagen. This developed into an intimate, club-like venue modelled on the jazz clubs in New York and Paris. From the start, prominent American musicians played there and during the same period several of them settled in Copenhagen, where they found both the musical and the social climate more congenial than at home. The tenor saxophonist Stan Getz and the double bass player Oscar Pettiford had lived in Copenhagen since 1958. Now they were joined by the saxophonists Dexter Gordon and Ben Webster, the pianist Kenny Drew and, in the 1970s and 1980s, the pianists Duke Jordan and Horace Parlan, the percussionist Ed Thigpen, the saxophonist Bob Rockwell and the band leader Thad Jones.

The Americans did not stifle the Danish musicians, but inspired them. Montmartre became the home of a rhythm group consisting of Kenny Drew, the double bass player Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen ('NHØP') (b.1946) and the percussionist Alex Riel (b.1940), who are still regarded as one of the best small jazz ensembles. A Danish free jazz scene also developed, centred round the saxophonist John Tchicai (b.1936), and a Danish mainstream tradition was established with the tenor saxophonist Jesper Thilo (b.1941) as its guiding star; the eclectic trumpet player, composer and project instigator Palle Mik-

kelborg (b.1941) began his career during the same period. In 1977, Thad Jones became leader of the Radio Big Band and his style continues to characterise the orchestra today, more than twenty years later, when two other Americans, Bob Brookmeyer and Jim McNeely, have been its chief conductor.

After the 1970s

In the 1970s, rock music took over the leading role on the music market, but the 1960s success had led to public subsidies for the more un-compromising jazz musicians and ensembles, among whom fusion jazz was now also gaining ground. The subsidies have helped Danish jazz to sustain an unchanged level of activity, although the music in many cases has become more searching and less audience oriented. The main venue is now Copenhagen Jazzhouse (the successor to Montmartre), supplemented by the annual Copenhagen Jazz Festival.

The official Danish attitude to jazz can thus be said to be that it is art music which deserves to be supported at almost the same level as classical music, which is in line with the cultural policy in the other North European countries. Nonetheless Denmark remains unique in jazz terms, in that Copenhagen has the only academy of rhythmic music in Northern Europe.

Important Figures in the New Millennium

Many figures are prominent on the Danish jazz scene today. Many of the veterans from the 1960s are still active: Alex Riel, NHØP, Jesper Thilo and Palle Mikkelborg. In addition, there is a group of prominent pianists, who all also work as composers and/or band leaders: Carsten Dahl (b. 1967), Jørgen Emborg (b.1953), Thomas Clausen (b.1949), Nikolaj Bentzon (b.1964), Ole Kock Hansen (b.1945), Niels Jørgen Steen (b.1939) and Jan Kaspersen (b.1948).

The bebop veteran Bent Jædig (b.1935) still plies his tenor saxophone, but is being seen out with great authority by younger

colleagues on the instrument: Fredrik Lundin (b.1963), Thomas Agergaard (b.1962), Hans Ulrik (b.1966) and Jakob Dinesen (b.1968). The trumpet player Jens Winther (b.1960) and the percussionist Marilyn Mazur (b.1955) take after Palle Mikkelborg in being composers and project instigators as well. Several quite exceptional instrumentalists are heirs to NHØP's double bass throne: Mads Vinding (b.1948), Jesper Lundgaard (b.1954), Lennart Ginman (b.1960) and Thomas Ovesen (b.1965).

The older styles are cultivated with special talent by the trombonist Ole 'Fessor' Lindgren (b.1938), who plays New Orleans jazz, and Ib Gлиндemann (b.1934), who plays swing. Other important names are the guitarist Pierre Dørge (b.1946), whose 'New Jungle Orchestra' is impossible to categorise, the guitarist Jacob Fischer (b.1967) and the violinist Kristian Jørgensen (b.1967). There are still many foreign musicians in Denmark, but they do not enjoy the same star status as before.

Peter H. Larsen

Producer, DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation)

ROCK, POP AND TECHNO

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The rock band Sort Sol photographed in 2002.
Photo: Scanfix Nordfoto/Bax Lindhardt.



The charismatic singer Annisette from Savage Rose during a concert in 2002. The band has existed since the late 1960s.
Photo: Gorm Valentin.

national hits are not the only yardstick for the extent and quality of the Danish music environment within pop, rock and techno. The current local scene is fortunately far too active and broad for that, both in terms of genres and idioms.

Rock

Rock'n'roll arrived in Denmark in 1956. Dancing schools, musicians and singers took up the new 'fad' influenced by American music on film and recordings. In the 1960s, it was The Beatles and The British Invasion which launched innumerable groups in Denmark as well as the rest of the world.

People sang in English and they wanted to both sound and look like the models in Liverpool. In Denmark the style was called 'barbed wire music'.

The Danish scene did not really change until 1967 with the group Steppeulvene (The Coyotes). Although they found inspiration abroad, they wrote their own

lyrics, original and most importantly in Danish. The following years saw the debuts of several other groups which blazed new and original trails, including the jazz rock group Burnin' Red Ivanhoe (formed 1967) and Savage Rose (first appearance 1968), both with roots in classical music. Some 20 albums later, Savage Rose remains artistically active, centred around the singer Annisette (Hansen) (b.1949) and the composer Thomas Koppel (b.1944).

From Barbed Wire to Beat

From the late 1960s the 'barbed wire' music disappeared and 'rock' in Denmark became 'beat', a term covering the part of the music created by the youth culture of the period. Alrune Rod (formed 1968) worked with a psychedelic musical idiom, others focused on lyrics originating in the current ideological trends. A sign of the times was the debut album of the group Skousen & Ingemann, *Herfra hvor vi står* (1971, *From where we are standing*), with lyrics in Danish.

Beat remained the code word for several years, but during the 1970s rock gradually took over. In the 1970s, Gnags, which was formed in Struer in Western Jutland in 1966, gradually became the most popular live rock band in Denmark, but measured by sales figures the most popular 1970s rock band was Gasolin, which from its origin in Christianshavn in Copenhagen became Danish national property from 1969 to 1978 with a series of saucy, singable lyrics presented with cheeky charm by the group's lead singer Kim Larsen (b.1945).

In 1983, his solo album *Midt om natten* (*In the Middle of the Night*) became Denmark's bestselling album ever.

Singers and song-writers

Alongside the groups, the Danish scene from the late 1970s and far into the 1980s was dominated by a number of talented singers and song-writers who did not work in permanent group contexts, but who, in Danish, in their different ways contributed to shaping the image of the

music of the period and the values and ideologies of the contemporary youth culture. Sebastian (b.1949) produced his first album in 1971 and with his lyrical temperament later had a popular breakthrough as a composer of music for films, musicals and theatre.

The intellectual, coolly observant C.V. Jørgensen (b.1950) made his debut in 1974 and primarily became as a 'song-writers' song-writer'. Both Sebastian and C.V. Jørgensen remain active. This is also true of Anne Linnet (b.1953), who has worked with a wide range of musical idioms and been a prominent figure since the mid 1970s.

Punk and New Wave

The 1970s punk and New Wave music primarily hit Århus and Copenhagen. In the 1980s, the New Wave band Kliché from Århus spawned the soloist, singer and songwriter Lars H.U.G. (b.1953) and from a start in the Copenhagen experimental punk group Ballet Mekanique, the composer, singer and guitarist Martin Hall (b.1963) became a wide-ranging 'loner', who subsequently experimented within both music and art.

From the actual Danish punk scene, only Sort Sol (Black Sun) managed to grow as a band from the underground to a status as a solid rock name on the Danish scene. Incidentally, the Danish punk scene also produced the heavy rock band Mercyful Fate, whose Satanic image was continued by the group's front figure King Diamond (b.1956) in the USA and elsewhere.

Pop Rock

The aggressive idiom of punk left plenty of room in the media and with the public for a softer sound, and for a number of years well-playing Danish-language pop rock groups were successful with Danish audiences.

In 1977, the musicians Jens Rugsted and Stig Kreutzfeldt formed the group Rugsted-Kreutzfeldt and 1978 saw the formation of Tøsedrengene (The Sissies),

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which reached a broad audience with its mixture of pop rock and reggae. Sneakers appeared in 1979 and remained a Danish top name until 1985, mainly because of the singer Sanne Salomonsen (b.1955), who gave the group its dynamic live expression.

In the late 1980s, Salomonsen (now without Sneakers) was indisputably the uncrowned Rock Queen of Denmark. On the rawer rock scene, groups emerging in the 1980s included the still active D-A-D.

The group TV-2 made its debut in 1981 with roots in the Århus music scene. The idiomatic lyrics of Steffen Brandt (b.1953) with their ironic, satirical snapshots of life in Denmark secured solid attention and broad popularity for the band, but it has retained its image and anchoring in rock music.

The Scene from the 1990s

Like TV-2, two of the popular Danish singers and song-writers of 1990s also came from Århus: the roots and blues based Poul Krebs (b.1956) with songs in Danish and the soul-inspired Thomas Helmig (b.1964), who attained actual idol status in the 1990s with songs in English such as Stupid Man from the best-seller album of the same name from 1993.

Some of Helming's records are issued abroad, but without resulting in an international breakthrough. On the other hand, the heavy rock band Pretty Maids (formed 1981) has achieved greater success abroad than at home and in the mid 1990s the pop rock group Michael Learns to Rock (formed 1988) had a very large following in Asia.

The Danish rock trio Dizzy Mizz Lizzy (1988-1997) was also well received there, especially in Japan. As a soloist, the group's front figure, singer and guitarist Tim Christensen (b.1974), was one of the best-selling Danish rock artist in 2003.

The New Danish Scene

During the 1990s, the Danish scene developed in several directions. The dynamic DJ and dance culture from among others the USA and Great Britain

inspired producers, remixers and DJ's such as Soul Shock (b.1968) and Cutfather (b.1968), who also made their mark abroad.

On the actual electronic music scene there was broad experimentation, for instance by the ambient group Future 3 (formed 1994), whose Thomas Knak (b.1973) in 2001 wrote songs with the Icelandic artist Björk. On the clubbing scene, the Goa-trance group Koxbox (formed 1990) made its mark with extensive tours of the USA, Latin America, Australia and elsewhere.

A number of Danish rap groups inspired by American hip hop culture developed at the same time, often with very funny lyrics. The first were MC Einar (formed 1987) and Østkyst Hustlers (East Coast Hustlers, formed 1994), later came for instance Den Gale Pose (also known as Madness 4 Real, formed 1996) and Hvid Sjokolade (White Chocolate, formed 1996).

In recent years, the rap trio Outlandish (formed 1997), with their English lyrics and musical elements borrowed from the Arab and the Latin American cultures, has attracted some international attention. Alongside the very maledominated rap scene, a number of new female rock song writers made their debuts, including Randi Laubek (b.1973) and Tina Dickow (b.1977).

On the actual rock scene since 2000, the trio Kashmir (formed 1991) stands as the band able to combine formal innovation with commercial success in Denmark. On the Danish mainstream rock scene, Saybia (formed 1993) and Carpark North (formed 1999) were the most popular bands in 2002-2003.

The Few Large Companies - and the Many Small Ones

The Danish record industry is dominated by the large international record companies: BMG, EMI, Sony Music and Universal Music, all with offices in Copenhagen and a common distribution network in Denmark through the limited

company GDC A/S. Alongside sales of their international catalogues, the companies have also been responsible for most of the Danish production of pop and rock for many years. The 1980s independent Danish record companies with popular pop and rock artists were bought by the 'biggies'. The company Genlyd with names such as Gnags and Thomas Helmig was bought by BMG Denmark in 1990 and Medley with names such as Kim Larsen and Sort Sol became part of EMI in 1994. However, this concentration has made room for new, small, local companies, including Bad Afro Records with the group Body Woodrose, and Cruch Frog Records, which is skilfully backing new distinctive Danish rock and pop groups such as The Ravonettes and Junior Senior, who have both managed also to get a foreign record contract. Entirely independently, the rock band Swan Lee with the singer Pernille Rosendahl (b.1972) has made a strong impression.

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