

BENT JÆDIG – THE FREE SPIRIT (Danish booklet essay translated into English)

The moment the tenor saxophonist leaps into his solo on any of these star-studded tracks, the listener jumps. Yes, it's Bent – BENT JÆDIG! No doubt here. A musician being his own so much more than most others. "The Free Spirit" never at all aware what it meant to compromise – in his music or his life.

It is with pride that the tiny Bent Jædig Foundation now presents Bent in several constellations, live and in the studio. Many hours have been spent to cull the music from Bent Jædig's collection, yet the payoff comes to the fore – bright and clear – in the varying recorded impressions from his career. One encounters Bent on top of his horn and with an inexplicable stylistic insight. A style that became his more than anybody else's in Scandinavia: Be Bop. Or Be-Bop, or even Bebop – a silly, little cartoon-like word that covers a lot.

Through so many years I have been biking, travelling, smoking, drinking, and eating music together with Jædig, and my recollections of him fill me with happiness, surprise, humour, absorption, and respect for his anarchic life – the latter almost at the very edge of existence. Bent was always poor, always generous, sometimes wild, at other times quiet and concentrated – caring for the people he liked and discreetly reserved with those he didn't. Everybody wanted to click with Bent. His broad grin behind the big glasses as well as his roguish facial expression invited contact – which he got everywhere.

Of course the great musicians didn't fall for that; they fell for his music, his intuition and attitude. Plus the fact that he never repeated himself. I have overheard musicians, among them James Moody and Jimmy Heath, saying, "The incredible thing with Bent is that he never reverts to a routine of old licks and phrases. Now and then we certainly fall back on that ourselves; however, Bent is constantly on-line to the universe." He was never disconnected – as was his home phone at times.

So where did he come from? What is his story? It is decidedly colourful and would make a rare documentary – a film, however, never to be. He originated in Amager, the Copenhagen isle that is the core and the key to Jædig. People from there are proud and often don't feel like Copenhageners.

THE CLARINET

Bent Jædig showed his face back in 1955, at a time when the crest of the European New Orleans Revival completely overshadowed any other jazz style. Bebop had become known almost overnight when the Don Redman Band with Don Byas visited Denmark in September 1946. Some American 78's had emerged after World War II, often smuggled in via Sweden. Yet it was Byas who shocked all the Danish saxophonists once they heard him blowing (using a No. 5 reed!).

The new style was quickly sucked up, flirted with, and played well by a few trailblazers like Jonny Campbell, members of Svend Asmussen's combos, Helge Jacobsen and Børge Ring. Also future modernists like Erik Moseholm, Ib Glindemann, Hans Henrik Ley, Atli Bjørn, and the advanced Swedes were all fascinated by the new phenomenon. In fact, bebop sometimes formed an integral part of the popular Copenhagen dance music repertoire – indeed mostly for the bands' own pleasure.

The real bebop hard-core club was the Blue Note on Krystalgade, midtown Copenhagen, where beboppers and cool jazzmen like Max Brüel and Jørgen Ryg cultivated the fresh ideas in this revolutionary music. They were the bosses. Nobody was sitting in with them simply because nobody was skilled enough – except for the young guy wearing a navy uniform. He came around, unpacked his sax, sat in, and played it all. Who on earth was this guy and where did he come from?

The author Jack Thimm has a number of his interviews published in the book *Swinger det ik'*. It is here the ultimate conversation with Bent Jædig is found:

"I was ten years old when my father made me enrol in a nearby clarinet class. The teacher was an old bloke who failed to rouse my interest. I started to play hooky instead because he hit me over the fingers with a ruler whenever I missed a note."

Jædig's dad brought him an old, tattered Albert-system clarinet and Bent practised in the attic after school hours "until one day my father came upstairs, took the clarinet out of my hands and broke it over his knee. Well, in fact it sounded like hell, was in bad shape anyway, and had a lengthwise split . . . so my father took me to John Hartwig's Music Shop and bought me a Boehm-system clarinet. That happened in 1948; I was thirteen years old. That's when it all started."

Bent began taking music lessons twice a week with his uncle, who led an orchestra in Tivoli Gardens, but was otherwise employed by the state railway.

"That same year I roamed around with a friend, Red John, stealing apples. He lived further out in Amager, on Italy Road, and from the end of the road, across the Sound, one could see the coast line of Sweden. One day, Red John took the ferry to lark around the city of Malmö. (In Sweden things were quite different and the economy a lot better since the country managed to stay neutral during the Second World War). Maybe by mistake, Red John's shopping included a couple of 78's with American bebop music and it occurred that his mother would not tolerate such infested rubbish in her home.

There was "Half Nelson" and "Milestones" with Charlie Parker playing tenor sax. I acquired the records for 2 crowns each and was hooked right away. Listening to this music for six years, inhaling every note, my jazz life began in the grooves of those two precious items. None of my friends – no one at all – shared my interest and it took a long time before I came to realize that Parker also played alto sax. So the very first jazz I ever encountered was Charlie Parker on a borrowed tenor sax, on Italy Road."



Collage. Bent Jædig, baritone sax, about 1955. Most likely presented by an enthusiastic fan



Bent Jædig on tenor sax, also ca. 1955

Jædig practised classical clarinet with his uncle for six years until he joined the Navy - the Royal Danish - as a radio officer. Here he was handed a tenor saxophone, still aiming at classical music. While sailing the length and breadth of the North Sea, Bent

rehearsed below deck in the engine room when off duty and while anchored at Iceland. A 3-month docking in Newcastle, England, speeded up progress.

"All the time, literally, I was right up the arse of a chap named Tubby Hayes. He taught me a lot and opened my ears further to modern music, so I never made it to Copenhagen's red-light district joints where the traditional jazz bands held forth." Edward "Tubby" Hayes (1935-73) was, of course, the great, internationally famous British tenor saxophonist.

Always in love with Jædig, bandleader, pianist, composer, and arranger Niels Jørgen Steen says: "The Danish musicians I have known started as talents and through the years developed and became better and better. Those who hung in there for the longest time, eager and working hard, now belong to the league of exciting and underpaid artists who we know from clubs and festivals. Maybe with the exception of pianist Ben Besiakov, Jædig is the only Dane who played stone-original American jazz right from the outset. Cannonball Adderley expressed his thoughts about guys like that: 'They came equipped!' That's damn irritating for us ordinary mortals! It has taken me 50 years NOT even to grasp what Bent already knew back then, in 1955."

THE FRANKFURTER

Bent Jædig's many travels and stopovers in Europe are chronicled elsewhere in this booklet. But what made him escape from Denmark? Bent relates: "When you're just out of the navy there is no money. And the gigs in Hillerød, where I joined Brüel and Ryg, didn't pay much. One day Max Brüel instructed me: 'Go to Frankfurt!' he said, and scribbled a jazz club address on Kleine Bockenheimerstrasse on a piece of paper. So I immediately trained off and arrived Sunday night, July 4, 1957. I was almost 22. And from then on I have been a professional musician. I went directly to the jazz club, but it was after midnight and the club had closed, so I walked back to the station, not knowing what to do.

Then, from a building nearby, I noticed some noise, not unlike jazz. I approached the venue and found it crowded with American musicians - all GI's stationed in Frankfurt by the US Army. I stepped inside, carrying my little bag, saw only black people and German girls, and heard George Coleman on tenor sax - he was in the Army like the others. The black guys took care of me and I never made it to the club on Kleine Bockenheimerstrasse. A few days later, I tore off to Kaiserslautern to join Attila Zoller, Hungarian guitarist and ex-Benny Goodman cat, among other things. Only blacks attended Kaiserslautern and there was plenty of jazz."

Jædig entered the Academy of Music in Mannheim and took lessons on transverse flute while working in Heidelberg at the same time. "One could really be needy there," Jædig remembered. "In a way, I only survived due to the Germans' fastidiousness. Several times a week I searched the discarded goods behind the supermarkets and nicked the cheese. Yes, dear me - the last-sale date had expired, so the

Germans wouldn't touch the stuff. The rest of us are very well aware that cheese ripens with age. Yeah man, I lived on cheese and bread for a loong time. They really thought I was crazy!"



The jazz club on Kleine Bockenheimerstrasse, Frankfurt 1960. From left: unknown drummer; probably Peter Trunk, bass; Albert Mangelsdorff, trombone; Zoot Sims, tenor; Bent Jædig, tenor; Gene Quill, alto (photo: Hellmuth Schmidt)



Also Kleine Bockenheimerstrasse, Frankfurt, 1960. From left: BJ, tenor; Unknown; Albert Mangelsdorff, trombone; Gerry Mulligan, baritone sax (photo: Hellmuth Schmidt)

THE CATALONIAN

Bent Jædig teamed up with Albert Mangelsdorff for one and a half years. Through Mangelsdorff he met the Catalonian pianist Tete Montoliu and then things took off. Jædig left for Barcelona and joined Montoliu for seven months at the famous club, Boite Jamboree, on Plaza de Real.

"Every month a new visiting guest artist was featured. It might be Don Byas, Bill Coleman, or Lucky Thompson. Lucky was a very sweet man, yet there were many who didn't like him too well – probably because he grouched whenever the rhythm section did something not exactly to his liking. Barcelona was really cooking and influencing – I learned a lot there. And it was just beautiful to play alongside the blind Catalonian – a great, great musician."



Tete Montoliu Quintet, ca. 1962 at Club Jamboree, Barcelona. From left: Dick Spencer, alto; Bent Jædig, tenor; Alfonso Bleses, drums; Tete Montoliu, grand piano; Peter Trunk, bass.

Back in Germany, Bent played with everybody and became friends with Ray Copeland, Dusko Goykovich, Larry Vukovich, Art Farmer, Philly Joe Jones, and others.

Before finally heading home, he sat in the orchestra pit of the Hamburger Staatsoper for quite a while. "We were seven jazz guys spread out among the symphony orchestra staff, playing dodecaphonic music for 2½ years! All the great boys – and girls – performed at the opera. John Foreman, Felicia Weathers, Peter Schreier – all with

flags flying! We did commissioned work, so very difficult, and rehearsed nightly for two months before the premieres. I certainly learned some reading there."



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From a 1969 concert in Switzerland

During his last period in Germany, Jædig visited Copenhagen only to get a work permit stamp in his passport at the German Embassy. It took 16 hours by train, one way.

In the fall of 1969 Bent returned home to join the Radio Jazz Group. He was also engaged with the Danish Radio Big Band for 14 years, parallel to all his combo work.

When at last leaving the DRBB, Jædig finally stepped out on his own. Bent Jædig, the soloist! And sometimes, the bandleader – though his modesty hindered the use of the latter title. He preferred gigs at intimate clubs and venues. His old stage fright vanished and the new situation was summed up thusly: "I like playing at the smaller places, reaching the audience – and the music is projected a lot better."

Whenever international names like Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim), Art Farmer, Benny Bailey, and Bernt Rosengren were in town, they spontaneously involved Jædig in their projects and engagements. The old joke – about St. Peter welcoming a jazz musician at the pearly gate, exclaiming, "Well, then, if you are a jazz musician you must know Bent Jædig!" – carries truth!

I twice had the good fortune to go on fancy Caribbean jazz cruises together with Bent and Tove Enevoldsen. I couldn't help sensing that all 100 musicians on board knew and loved Jædig – okay, it could be that Oscar Peterson and Ray Charles hesitated in recognizing him. Bear hugs, cabin visits, shop talk, witty remarks, music soirées, invitations to sit in, and extravagant desserts were

plentiful. Bent, always a sharp dresser and looking hip, was summoned to appear on stage for the most individualistic, finest constellations. Once with the band, he waited humbly in a resting position, smiling kindly to his colleagues and acknowledging their efforts. When it became Bent's turn, his lips shaped around the mouthpiece. In a flash his face expressed full concentration and his eyes closed while the evening's high point of creative soloing poured over the gaping listeners - everybody feeling like they were floating on air. "Who on earth is this guy?"

It was at all the smaller Copenhagen venues that Jædig was heard most often and most favourably. He expanded his new, free way of life. He sat in; maybe he was leading the band, maybe not - at La Fontaine, Christiania's Jazz Club, Sofiekældereren, Drop Inn, Huset, Krut's Carport, and of course continuously featured at Tivoli's Slukefter.

Jædig's status changed, developing a sort of a guru-like dimension. The young talents gathered around him - pianists, drummers, bass players, trumpeters, and other tenor saxophonists. The statement - "Sharing half a gig with Bent beats half a term at the Conservatory of Rhythmic Music!" - is certainly not a cliché. Just ask the newcomers, a few of whom are even represented on these two CD's. Or, as Bent put it: "This is the best that could ever happen to me. I love those lads and for some reason they hang onto me. It means new energy for this old body - really a mutual affair, eh?"

ALONE TOGETHER

Some characterized Jædig as "The Lone Wolf", which was nonsense, after all. For the last 35 years he was guided by his "girl" - as Bent courteously referred to Tove. Tove Enevoldsen - Lady of the Danish Jazz Scene, entrepreneur, booker, talent spotter and sometimes cook for the Copenhagen-based musicians.

Among other things, Tove fostered Bent's joy for bicycling; she tailored his colourful hats; took him to far-away sunny beaches where he recharged, wrote music, and read poetry or spy novels. He learned to eat well and appreciate good wine. She discreetly formed his social life and further balanced the physical and psychic levels of the free spirit. Bent became very fit, even strong; he loved to embrace people and lift them off their feet. The most impressive load, ever, was Thad Jones one night at the Montmartre Jazzhus - I witnessed it myself.

Tove is the natural chairman of the Bent Jædig Foundation, staging an annual, rather comprehensive birthday concert in Jædig's name, where the best musicians pay homage to Bent. Every year a musician is awarded the prestigious Bent Jædig Prize, along with a gilded music stand engraved with the winner's name. It might rightfully be said that Tove sees to it that Bent's music lives on, and this CD set is being released on her initiative.

Even if Tove and Bent made up the Number One Danish Jazz Couple, the two did not share the same address. Jædig never moved out of his small apartment on Aalandsgade in Amager. However, they travelled together so often that Bent became an expert in low-price airlines. Yet he never compromised his integrity during all those years, both knowing that a jazz musician's first love is the music.

For a long time it has been the intention to collect and publish the spontaneous cracks and *bon mots* that Bent used when expounding his special observations. They might be more hilarious when related in good company, but here are a few samples.

About women: "I don't understand them. They think with . . . their brains!"

About cannabis: "They say it's habit-forming. Nonsense! I have been smoking that shit for 45 years, man, and I'm not hooked!"

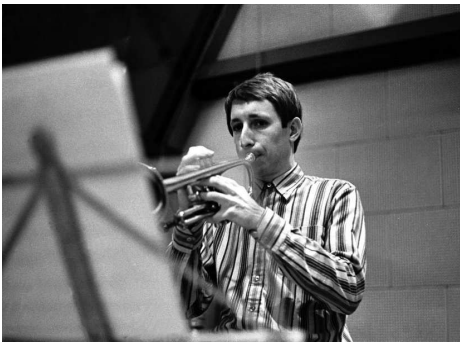
About jazz: "We have to take good care of jazz – it's the only one we've got."

Henrik Wolsgaard-Iversen

BENT JÆDIG - EXTRA PHOTO GALLERY



BJ, Albert Mangelsdorff, Chet Baker, and Oscar Pettiford in concert with Erwin Lehn's Orchestra. Stuttgart, Germany, March 8, 1960 (photos: Peter Wolkenhauer)



Debut Records sessions. Copenhagen, February 1967. BJ, Dusko Gojkovich, Allan Botschinsky, Bent Axen, Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, Alex Riel (photos, by permission: Jan Persson)



Top, Tove Enevoldsen, BJ, and Dexter Gordon. October 18, 1975.
Bottom, BJ ca. 1980 (photos, by permission: Jørgen Bo)



Top, BJ at Copenhagen Jazz Festival, 2002. Bottom, BJ at Copenhagen Jazz Festival, 1990 (photos, by permission: Kirsten Malone)



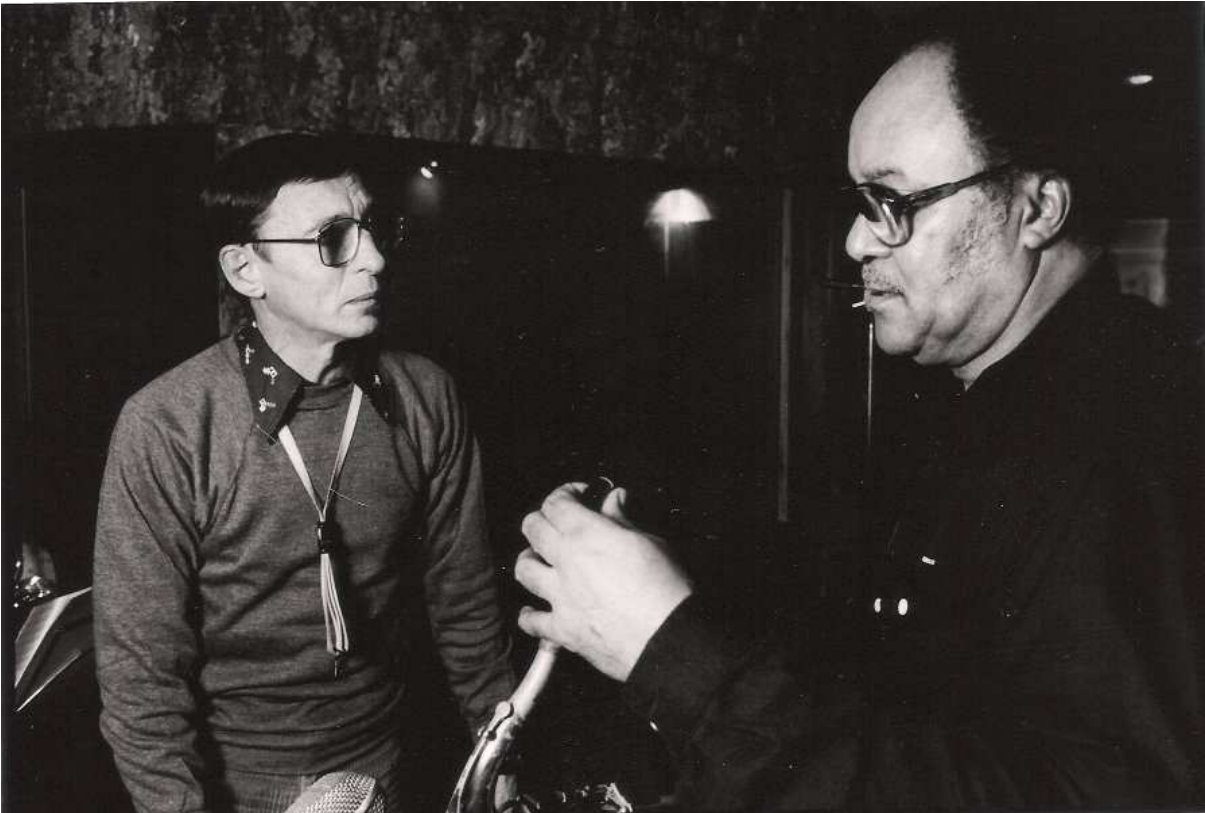
Top, BJ and Art Farmer in Copenhagen, 1996. Middle and bottom, BJ with Jimmy Heath's combo on the Caribbean cruise in 2000 (photos, by permission: Tove Enevoldsen)



BJ with James Moody, Ben Besiakov and Jesper Lundgaard, Copenhagen, 1996 (photos, by permission: Tove Enevoldsen)



BJ with Denmark's Radio Big Band, conducted by Thad Jones, Montmartre Jazzhus, January 1977
(photos, by permission: Gorm Valentin)



BJ and Ernie Wilkins (EW's Almost Big Band), Studio 39, October 30, 1980



Marilyn Mazur and BJ (being awarded the Ben Webster Prize), Montmartre, 1983
(photos, by permission: Gorm Valentin)



Easy Sound Studio, February 12, 1984.
BJ, Jesper Thilo, Ed Thigpen, Hugo Rasmussen, Duke Jordan.



The A-Team, Copenhagen Jazz House, July 11, 1993. Jesper Lundgaard, BJ, Bob Rockwell, Uffe Marcussen
(photos, by permission: Gorm Valentin)



Ib Glindemann's Orchestra onboard m.s. *Kronborg*, July 15, 1995. IG, Ole Ousen, BJ



BJ, Pakhuset, August 11, 1996 (photos, by permission: Gorm Valentin)



Birthday party at Copenhagen Jazz House for BJ on October 18, 1995. Allan Botschinsky, BJ, Svend-Erik Nørregaard, Uffe Marcussen, Bob Rockwell, Thomas Franck, Claus Waidtløw, and Jens Christian Søndergaard



BJ being awarded the Palæ Bar Jazz Prize, July 5, 1996, by Skip Malone. Nicolai Gromin, guitar, and Jens Skou Olsen, bass (photos, by permission: Gorm Valentin)