

The
GUITAR
of
ROBERT NORMANN

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
Last update: Nov. 28, 2016

Born: Sarpsborg, Norway, June 27, 1916
 Died: Sarpsborg, May 20, 1998

Introduction:

Robert Normann was probably the most creative jazz performer in the Norwegian vintage jazz tradition, the most important European string swing jazz guitarist beside Django Reinhardt, and our great hero. His soli reveal a very forceful and personal musical personality. His sense of melodic construction is very advanced, his range of emotions is wide, his harmonic scope is broader than most of his contemporaries, and his technique is amazing. However, he was a very shy person, and after his great recording sessions before and during World War II, he rarely appeared in public. He was quite active as a composer though, and was frequently used in Norwegian broadcast and intermission-TV with his fascinating non-improvised guitar pieces. I wrote his 'vintage' solography in my Jazz Solography Series Vol. 4 back in the 1970s, now updated and including his whole career. Personally I never had the opportunity to meet him nor hear him live, although he passed away forty years after I became interested in jazz. He could have been an international star, if he had been a different personality.

History:

Here is one of the best kept secrets in the Norwegian jazz world:

From his account, Robert Uno Normann was weaned on music. He has early and happy childhood memories (he was born June 27, 1916) from a music filled home. The whole family were musical and relaxed in the evenings by giving improvised concerts on accordion, mandolin and guitar. The warming-up number was inevitably *Donauwellen*. Little Robert peeped around the door, fascinated by the music.

His father and grandfather had worked for long periods at the nickel works in *Petersburg*, where the Russian workers gathered on Sundays to play and sing. Melancholy minor chords could therefore often be heard in his childhood home, Sundløkka, Borge near Sarpsborg. Robert learned the guitar by ear and later on both the accordion and tenor sax.

His first encounter with jazz was a clarinet rendering on the radio about 1926. A couple of years later, Robert teamed up with the accordion player *Sverre Samuelsen* playing a wide, mixed repertoire of foxtrot and jazz. Sixty years later he still maintains that no better jazz has been played on the accordion! His first engagements brought in a little extra pocket money, however when the Zinc works where his father worked closed down in 1928, things got serious. His family were in a difficult financial situation, and Robert's dream of becoming a mechanic had to be put to one side so that he could use his musical talent to help out. Twelve years old, equipped with his guitar, a natural flair for Russian minor chords with flatted fifths and a dawning curiosity about jazz, Robert started out on a wandering life – strangely enough, a biographically similar experience to that of another great musician who made his first record that year – *Django Reinhardt*.

In the years that followed the Samuelsen and Normann duo were joined by Selmer on drums and the general depression at that time had an inverse effect for these three dancehall musicians. There were enough jobs to be had and their repertoire was mainly simple, popular music. His meeting with the accordion virtuoso and vagabond *Willy Eriksen* was therefore much more stimulating for Robert and not long after the two of them hit the road, starting out on the free and easy life of wandering musicians. As street musicians they did fairly well, but then they did not demand much in those days. They could work their way 160 miles down to Kragerø just on a rumour of 'peasoup for 15 øre a platefull and so thick you could cut it with a knife'. They travelled the country from north to south and got to know musicians and wanderers everywhere. Robert Normann looks back on this period as a particularly good time, stimulating and full of impressions for a freedom-loving and searching youngster – playing as they travelled the roads.

From the mid-thirties the duo frequently found its way to Oslo. These two weatherbeaten musicians now had an exciting repertoire which included the semi-classical bravado pieces of accordion virtuoso *Robert Deiro* and *Pietro Frosine*. Normann and Eriksen sometimes accompanied by the guitarist *Hans Larsen* spent three or four years as street musicians, a popular attraction in the street scene and, astonishingly quite a lucrative source of income in the hard thirties. After their

first radio broadcast in a programme produced by Leif Rustad in Klingenberg-gaten, they agreed that broadcasting was a waste of time – they would have earned three times as much on their usual rounds of the streets. A remark by the guitarist Hans Larsen during one of their rare indoor engagements summed it up. ‘Are we just going to sit here *losing* money?’

There are many who have laid claim to the discovery of Robert Normann. In fact he knew his own way around very well and made his way to *Sisseners Bar* where the town’s best jazzband *Funny Boys* were playing. The band’s guitarist *Finn Westbye* recognized the lean musician from the streets and courtyards. Westbye had met Django Reinhardt some years previously on one of the band’s tours in Europe, and he worked occasionally in *Carl M. Iversen’s* music shop on Youngsgate. The two became friends, and Robert and Finn Westbye started playing together in the store after closing time.

At this time *Fridjof Linnae* who had a French mother and had been brought up in Spain, came to Norway. He was quite a dandy and adopted the name *Freddie Valier*. He hit on the idea of forming a Norwegian string ensemble a la Django Reinhardt and Quintette du Hot Club de France. During the winter of 1937-38 *Freddie Valier’s String Swing* came into being; *Freddie Valier* (guitar and vocal), *Robert Normann* and *Stein Musum* (followed by *Finn Westbye*) on guitar, *Arild Iversen* (violin) and *Fredrik Lange-Nielsen* (bass). Backed up by vocalist *Betty Moe*, the band went into the studio on December 5, 1938 and recorded four numbers – the first real jazz recording in Norway!

Quintette du Hot Club de France finally came to Norway for the first and the last time. They played in Den Gamle Logen in Oslo on February 8, 1939. This fine old Freemasons Hall was packed out and the audience were spellbound. Even the infamous music reviewer, *Pauline Hall*, feared for her ruthless criticism, praised the orchestra for their cultivated music. Django Reinhardt was described as an artist on his instrument, but she did wonder how the violinist could stoop to such cat-like glissando squealing. All the members of String Swing were on the first bench.

Possibly due to their partly similar backgrounds providing him with a recognition and an understanding of the music, this concert was a tremendously exhilarating experience for Robert and he had the impression that Django was staring at him while he played! After they had recovered from the shock, Finn Westbye took the rest of the band with him backstage in the intermission and introduced his old acquaintance to his partners. In Robert’s own words ‘after that it was better – I actually *heard* what he was playing!’ Later on it was Django’s turn to be surprised; Robert was handed the legendary Maccaferry guitar and started playing. After listening for a while, he grinned and exclaimed: ‘What am I doing here, you’ve got Robert Normann!’

The meeting was a mixture of inspiration, motivation and frustration for the Norwegian band. A month later, Freddie Valier’s String Swing spent another session in the studio after which Valier left, probably to concentrate on singing. Robert kept the band together for a time as *String Swing* and later when everything had to be in Norwegian, *Robert Normann’s Strengkvartett*. War had broken out in Europe, and in another part of the world another slim guitarist was switching the tracks of jazz history: *Charlie Christian*.

You may wonder about the origin of the elegant style which Robert Normann developed in his improvisations at this time. Without any special influence by Django, before Charlie Christian’s time and with a much more modern appreciation than Eddie Lang. The music researcher Johs Bergh suggests that Robert developed his own style in his own environment in the same way Charlie Christian did in the United States, that is primarily by listening to prominent musicians on *other* instruments. It would seem that Robert Normann was influenced by Leon Chu Berry and Coleman Hawkins, in the same way Lester Young influenced Charlie Christian.

In the autumn of 1939 after sitting in the orchestra pit for a *Bernau* performance at Det Nye Teatret, Robert replaced guitarist *Sverre Jensen* in *The Hot Kiddies*. Shortly after the band changed its name to Gunnar Due’s kvartett named after the orchestra leader and pianist. This band played regularly at the *Lido*, now Restaurant Larsen at Majorstuen. They played six days a week at the outbreak of war, but gradual cutbacks followed and a new period as freelancer started for Robert. He was by this time a leading figure in the jazz life of the Oslo city.

About this time the electrically amplified guitar was catching on all over the world. Robert built his first electric guitar using telephone magnets, copper wire, pitch and a small wooden board. The result was astonishing and can be heard in recordings by the all-star band *Syv Muntre* from 1942 and 1943. This mechanically interested and innovative guitarist was quick to pick up anything new and developed rapidly along new lines.

After the war years, Robert worked for a decade in jazz, radio, theatre and restaurant musician jobs. One year at the *Karl Johan Revyteater*, several years at *Edderkoppen*, *Chat Noir*, *Dronningen* etc. Robert Normann was now a much sought after musician and a popular accompanist. He could follow up the impulses of soloists and even wrong notes were elegantly parried! *Svend Asmussen* and other well-known orchestra leaders tried in vain to get Robert to join them, but he preferred to set his own pace, fishing for eels from his houseboat in Frognerkilen, composing and enjoying his freedom.

The radio programme *Søndagsposten* produced by *Otto Nilsen* provided a steadily increasing number of engagements and several of these recordings are intact. There was a great diversity of artists on these programmes, including the poet *Alf Prøysen* for whom Robert became a sort of 'court composer'. The Hardingfele-virtuoso *Sigbjørn Berhoft Osa* and Robert formed a lifelong friendship, and Osa's rich repertoire of Norwegian folk music had a lasting influence on Robert's style. There was the opportunity of experimenting with multi-track tape-recordings and trick recording. *Les Paul's* productions along these lines were closely followed up by Robert, but after a short while the pure technical side could not offer much more in the way of challenges. Robert went back to his guitar incorporating the polyphonic tones and basses from the trick recordings in his new unique style where the arrangements form the backbone of the piece. Outwardly this is related with the carefully arranged style of *George Van Eps*, but Robert Normann's colour is quite different.

After 1959 little is heard of Robert in pure jazz connections. Preserved recordings are largely in the names of others and are limited to jazz peripheral forms of music where he plays the comp. He was employed as musical director for the travelling *Riksteatret*, a position which was a strange combination of classical discipline and the free life of a wanderer – both probably essential factors for Robert. He keenly felt the frustrating limitations of the jazz environment of the time and longed for greater musical forms. He composed music for theatre productions and planned a large concert for guitar and orchestra. But the basic and vital freedom sought after by Robert Normann is only to be found in jazz. Jazz is his medicine and his poison in one and the same dose. Frustration is pronounced and the guitar concert is never performed...

There are however some historical recordings used in the fleeting media of television and radio where Robert's mature and highly personal style is demonstrated in full. These include elements from his entire musical experience including quite clearly those melancholy Russian minor chords, an echo from his childhood at Sundløkka.

With this new release of Robert Normann's collected jazz recordings, he is no longer 'the best kept secret of Norwegian jazz'. Today, Robert lives quietly with his wife Gunvor in Skjeberg, not far from his childhood home near Sarpsborg. His guitar is never far from hand. The first three volumes of the series *Vintage Guitars* with Robert Normann were presented at an anniversary concert in Den Gamle Logen in Oslo, 50 years and one day after Django's concert at the same venue! The manouche guitarist *Angelo Debarre* was on stage together with Serge Camps and Frank Anastasio and on the first bench in the packed hall was Finn Westbye from String Swing, and many of Robert's other colleagues and friends from the early years. However, Robert Uno Normann was conspicuous by his absence. No wonder the journalist Knut Borge recently called him The Greta Garbo of Jazz.

When I told Robert about this he donned his darkest shades and continued to play with a satisfied chuckle. Well aware of this fact that he was still our hottest guitarist – and a free man.

Jon Larsen

Availability on CD for sessions in the Robert Normann solography:

Almost everything of importance is included in the 5 volumes:
 "Robert Normann – The definite collection"
 Normann Records NOCD 3004 (1938-1941), 3005 (1942-1954),
 3008 (1950-1971), 3009, 3018

ROBERT NORMANN SOLOGRAPHY

FREDDY VALIER's STRING SWING **Oslo, Dec. 5, 1938**

Arild Iversen (vln), Robert Normann, Finn Westbye (g), Fred Lange-Nielsen (b), Freddy Valier (g, vo-1194,95,97), Betty Moe (vo-1194,96).

Four titles were recorded for Norwegian Columbia:

1194-1	Sweet Sue	Solo with ens 32 bars. Break. Solo 16 bars. (FM)
1195-1	Flat Foot Floogie	In ens 8 bars. Solo 32 bars. (FM)
1196-1	Laughing At Life	In ens 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. (M)
1197-1	Nobody's Sweetheart	Solo 40 bars. (F)

Robert Normann's first recording session took place when he was 22 years old. He was born in Sarpsborg, a small city 100 kilometres from Oslo and was a prominent jazz musician in the Norwegian jazz milieu since he was a teenager. Already at this time he proved himself to be a magnificent guitar player. His style may superficially seem to resemble that of Django Reinhardt, but closer listening shows this to be a much too simple observation. There is nothing gypsy-like in the atmosphere he creates, although there seems to be a clear influence on his technique. The best of these items are definitely "... Sweetheart" which swings beautifully with rather meager support. The solo has the continuity which is the mark of a great improviser, and technically it is very impressive. "Sweet Sue" has a particularly fine opening of the last solo. This alone is enough to place RN among the greatest of jazzmen. "...Life" reminds us about Django on several occasions, particularly in the break before the bridge. The rhythmic support on this tune and on "... Flogee" is however rather weak, so that the soli lose their anchor to the rhythm. As a summary, all of these sides are very valuable for their guitar soloing and stimulate our interest in the time to come.

FREDDY VALIER & STRING SWING **Oslo, March 24, 1939**

Arild Iversen (vln), Robert Normann, Finn Westbye (g), Fred Lange-Nielsen (b), Freddy Valier (g, vo).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia:

1247-1	Moon Glow	Intro 2 bars. Duet with (vln) 16 bars to solo 16 bars. In ens to coda. (SM)
1248-1	I Found A New Baby	Solo 16+8 bars, (vln) on bridge. Soli 8 and 8 bars. (FM)

"Moon Glow" starts with RN in a secondary role, letting him make some nice figures behind the violin, and when he starts to solo, the first 8 bars are beautiful chording to warm up. However, the last 8 bars prove his extraordinary capabilities to the fullest extent. The balance, inventiveness and melodic sense seem to me to be rather unique. In "... Baby" he also presents beautiful music, but as on the previous session the rhythmic support is too weak, and it seems that RN has to take care of everything by himself. This turns out to be a bit too much for a totally coherent work to be made. However, his phrases are full of melody and sound better for each repeated listening.

OSLO SWINGKLUBBs BAND
WITH JACK BUTLER **Oslo, Feb. 14, 1940**

Jack Butler, Rowland Greenberg (tp), Ivan Jacobsen (tb), Per Nilsen (as), Arvid Gram Paulsen (ts), Fren Dahl (p), Robert Normann (g), Fred Lange-Nielsen (b, arr), Stein Lorentzen (dm).

One title was recorded for Norwegian HMV:

520	I'm Coming Virginia	No solo. (M)
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JACK BUTLER & HIS SWING PATROL **Same date**

Jack Butler (tp, vo), Carl Engstrøm (cl), Robert Normann (g), Gunnar Sønstevold (p), Fred Lange-Nielsen (b), Kjell Bjørnstad (dm). One title:

521	After The Ball	Solo 14 bars. (F)
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A fine and daring solo where RN uses very large intervals for his improvisations, and where the ideas are flowing easily. A resemblance to Django's world may again be found in some phrases, but the personal mark on the solo is very prominent.

STRING SWING **Oslo, Sept. 12, 1940**

Arild Iversen (vln), Robert Normann, Finn Westbye (g), Fred Lange-Nielsen (b).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia:

- 1376-1 Farewell Blues Solo 48 bars, partly with ens.
Solo 8 bars. More ens and acc. (F)
- 1377-1 Swingtime In The Rockies Soli 32, 8 and 8 bars. (FM)

Oslo, Feb. 25, 1941

Same. Two titles:

- 1417-1 Lady Be Good Soli 32, 16 and 8 bars. (F)
- 1418-1 Someday Sweetheart Solo 32 bars. Solo with
ens 16 bars. (FM)

The String Swing group is in better shape now than 1 ½ years ago. The rhythm is firm and active, and when RN solos, he gets more support than on the previous items. The best solo is to be found on "Someday ...", perhaps his first solo to be constructed as a single piece. Note bars 9-15, here the differences between the gypsy style of Django and the Nordic style of Robert are quite obvious. They are both basically romantic inclined, but the atmosphere is very different. I do not hesitate to call the solo a lasting masterpiece. The other three tracks contain all very fine soloing. His presence on "Farewell ..." is dynamic, and his longest solo contains three different parts, each full of surprises. The conclusion of the longest "Someday ..." solo is fine and so is "Lady ...", although they cannot quite compare with "Someday ...".

STRING SWING

Oslo, June 11, 1941

Arild Iversen (vln), Robert Normann, Finn Westbye (g), Fred Lange-Nielsen (b, vo), Lasse Herlofson (vib).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia:

- 1439-1 I'm Gonna Sit Right Down Solo 34 bars. (FM)
- 1440-1 Opus 5 Solo 8 bars. Solo 16+8 bars, (vln)
on bridge. Solo 14 bars. In ens. (F)

"Opus 5" has some really gigantic playing in fast tempo. This item alone should be reason enough for a RN-solography! Also it is proving that RN belongs among the top jazz guitarists. His technique is in abundance, his melodic sense is wonderful, his use of harmony masterly. Then we take the flip side, and what do we find? An unforgettable solo, a definite product of a great improviser. Every bar of "... Down" contains small pieces of beauty, and together they form a wholeness which is rare in improvised music.

STRING SWING

Oslo, Oct. 23, 1941

Personnel as June 11 with Carsten Klouman (p), Stein Lorentzen (dm-1449,50) added.

Four titles were recorded for Columbia:

- 1447-1 Sonny Boy Solo 32 bars. (FM)
- 1448-1 Tutti Frutti Solo 8 bars. Solo 16+8 bars,
(vln-pizzicato) on bridge. (FM)
- 1449-1 I Can't Give You Anything But Love Solo 8 bars. (FM)
- 1450-1 Rhythm Is Our Business Solo with (vo) 16 bars. (F)

I fear that the readers will not believe my praise of my country fellow Robert Normann, assuming me to be chauvinistic. However, I hope to stimulate the interest in this masterly performer, and *my* reputation is also at stake! This session contains some marvelous playing. "Sonny Boy" is a beauty, note particularly the middle 16 bars and listen to how single string and chords blend in such a perfect way that it is difficult to remember something similar. "Tutti Frutti" on the other hand has a dynamic solo, one of his very best. His sound is surprisingly fragile, but the musical result is certainly not. His intervals are large, his melodic sense well developed, and he swings like very few guitarists have ever done! "... Love" however seems rather ordinary, while "Rhythm ..." has a driving, smooth solo with a fantastic ending break!

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 Odeon:

- 3032-1 Ding Dong Dang Solo 32 bars. (F)
- 3033-1 Skumring Solo 32 bars. (M)
- 3034-1 Promenade Solo 16+8 bars, (p) on
bridge. Solo 8 bars. (FM)

3035-1 Opus 1

Solo 32 bars. (FM)

I consider this to be the best recording session of Norwegian jazz previous to 1945. Although it is not without minor faults, it has a completeness and an inspiration which was rare in European jazz at that time. The rhythm section functions as one body and does an excellent job. Every side swings steadily and firmly, and RH's soli therefore have better support than on the String Swing sessions. Even with all the pretty words given earlier in this solography – here we have RN's best session! It is very difficult to choose a favourite solo, they are all great!! “Ding Dong Dang” is very fast but masterly constructed in every way. As a parenthesis: I wonder how a jam session with Django would have turned out ... “Skumring” (freely translated as “Twilight”) has a lovely opening and continues in the same relaxed beautiful way. And then “Promenade”, what shall I say? I do not have words for the last 8 bars solo, nor for the rest. “Opus 1” lastly is also first rate in every way and unforgettable. Again I must point out that that my praise is not based upon nationalism but on close listening. I will not eat the records (the 78s are very rare!), if somebody disagree with me, but it would surprise me if I was judged wrong in my evaluation. Postscript: Note Frank Ottersen's beautiful violin playing, in my opinion one of the best in Europe.

SYV MUNTRE**Oslo, Oct. 27, 1942**

Arild Iversen (vln), Arvid Gram Paulsen (tp, as), Carsen Klouman (p), Robert Normann, Finn Westbye (g), Fred Lange-Nielsen (b), Stein Lorentzen (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia:

1489-2 Monolitt

Solo 32 bars. (M)

1490-2 Sigarettstomp

Soli 4 and 8 bars. (M)

The guitar playing here is surprisingly different from the previous items. Particularly “Monolitt” is interesting with a pensive solo without much contact with the surroundings, almost as if it does not belong there. However, it is very personal and quite advanced harmonically for that time period. Where the influence came from is not clear, Norway was at war with slight contact with the jazz world at large. It is the kind of solo that makes one wonder what kind of musical experiments RN made which were not captured on record. It has not the melodic beauty of the Ottersen items, but it is definitely one of his most noteworthy. “Sigarettstomp” (the name is a play of words, it means “Cigarette Butt”, referring to the shortage of tobacco during the war, and has a funny Norwegian ensemble vocal) also has some brief sections of similar type.

SYV MUNTRE**Oslo, Nov. 24, 1943**

Arild Iversen (vln), Arvid Gram Paulsen (tp, as), Bjarne Nerem (ts), Robert Normann (ts, g), Carsten Klouman (p), Fred Lange-Nielsen (b), Harald Ottho (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Columbia:

1549-1 Bob's Vuggesang

Intro 4 bars. Solo 8 bars. Coda. (S)

1550-1 Opus 7

Solo 34 bars. (FM)

Earlier I wrote that the Frank Ottersen session was the best made in Norway before 1945. However, the best single item was made on this date by the “SEVEN MERRY ONES”! It is called “Bob's Vuggesang” (or “Bob's Lullaby”), composed and arranged by Gram Paulsen to the honour of RN's son, born a few days before and still unnamed, therefore called “Little-Bob”. It has a beautiful arrangement of quite exceptional quality. The sound is full and ripe, more than one could expect from the size of the group, although RN plays tenorsax in the ensemble. The guitar playing is absolutely unforgettable, a deep, transparent solo with a masterly touch. There are few guitar players in jazz who ever recorded a “memorial” solo for themselves like this, really. And Benny Carter would have been proud to make this arrangement. One almost forgets the fine “Opus 7”, the “other side”, however, the solo is excellent, harmonically advanced and somewhat more modern than the 1938-41 recordings although not as manifest as “Monolitt”.

PETE BROWNS ORKESTER**Oslo, May 6, 1946**

Frank Andersen, Sigurd Sjøbergt, Bjarne Haraldsen (tp), Lyder Vengbo, Arild Jensen, Erik Fredriksen (tb), Per Nilsen, Sigurd Kolsrud (as), Bjarne Nerem, Per Skogsrud (ts), Hans Eriksen (bar), Lulle Kristoffersen (p, arr), Robert Normann (elg), Håkon Nilsen (b), Pete Brown (dm), Frank Weylert (vo-678), Nora Berg (Brockstedt (vo-679), (vo-quintet).

Two titles were recorded for Musica:

678-B Love In Bloom

No solo.

679-C Gotta Be This Or That

Solo 8 bars. (FM)

Three years have passed since the previous session, and that is a long time, this is not the sound of the swing era anymore. RN's style seems to have changed with the time, also to the electric guitar or amplification. I miss his beautiful fragile sound in higher tempi. The solo on "Gotta ..." is certainly interesting but too brief to challenge any opinion.

**BOOK'ns REYORKESTER /
CHAT NOIR's ORKESTER**

Oslo, July 18, 1946

Rolf Syversen (accordion, dir), bigband orchestra of 15 people including Gunnar Tuft (tp), Robert Normann (elg), Kåre Sandegren (b), Rolf Birkedal (dm).

Two titles, private recordings:

Ouverture / Tico Tico	Straight.
Boogie Woogie / Robert's Boogie	Solo 12 bars. (FM)

RN has no problem with the "... Boogie" here, although his music is far from what we are used to.

TRIO

same date

Rolf Syversen (accordion), Robert Normann (elg), Kåre Sandegren (b), unknown (vo-"Rhumba"). Two titles:

Seven Come Eleven / Robert's Riff	Solo 12 bars. Straight. (F)
Rhumba	Straight.

Another real guitar solo but a bit too fast to make much impression.

QUARTET

same date

Personnel as trio plus Rolf Birkedal (dm), Solveig Barland (dm). One title:

Nancy With The Laughing Face	Straight intro. (SM)
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Note: Robert Normann CD NOCD 3005, Vol. 2 have slightly different titles and info than the Discography in Bergh & Stendahl's "Sigarett Stomp", but probably they treat the same program.

ROLF SYVERSEN – ROBERT NORMANN

Oslo, Oct. 15, 1947

Rolf Syversen (accordeon), Frank Ottersen (vln), Robert Normann (elg), Kåre Sandegren (b).

Two titles were recorded for Musica:

758-B	78 Jump	Solo 16+8 bars, ens on bridge. (FM)
759-B	Bagatell	Soli 16 and 8 bars. (F)

Also here it is difficult to state anything definite about the guitar playing. Technically RN is as good as ever and can be compared to the best American postwar guitarists. The rhythm is swing style but with a definite modern touch, and the soli fit nicely into the setup. However, the beautiful sound of yesterday is not quite there, being also somewhat "wooly" like so many contemporaries. The improvisations are of high quality though and offer new and interesting insight into the workings of one of the finest guitar players in jazz history.

EDDERKOPPREVYEN

Oslo, April 1, 1950

Two unknown (tp), unknown (cl), (vln), (b), (dm), Robert Normann (g, arr), A. Amundsen (arr, dir).

Music from revue "Byen Med Det Store Hjerte" (City With The Big Heart):

Dårlig Bilde	Acc. (tp). (SM)
Ouverture/Finale	Straight in ens. (F)

As RN is clearly heard on single string behind the straight trumpet playing, this otherwise not very jazzy performance has to be included here!

ARILD ANDRESENs TRIO

Oslo, Nov. 4, 1950

Arild Andresen (p), Robert Normann (g), Einar Hoff (b). One title:

Body And Soul	Duet with (p) 24 bars. (M)
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A very interesting discovery inasmuch as it is three years since RN did any recordings. He also uses the single string here. The piano takes however much of the attention here, not only with a full chorus first, then accompanying RN very heavily and finally taking the conclusion all by himself.

FRANK OTTERSEN**Oslo, Feb. 21, 1951**

Frank Ottersen (vln), Tom Klausen (oboe), Per Nyhaug (vib), Willy Andresen (p), Robert Normann (elg), Frank Cook (b), E. Jarlseth (vo-693), Carsten Byhring (vo-694).

Two titles were recorded for Harmoni:

693	Vårsang	No solo.
694-G	Rytmenes Makt	Solo 8 bars. (M)

"Vårsang" (or "Song of Spring") has nothing to do with jazz whatsoever. "Rytmenes Makt" (or "Power of the Rhythms") however is an interesting piece, particularly because of the very funny lyrics, sung by one of Norway's leading comedians. RN's solo is good and personal but again too brief for any general evaluation to be made.

ROBERT NORMANN**Oslo, March 21, 1951**

Robert Normann (elg).

Say It With A Kiss	Intro 4 bars to solo 32 bars (M) to
Blue Orchids	Solo 4 bars (NC). (S)

Just enough to get started on "... Kiss", then changes to another tune, not a good idea really.

ROBERT NORMANN**Oslo, ca. 1953**

Willy Andresen (p), Robert Normann (g), Per Nyhaug (dm).

Three titles:

Just A Gigolo	Duet with (p) 16+8 bars, solo on bridge. (SM) to solo 32 bars (FM) to solo 16 bars. (SM)
Love In Bloom	Duet with (p) 16+8 bars, solo on bridge. (SM)
Shine	Duet with (p) 32 bars. Solo 64 bars. (F)

This is the most important RN session since long time ago, ten years to be precise! There is a lot of brilliant improvisation on these three titles, and although we miss his soft single string, being replaced by the harder amplification, the messages comes through, this is great music! There is no doubt that RN is playing as good as ever, and it is a shame that he could not record his talents in a proper, systematic way. All these three titles are musts for guitar collectors!!

ROBERT NORMANN**Oslo, 1953**

Frank Ottersen (vln), Robert Normann (g).

One title was recorded at Hotel Exelsior:

Smoke Gets In Your Eyes	Duet with (vln-pizzicato). (S)
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This might have been a historical event, teaming our great guitar player with our great violinist. However, "Smoke ..." has guitar in a minor role, FO takes most of it. But listen to RN's coda!

WILLY ANDRESEN**Oslo, Dec. 11, 1954**

Willy Andresen (p), Robert Normann (g), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm).

One title was recorded for Musica:

1413	Cocktails For Two	Ens and rhythm. (FM)
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ALF PRØYSEN VOCAL WITH GUNNAR SØNSTEVOLDs ORKESTER**Oslo, Jan. 2, 1955**

Rowland Greenberg (tp), Gunnar Sønstevoid (p), Robert Normann (g), Per Nyhaug (dm), unknown (tb), (cl), (vo), (acc), (b).

One title was recorded for Philips:

53037	Trippe Tripp	No solo. (FM)
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NORA BROCKSTEDT VOCAL WITH WILLY ANDRESENs KVINTETT**Oslo, March 1956**

Bjarne Nerem (ts), Willy Andresen (p), Robert Normann (g), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm).

One title was recorded for Musica:

1585	C'Est Magnifique	No solo. (FM)
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ROBERT NORMANN**Oslo, April 18, 1956**

Robert Normann (g).

Two titles were recorded for Norwegian Columbia:

Gitarpolka	2:23. (FM)
Dinora 2	2:15. (FM)

Oslo, Oct. 18-26, 1956

Same. Two titles:

My Prayer	2:13. (M)
When The Lilacs Bloom Again	2:46. (M)

These are trick recordings, inspired by Les Paul, and although they hardly can be called jazz, they are amazing results of RN's endless creativity and searching for new sounds. Although there were lots of critique from jazz musicians and buffs against these kind of experiments, today we are lucky they exist.

**INGER JACOBSEN VOCAL
WITH WILLY ANDRESENs KVINTETT**

Oslo, autumn 1957

Probably Ragnar Robertsen (cl), Robert Normann (g), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm).

One title was recorded for Columbia:

2254	Jeg Drømte	No solo. (FM)
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ROBERT NORMANN**Oslo, April 26, 1959**

Robert Normann (g), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm).
NRK "Søndagsposten", one title:

Säkkjärven Polka 1	1:44. (F)
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Another impressing trick recording.

ROBERT NORMANN**Oslo, Oct. 17, 1959**

Robert Normann (g), Håkon Nilsen (b).
NRK "Søndagsposten", one title:

Handkerchief Fox	2:43. (M)
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Oslo, Nov. 14, 1959

Same. NRK Fjernsynet, one title:

The Harry Lime Theme	2:47. (M)
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Oslo, Dec. 21, 1959

Same. One title was recorded for Norwegian Columbia:

Junkers Samba	3:07. (F)
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Oslo, Dec. 30, 1959

Same. One title was recorded for Norwegian Columbia:

The Harry Lime Theme	3:01. (M)
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ROBERT NORMANN**Oslo, 1959**

Eilif Holm (vib), Robert Normann (elg), Finn Westbye (g), Håkon Nilsen (b),
Arnulf Neste (dm).

Six titles, broadcasted from NRK:

Fascination	2:14. (M)
Lullaby Of The Leaves	2:14. (M)
Tango Jalousie	1:53. (FM)
Dinora	1:58. (F)
Tenderly	2:06. (S)
Body And Soul	2:57. (S/M/F)

This is the best program around the change of decade! The titles are much too brief, and possibly they are well planned with not so much improvisation after all. But they swing, and sound beautiful!! And one item, "Body And Soul" must be considered the most exciting item RN recorded since the early forties, dig this incredible performance in all tempi, masterly!!!

ROBERT NORMANN**Sarpsborg, 1959**

Robert Normann, Roar Hellberg (g).
Private recording, one title:

Shine

Solo 5 choruses of 32 bars. (FM)

This is a quite unique item inasmuch as it is the only real private recording in homely circumstances with our great guitarist. It is far from perfect, several mistakes, and after three choruses RN offers the stage to RH who doesn't want it, so RN continues. Nevertheless, it gives us some ideas of what could happen when RN in his prime really stretched out!

ROBERT NORMANN **Oslo, 1960**
Robert Normann (elg), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm).
Two titles:

Smålåt 2 1:33. (F)

How High The Moon 2:43. (F)

These have more improvisation, or so it seems, than most others from this period!

ROBERT NORMANN **Oslo, March 26, 1960**
Robert Normann (elg). NRK Søndagsposten, one title:

Mariposita 2:37. (FM)

Oslo, Dec. 17, 1960

Same. One title:

Elvira 2:51. (M)

ROBERT NORMANN **Oslo, 1963**
Robert Normann (elg), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm).
Broadcast, one title:

Ruletten 0:40. (M)

Oslo, unknown date, 1963?

Same. One title:

Å Sudderiårei 2:42. (M)

Oslo, Oct. 29, 1963

Same. One title:

Playbackpolka 1:25. (FM)

Oslo, Oct. 9, 1964

Same. One title:

Suite 1 & 2 2:08 & 0:44. (M)

Particularly "... 1 ..." is a beautiful piece of music.

ROBERT NORMANN **Oslo, ca. 1965**
Robert Normann (elg), Håkon Nilsen (b).

Gammel Polka 2:07. (F)

Sang Uten Ord 2:41. (S/M)

MAGNI WENTZEL **Oslo, Feb. 4, 1966**
Willy Andresen (p), Robert Normann (elg), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm),
Magni Wentzel (vo).
One title from broadcast:

Sang Uten Ord No solo. (FM)

Oslo, March 3, 1966

Same except Andresen omitted. One title:

Trallingen No solo. (M)

Magni belongs to the cream of Norwegian jazz vocalists, and her wordless scat is fascinating. RN is the composer of these titles, "Song Without Words" and "Untranslatable", but as has been obvious now, he does not like to solo anymore.

JOHN SVENDSEN **Oslo, Oct. 14, 1966**
John Svendsen (accordion), Robert Normann (elg), Håkon Nilsen (b).
One title from broadcast:

Tvebetten No solo. (M)

Oslo, Oct. 28, 1966

Same. One title:

Terningkast No solo. (M)

Two more RN compositions, "Untranslatable" and "Dicethrow".

ROBERT NORMANN Oslo, Nov. 2, 1966

Robert Normann solo (elg).
Broadcast, one title:

Variasjon Over Visa "Se En Ild I Mørket Brenner" 2:52. (S)

One of the most pleasant and beautiful late RN items. Although playing single string on this "See A Fire In Darkness Burns", he does not improvise (much), but that does not matter at all!

ROBERT NORMANN Oslo, 1969

John Svendsen (accordion), Robert Normann (elg), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm). One title:

All The Things You Are 1:53. (S/F)

A colourful swinging piece which must be improvised, really!!

Oslo, 1970

Same. One title:

Nå Går Det Mot Vår 1:49. (FM)

This title should be noted!

Oslo, Dec. 11, 1970

NRK Søndagsposten, one title:

Kjærlighetssmil 4:53. (F)

Note also this elegant piece with brilliant non-jazz guitar playing!

Oslo, Nov. 26, 1971

Same. One title:

Dialog 2:00. (F)

Oslo, Dec. 26, 1971

Same. One title (Tribute to Alf Prøysen):

Julepotpurri 4:14. (M)

ROBERT NORMANN Oslo, 1971

Robert Normann (elg), Willy Andresen (p, org), John Svendsen (vib), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm).
Four titles:

Medley 3:03. (M)

Gammel Vise 2:05. (M)

Two Sleepy People 2:09. (SM)

Lullaby Of Birdland 2:15. (M)

This is also one of the most exciting RN around! Note for instance how he treats his "... Vise", one of his own numerous compositions. All items here have most delightful and exciting guitar playing!!

ROBERT NORMANN Oslo, undated

Robert Normann (elg) and others.
HCRC42 "Robert Normann Vol. III" contains five items not included in the 5-CD "The Definitive Collection":

Sull II 0:40. (M)

Sull III 0:40. (SM)

Sull IV 0:25. (M)

Springær Fra Sundløkka	2:40. (M)
Love's Smile	4:06. (SM)

ROBERT NORMANN **Oslo, April 16, 1974**
 Robert Normann (elg), John Svendsen (vib), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm).
 Recorded by NRK as TV pause programs, thirteen titles:

Perpetuum Mobile	2:41. (M)
Pluto	1:56. (FM)
Lullaby Of The Leaves	1:19. (S/M)
Little Man You've Had A Busy Day	1:56. (M)
Nå Går Det Mot Vår	1:31. (M)
All The Things You Are	1:47. (S/F)
When You Wish Upon A Star	1:18. (M)
Medley (The Way You Look Tonight / Top Hat / A Fine Romance)	2:26. (F)
Let's Face The Music And Dance	1:05. (F)
I've Got My Love To Get Me Warm	2:42. (F)
Cheek To Cheek	1:22. (FM)
Walkin' My Baby Back Home	0:57. (M)
Oppvaskbenken	1:21. (FM)

These titles are much too obviously meant to be short TV-intermissions and therefore even shorter than usual. Thus there is not much space for anything like improvisation. Also the guitar has a very strong and hard sound here. Therefore we must admit there are better and more exciting examples of RN's playing. Nevertheless there are many good moments here, like "... You Are" and "... Warm", try to play those on your own guitar!

ROBERT NORMANN **Fredrikstad, May 30, 1989**
 Robert Normann, Bjørn Hellberg (elg), John Svendsen (vib), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm).
 Five titles were recorded by NRK:

Django	2:46. (SM/F)
Fram Og Tilbake	1:51. (F)
Navnløs	1:38. (SM/M)
Ikke Døpt	2:58. (FM)
Sweet Georgia Brown	1:51. (F)

Fifteen years have passed since the last session, but nobody would be inclined to believe that after listening to this session! Although the items are much too brief, nevertheless here we get a lot of improvisation. My favourite is the sensitive but dynamic "Django", but all items are highly noteworthy. And possibly "Sweet ..." is the last time to hear the swinging RN!!

ROBERT NORMANN **Fredrikstad, Feb. 18, 1992**
 Robert Normann (elg), Per Nyhaug (dm).
 Seven titles, issued as "Syv Stubbær For Een Gitar Og Trommer":

Tema I E-moll	1:47. (SM/M)
Tema I H-moll	2:18. (FM)
Tema I Ass-dur	0:58. (FM)
Tema I E-moll	1:52. (SM/FM)
Tema I D-dur	1:47. (SM/FM)
Tema I F-moll	1:34. (FM)
Tema I F-moll	1:04. (F)

These connected titles are preceded by a ten minutes long interview, explaining the technical background for the fact that RN plays guitar and bass at the same

time! RN life, both inside and outside music is an adventure, too long and complicated to describe here. I can only suggest that you seek “Robert Normann – The definitive collection”, Volumes 1-5 on CD!!

No further recording sessions.

APPENDIX

Arne Bekk from Elverum, Norway kindly supplied two hitherto unknown items. Full five years since last update, so this is cause for celebration! The dates are unknown, and I have therefore put them here in an appendix for the time being:

JAM SESSION **Oslo, unknown date after 1957**
Rowland Greenberg (tp), Robert Normann (g), Willy Andresen (p), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm), Erik Bye (mc).
Broadcast from Norwegian Radio (NRK), one title:

I Found A New Baby Solo 32 bars. (FM)

This is a great discovery inasmuch as there is no similar item in existence. RN's association with Norwegian radio was limited to his pause programs described above and never in a proper jam context as this one. The guitar solo is typical and very interesting, although the pianist interferes unmotivated from bar 11. The mc makes some utterly funny comments (for Norwegians only ...) after the music, indicating also that there might have been jammed more on this occasion. Possibly more music exists?

ROBERT NORMANN **Oslo, unknown date 1950s/60s**
Robert Normann (g), Willy Andresen (p), Håkon Nilsen (b), Per Nyhaug (dm).
Broadcast from Norwegian Radio (NRK), one title:

Avant De Mourir 3:28. (SM)

This is a blend of jazz and very pleasant tango music with some beautiful guitar playing.

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