

Jazz Bakery Offers Tasty Swedish Schnapps

by Skoot Larson

Arne Domnérus, along with Sweden's young piano virtuoso Jan Lundgren, are in town recording a compact disc in tribute to Duke Ellington. Arne and Jan were joined at the Bakery Sunday afternoon, September 10, 2000, by bassist Tom Warrington and drummer Paul Kreibich where they entertained a mixed audience of American fans and Swedish ex-pats for over two hours.

The Parisorkestern of 1949 first made Americans aware of Swedish jazz. In the 1930s and 40s, the people of Sweden had developed a fondness for American jazz music. They were, and still are, avid listeners. When World War II ended, these music-loving Scandinavians welcomed American musicians to their shores.

Hearing the Parisorkestern, a Swedish group hand-picked by that country's music critics, Americans realized the serious ear with which Swedes were listening to jazz, and how much they had made it their own music.

One of the luminaries of that all-star group was a 25-year-old alto saxophone and clarinet player named Arne Domnérus. Now, more than half-a-century later, Arne Domnérus is still wowing jazz fans the world over, as he did this past Sunday at the L.A.'s Jazz Bakery.

The first set was largely the Ellington material scheduled for an up-coming recording session, although the program opened with Arne and Jan dueting **Pråmdragarså**, a tune from the short life of Swedish piano idol Jan Johansson.

Domnérus, smartly dressed in a gray striped sports coat with green tie and pocket square, introduced the band, asking his audience if he could speak Swedish to them, as he wasn't very sure of his English. He also introduced a few other VIPs: Börje Ekberg, one of the founders of Sweden's Metronome Record Company, and Carl Jones, an American who visited Sweden in the 40s and composed the popular **Flicka Fra Småland**.

As the band launched into their first medley of Ellington tunes, Lundgren showed some very impressive two-handed piano work, mixing full but closed-voiced chords with his melodies and adding tremolos for a soulful, churchy, gospel effect. Lundgren also uses a

lot of imagination while feeding chords to the other soloists. He often creates a rhythmic pulse with his comping, adding some interesting high-octave triads from time to time.

Introducing his version of Ellington's **Caravan**, Lundgren explained that his own career began when Arne discovered him ten years before playing in the small northern Swedish town of Djakneboda.

A highlight of the first set was Ellington's **Moche**, which Domnérus brought from the lower *Bohmé* register of his clarinet, purring the deep and sweet melody with occasional high note runs and a growl or two.

On the alto, Domnérus plays so quick and smoothly that his fingers barely appear to be moving as his body bends and ducks with the music. Domnérus has a distinct, recognizable sound of his own, though one *can* hear a little Benny Carter in his playing.

In the program's second half, Domnérus played **When Lights are Low** as a tribute to Carter, saying that as a young man in school, he had listened quite a lot to Benny Carter.

The later set was more relaxed, with the band taking off their coats and getting comfortable on standards like **Misty**, **Secret Love**, and a version of the 5/4 timed **Take Five** that sounded much fuller and gutsier than the classic Brubeck-Desmond recording.

In all they played, Domnérus and Lundgren sounded to be nearly of one mind and extremely comfortable together, often sharing embellishments on their choruses. Domnérus often voiced soft arpeggios behind Lundgren's piano improvisations just the way Lundgren fed the changes to the other performers.

With the crowd on their feet and applauding loudly, Domnérus, Lundgren, Warrington and Kreibich agreed to a pair of encores. Domnérus emoted a tasty and mellow version of Quincy Jones' **The Midnight Sun Will Never Set**, and then the band dove into a roaring up-tempo and driving blues number before departing the stage.

Without a doubt, Arne Domnérus is one of the great world masters of jazz, and Jan Lundgren is destined to rise to similar heights. It is always a pleasure to hear such beauty and competence.

Note: The day after this Jazz Bakery performance, Domnérus and company went into the studio to record the music from their Sunday live performance. The resulting CD, Dompan! Is available on Fresh Sound Records: FRSCD 5032.