

The
GUITAR
of
FRANK AASEN
“SKREDDERN”

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
Last update: June 19, 2017

Born: Oslo, Nov. 20, 1921
 Died: Jan. 5, 1995

Introduction:

I had the pleasure of hearing Frank Aasen several times. He was a personal musician with his own easily recognizable style and his improvisations held high quality. He probably must be considered our best swing guitar player after the legendary Robert Normann, until the Django-revolution around 1980.

History:

With Frank Ottersen's quartet and Lido's orchestra 1941, Johnny Johansen's orchestra in autumn, Frank Ottersen's Rytmeorkester at Sinsen Kino (cinema) summer 1942, Frank Ottersen's rhythmtrio, quintet and string trio 1942-43, with Alf Søgaaard's bigband winter 1943, concerts with Frank Ottersen's quintet winter 1945. With Will Arild's orchestra July 1945, Frank Ottersen's quartet in the autumn, broadcasts with own trio 1946, continuing as Kings Trio 1947-48, occasional jobs, own trio at Torshov Tivoli autumn 1948, with Frank Ottersen's orchestra at Kongen summer 1949, Leif Egil Kristensen's orchestra autumn 1949. Later active as jazz- and dancemusician (ref. Bjørn Stendahl & John Bergh: "Sigarett Stomp" – Jazz i Norge 1940-50, Norsk Jazzarkiv 1991).

Availability:

July 10, 1943: Herman Records HJCD 9002 (Jazz in Norway Vol. 2)
 Oct. 27, 1943: Herman Records HJCD 9002 (Jazz in Norway Vol. 2)
 Feb. 23, 1950: NJA D129
 Feb. 1951: NJA K044 and others
 Ca. Nov. 1951: NJA K025
 Ca. 1960: NJA K47
 Dec. 27, 1960: NJA K3&4
 Aug. 5, 1962: "Stardust": NJA K4, others: Gemini Records GMOJCD 9501

FRANK AASEN SOLOGRAPHY

FRANK OTTERSEN OG HANS SEKSTETT **Oslo, July 14, 1942**

Frank Ottersen (vln), Per Nilsen (cl, as), Lulle Kristoffersen (p), Robert Normann, Frank Aasen (g), Mikal Kolstad (b), John Veiglum (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Norwegian Odeon: "Ding Dong Dang", "Skumring", "Promenade" and "Opus 1" but all guitar soli by Robert Normann.

ALF SØEGAARDs**EDDERKOPPEN ORKESTER** **Oslo, ca. Sept./Oct. 1942**

Bigband personnel probably including Frank Aasen (g). Leif Juster, Kari Heide-Steen (vo).

Five titles (or more) were recorded for Norwegian HMV: 587 "Vær Glad For Det Lille Som Du Har", 590-1 "Saker Og Ting", 603-1 "Problemet", 606 "Den Holder Koken", 607-1 "Minorka", but no FAa to be heard.

WILL ARILDS ORKESTER **Oslo, July 10, 1943**

Frank Andersen, Erling Løchen (tp), Lyder Vengbo (tb), Karl Westby, Bjarne Jonsson, Karl Ekdahl (reeds), Arne Haugen (p), Frank Aasen (g), Per Sleipnæs (b), Will Arild Hermansen (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Norwegian Odeon, no guitar solo on nw3069-1 "Bare Et Ord" but:

nw3068-1 Brenning Solo 12 bars. (FM)

Frank Aasen's first recorded solo is a simple but well conceived construction, obviously he knows his instrument.

FRANK OTTERSEN OG HANS SEKSTETT **Oslo, Oct. 27, 1943**

Frank Ottersen (vln), Arvid Gram Paulsen (tp, as), Rolv Nordstrand (cl), Per Nyhaug (vib), Frank Aasen (g), Per Sleipnæs (b), Lorang Karlsen (dm), Inger Beck and band (vo-592).

Two titles were recorded for Norwegian Telefunken, no guitar solo on 593-E "Frankie's Signatur" but:

592-B Mester Jacob Soli 4 and 4 bars. (FM)

Two brief pieces of unamplified guitar, very nice!

SØGAARDs DANSEORKESTER **Oslo, Nov. 22, 1943**

Alf Søgaaard (dir), Gunnar Tuft, Einar Johansen (tp), Arvid Gram Paulsen (tp, arr-601), Gunnar Rugstad, Fritz Austin (tb), William Syversen, Bjarne Hansen, Harald Barwin (reeds), Frank Ottersen (ts, arr-602), Ulf Arnesen (p), Frank Aasen (g), Per Sleipnæs (b), Per Onsum (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Norwegian HMV, 601-1 "Pike Fortell Meg Et Eventyr" and 602-1 "Melodi", but no guitar soli.

THORLEIF ØSTERENGs JAZZENSEMBLE **Oslo, Feb. 23, 1950**

Thorleif Østereng (tp), Lyder Vengbo (tb), Rolv Nordstrand (cl, as), Bjarne Nerem (ts), Egil Monn-Iversen (p), Frank Aasen (g), Rolf Windingstad (b), Pete Brown (dm).

Two titles were recorded privately, no guitar solo on "Free And Easy" but:

Don't Blame Me Solo 16 bars. (SM)

This solo seems to be kind of transition from the widespread Django influence to a more laidback and economic style, interesting!

FRANK OTTERSENs KVINTETT **Oslo, Feb. 1951**

Frank Ottersen (vln), Scott Lunde (p), Frank Aasen (g), Frank Cook (b), John Veiglum (dm), Solveig Barland (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Norwegian Columbia, no FAa on 1834-1 "Den Farlige Alder" but:

1835-1 Min Lille Pekingeser Solo 8 bars. (M)

1836 I Et Ubevoktet Øieblikk Soli 4 and 4 bars. (M)

1837 Fidelidelei Solo 8 bars. (M)

Commercial sides with lots of funny vocal, but there is space for soloing, and FAa plays nicely unamplified guitar on three of the four titles.

JAM SESSION**Oslo, ca. Nov. 1951**

Bjarne Nerem (ts), Frank Aasen (g), unknown (b), (dm).

One title, "Blues", was privately recorded at Folkets Hus, 1:40, but only the tenorsax solo is preserved, and FAa is not heard.

JAM SESSION**Oslo, ca. Nov. 1951**

Frank Ottersen (vln), Frank Aasen (g), probably Øistein Ringstad (p), unknown (b), (dm). Possibly same date as above. One title:

7:05 Pennies From Heaven Soli 32, 64 and 64 bars. (M)

A great jam session where guitar, piano and violin repace each other in turn, the former most eager, taking full five choruses in total. Apart from the great Robert Normann, better swing guitar has not been played in this country!!

ARVID GRAM PAULSEN**Oslo, ca. 1960**

Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), possibly Terje Kjær (p), Frank Aasen (g), Hans Christian Jarnfeldt (dm).

Thirteen titles were recorded live at Frognerseieren Restaurant:

3:15 Night And Day No solo. (M)

4:30 Crazy Rhythm Soli 32 and 32 bars. (M)

4:15 I'm Getting Sentimental Over You No solo. (S)

4:40 Out Of Nowhere Solo 32 bars. (M)

5:35 Blues No solo. (S)

3:50 All Of Me Solo 32 bars. (FM)

4:00 Stardust No solo. (S)

4:00 Tea For Two Solo 32 bars. (M)

4:10 Ain't Misbehavin' No solo. (S)

4:55 Blues Solo 24 bars. (FM)

4:40 Blue Moon Solo 8 bars. (S)

4:15 Lady Be Good Soli 32 and 32 bars. (FM)

4:45 Dinah Soli 32 and 32 bars. (M)

The first of the two restaurant sessions preserved has some shortcomings compared to the second one. The sound quality while surprisingly clear, suffers from guitar overamplification, making FAa's soli sometimes be less pleasant to the ear than they really were. Furthermore the pianist's eagerness to solo all the time and as much as possible is not quite consistent with his artistic capabilities. Nevertheless, as written in the Paulsen-solography, this is a great tenorsax session, and concentrating on FAa, he demonstrates that he is an excellent and original guitar player in mainstream style. For some inexplicable reason he does not solo on the slow items, but there are very nice examples of his laidback and economic style in the medium tempi. Note that FAa passes the primary test of jazz by being easily identifiable, a real personality!

ARVID GRAM PAULSEN**Oslo, Dec. 27, 1960**

Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), Ivar Andresen (vib), Øistein Ringstad (p-"I Can't Believe ...", Frank Aasen (g), Bjørn Jacobsen (b), Øistein Lund (dm).

Twelve titles were recorded live at Metropol Restaurant:

4:50 I Can't Believe That You're ILWM Soli 32 and 32 bars. (FM)

7:30 Stardust Solo 32 bars. (S)

5:40 Avalon Soli 32 and 32 bars. (FM)

8:15 Rose Room Soli 32 and 32 bars. (M)

5:55 Moonglow Solo 32 bars. (S)

9:00 Exactly Like You Soli 32, 64 and 64 bars. (FM)

8:35 Out Of Nowhere Soli 32 and 32 bars. (SM)

5:10 I Got Rhythm Solo 68 bars. (FM)

7:20 Don't Blame Me Solo 32 bars. (S)

5:00 All The Things You Are Solo 80 bars. (M)

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| 8:50 | Body And Soul | Soli 32 and 32 bars. (S) |
| 6:20 | Blue Lou | Solo 32 bars. (FM) |

This session, although sometimes pretty noisy, represents the very best of FAa! This time he solos on the slow items, and “Stardust” is just so sensitive and delightful. Too much audience on “... Blame Me”, while he surprises by starting out on “Body ...” and taking two soli on this extended item, the guys don’t want to quit! And “Moonglow” is a restrained and minimalistic masterpiece, really containing and presenting the secret of FAa and his original style. Several great and swinging items in medium tempi (although the vibraphone seems to believe it has to lay out background all the time ...) demonstrates how his ‘on the beat’ approach without too much technique (which he had and could use when he wanted it) in fact possesses great elegance. Take “Rose ...” as a remarkable example (the opening is grandiose!), as well as a magnificent “... Nowhere”, perfect, could not been done better! In my biased opinion FAa deserves to be remembered as a great jazz artist with qualities well above a pure local/national level.

ARVID GRAM PAULSEN **Molde, Aug. 5 1962**
 Øistein Ringstad (p), Frank Aasen (g), Bjørn Jacobsen (b), Karl Otto Hoff (dm).
 One title was recorded live in concert at Molde Kino during Molde International Jazz Festival:

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| 3:50 | Stardust | Solo 64 bars. (S) |
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same

As above with Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts) added.
 Three titles, no guitar solo on “Limehouse Blues” but:

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| 5:55 | Out Of Nowhere | Solo 64 bars. (M) |
| 5:51 | All The Things You Are | Solo 72 bars. (FM) |

This famous concert represented the last public appearance of the great Arvid Gram Paulsen, and also, as far as we know, the last preserved session with FAa. Some of it was even filmed, and those who were present (like me) remembers it vividly (read also the AGP-solography). Since it is in fact the only FAa session easily available to the general public, it deserves concentrated attention. “Stardust” was played as a quartet number, and while quite good, it cannot quite compare with restaurant sessions described earlier, unnecessary piano comping may have contributed. However, getting to “... Nowhere”, except for a catastrophic piano/tenorsax misunderstanding in the beginning it turns out to be a memorable example of Norwegian mainstream swing. FAa takes two very fine, groovy and swinging choruses here, note the sovereign opening and the elegance of his almost arrogant playing, and the transition between the two choruses! The choice of “... Things ...” was perhaps not the wisest for this group, and the guitar narrowly lost its solo to the piano, consequently the first chorus is somewhat hesitating while the second one definitely has class. Jazz Archeology is proud to have Frank Aasen as part of its vintage jazz artists base!!

No further recordings found, but there must be private sessions hidden on reels and cassettes somewhere?

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