

JLN

Jan Lundgren News

Welcome!

A very warm welcome to the first edition of JLN, brought to you by the Friends of Jan Lundgren.

What is the Friends of Jan Lundgren? Well, it's a newly formed group of people like you and me across Europe and the rest of the world who really admire and enjoy Jan's music – and the music of the many other fabulous musicians that Jan plays with. Call it an appreciation society, a fan club, whatever. The important thing is that we want to create a forum, a 'community', for keeping you up to date with what Jan's thinking and doing professionally. And, as the Friends of Jan Lundgren gets more established, we're hoping to organise the occasional special performance and other events.



Photo: Sune Andersson

For now, though, we're concentrating on this newsletter. JLN takes a deeper look at aspects of Jan's concerts, recordings and collaborations. We also want it to become a place where you can join in a conversation about and with Jan. What do think of his latest CD? Did you go a recent concert that you particularly enjoyed? What's your all-time favourite Jan Lundgren composition or album? Have you got a specific question that you've always wanted to ask him?

In the finest traditions of jazz, we're deliberately improvising. So please do send me your thoughts, ideas and questions (to the email address below), and I'll do my very best to deal with them in future editions of JLN. And if you want to become a member of the Friends of Jan Lundgren, just follow the simple steps on page 7 – it's free and it will be fun.

Jan is 100% behind JLN and the Friends initiative. He knows how important you as the audience are, he wants to give you some real insights into his work, and he's keen to hear what you've got to say.



Guy Jones

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New Trio album

*Exciting news: November 2013 – we don't know exactly when yet – sees the release of a brand new Trio album, **I Love Jan Lundgren Trio**. It's the first stand-alone recording that Jan, Mattias Svensson (bass) and Zoltan Csörsz (drums) have released since *European Standards* in 2009.*



Photo: ACT/Martin Magntorn

"This album has been quite a long time in the making" says Jan. "The release of *European Standards* spurred me on to compose a number of new songs, including some specifically for the Trio. Then we got an invitation from Eric Palmcrantz at Figaro Music in Stockholm to record the material."

The offer involved two days of recording, back in May last year, in a studio at Swedish Radio. The particularly interesting part was that Jan, Mattias and Zoltan would be playing together in the same room. "This isn't how recording is normally done" Jan explains. "It's more usual to sit in separate booths. But Eric's preference was to seat us all together just as though we were on stage at a concert."

In this sense, then, *I Love Jan Lundgren Trio* is very similar to a live recording. The sound was captured with state-of-the-art Didrik De Geer microphones, and the album is being released first as an LP (accompanied, perhaps, by a download).

"So the recording has a 100% natural feeling" adds Jan. "And the warmth is reinforced by the fact that it's on vinyl, rather than CD."

"Eric is fabulous to work with, and we're extremely pleased with the result. The only trouble is, you'll have to dig out your old turntable if you want to hear the album as it's really meant to sound!"

Ystad: standing on its own

The fourth Ystad Sweden Jazz Festival took place 1-4 August. As co-founder and artistic director – and long-time resident of Ystad – how does Jan feel it went this year?

"It was a great success" Jan replies. "The 2012 Festival featured a whole host of big international names and was headlined by the great Quincy Jones. As I said at the time, 'It doesn't get any bigger than this'."

"So we decided this year to take a different approach – to be a bit more experimental, daring even. We wanted to see to see if the Festival could 'stand on its own' with a programme of performers who, in some cases, are not well known in Scandinavia and have no audience here."

The approach worked well, explains Jan. Some 6,300 tickets were bought over the four days of the Festival and many of the concerts were sold out long in advance. "It's always hard selling tickets for a programme that hasn't been finalised, so we were delighted by the early response."

Why is the Festival so special for Jan? "All the performers get a great reception at Ystad: the warmth and enthusiasm of the audience constantly amaze me. For example, the Trio and I performed with the incredible Italian clarinettist, Nico Gori, on the Saturday night, and the theatre went completely wild after our first number together."

"It's always an exceptional feeling to play at Ystad."



Photo: Mark Hanlon

Concert news

For definitive dates and locations of Jan's performances, always check the 'Concerts' page of www.janlundgren.com But here are some events to look out for.

Project	Location/timing	What's happening
2013		
<i>Man in the Fog</i>	Paris, France 17 October; Stockholm, Sweden 24 November	Jan plays solo.
With Nils Landgren & others	Southern Sweden 23-26 October	"It's called 'Come Together' and we're playing Beatles songs!" says an animated Jan. "I'm with super-talents like Nils and Pernilla Andersson – and even a string quartet. Should be great!"
<i>Mare Nostrum</i>	Bari, Italy 30 October	With the incomparable Paolo Fresu and Richard Galliano.
With Scott Hamilton	Sweden & Denmark 5-30 November	"Scott and I have been collaborating for years" Jan says. "He's truly a master of the great American songbook."
<i>Jul på Norsk</i>	Norway & Germany possibly November & December	The follow-up to <i>Jul på Svenska</i> – see the story on page 6.
2014		
<i>Mare Nostrum</i>	Germany spring	"Nothing's definite yet, but I'm reasonably confident it's going to happen."
Ystad Sweden Jazz Festival	Ystad, Sweden August	"It's never too early to start thinking about the next one!" Usually takes place on the first weekend of August, so pencil it into your diary and register for updates at www.ystadjazz.se .



Passage to India

Jan performs roughly once every four days in any given year. That's a lot of concerts – and a lot of towns in a lot of countries. JLN asked Jan which of the many tours he's done in the last 24 months were the most memorable.

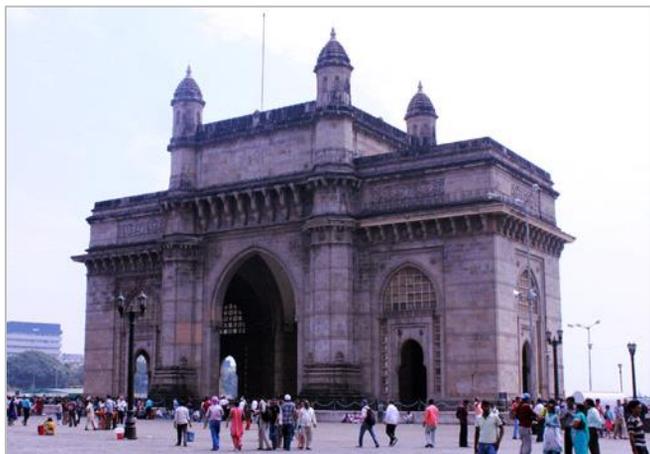
"India" says Jan immediately, who played four Trio concerts in December 2011 in New Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore. "There's a well-established jazz tradition in India, and a big and very knowledgeable jazz audience. We were given a great welcome and all our gigs were sold out."

Were there any particular challenges playing in India? "Well, all of us were ill at various stages" laughs Jan. "But the real difficulty was finding a good piano."

"I don't know how accurate this is, but I was told there are only *two* Steinway concert grands available for public performances in the whole of India. And they're both in New Delhi. So, in Mumbai and Bangalore, I played on Yamahas – and there's only *one* Yamaha in Bangalore!"

Any other memorable tours for Jan? "The Trio did three gigs in Italy in August. It's been one of the main markets for *Mare Nostrum* since we started that project almost a decade ago, and I always enjoy performing there."

"It was the first time I'd played with the Mattias/Zoltan Trio line-up in Italy, and we got a fabulously warm reception. Several people came up to me after the performances and said how much they'd enjoyed watching Paolo, Richard and me play *Mare Nostrum* in previous years. So it was really gratifying that they now wanted to see the Trio."



Out of the fog?

Jan's album *Man in the Fog* was released in February this year and is already on its third production run. That means there are potentially 30,000 people out there listening to Jan's first and so far only solo recording. JLN asked Jan for his thoughts on this milestone in his 20-year career.



Photo:
Thomas Schloemann

"I'll let you into a secret" confides Jan. "I recorded a solo CD back in 2006 for a short series of concerts I did in Stockholm called *History of Piano Jazz*. But you could only buy it at the performances."

"Forget that. *Man in the Fog* is something completely different. After half a lifetime of trying to perfect my trade, I was finally ready to work on something serious, grown up and consistent.

"The temptation when you're young is to prove how good you are by showing off – too many contrasting styles, too much distracting technique. With *Man in the Fog*, I didn't feel the need to show every different element of Jan Lundgren. I wanted to pick a single theme, a feeling, a mood, and see where I could take it."

How does Jan define this theme? "The album conveys a definite sense of simplicity, and occasionally a little melancholia. This is partly a reflection of growing older and, perhaps, the fact that I'm Swedish. Straightforwardness and the avoidance of fuss are among the things that many Swedes pride themselves on, and I think these characteristics are partially reflected in the album."

Is that why *I don't want to cry anymore* is the only tune on *Man in the Fog* from the great American songbook? "Unconsciously, yes" replies Jan. "Although I love them, those tunes were not what I wanted to explore on this album. It's also why we didn't include the download bonus track *Yesterdays* on the CD. The treatment was just that little bit too complex and showy, and it jarred with the mood and tone of the album."

Now that Jan has finally bitten the solo bullet, JLN wonders whether we can expect more solo recordings in the future. "I very much hope so. I'd certainly like to do more. But I want to be sure that, when it happens, I'm saying something which is properly considered and coherent."

How it happens: Part I

The tune comes first

We hear a song, we buy a recording or we attend a concert. Most of us probably just take it all for granted. But what does Jan actually have to do to make these things happen? For this edition of JLN, we asked him how he composes. In Part II of the series, we'll look at what goes on when Jan records and, in Part III, we'll go behind the scenes when he performs.

"*Man in the fog* is a very simple tune, basically just three tones repeated. The idea came to me in probably no more than a minute, but the composition itself took several months. It takes time to work out the details – the chords, the beats. A song will always get better the more time you spend on it. If it only took a week, it probably wouldn't be much good.



Photo: Sveriges Radio

"I do my composing the old-fashioned way, writing the notes down with pen and paper. A lot of musicians use computers nowadays, but I find that distracting. I need to hear the tune inside my head as it develops.

"My song-writing is usually driven by demand: a new album, a new project – a *pressure* of some kind. I'd love to sit down and experiment quietly with ideas, but I just don't have the time.

"Nevertheless, writing a good tune is a lengthy process for me. Take *Man in the fog*. After *European Standards*, I felt the urge to produce some new material for another Trio album. So I wrote *Man in the fog* – along with songs like *Poeten* ('The poet') – long before I even thought about a solo recording.

"It's the same with recording a new composition. The longer you leave it, the better it will be. The risk is that you record too soon, when you could have been pushing the song further forward at performances.

"The tune always comes to me before the title. Given that I don't write lyrics, I could call the songs virtually anything. In practice, they usually suggest their own title. The simplicity of *Man in the fog* made me think of a lonely feeling. Then one day I found myself standing alone on a fog-bound railway platform waiting for a train. And the tune was playing away in my head, like a station clock ticking in the background.

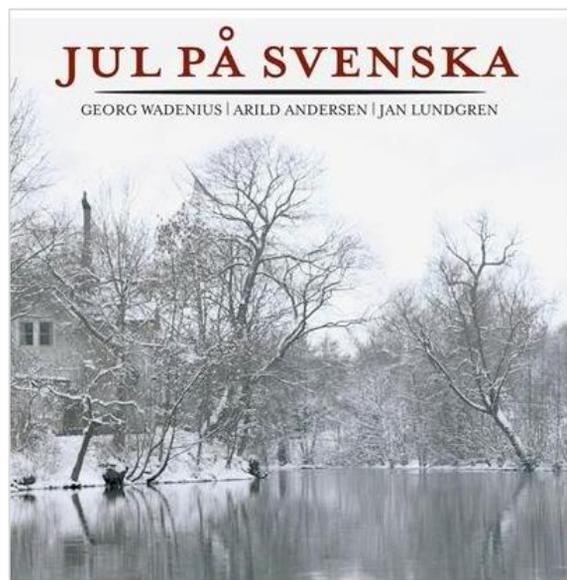
"So that's what I think of when I perform *Man in the fog*. I always like to feel a specific connection with the songs I write."

A second Scandinavian Christmas

Early in the summer, Jan took another trip to Rainbow Studios in Oslo with Georg Wadenius (guitar) and Arild Andersen (bass) to record *Jul på Norsk* ('Christmas in Norwegian'). Out in the next few weeks, it's a follow-up to *Jul på Svenska* – no prizes for guessing what that means – which was the Christmas album they released in 2010.

"Being Norwegian, Arild fortunately didn't have to travel very far" jokes Jan. "He was also the perfect person to translate song titles."

Does that mean the Norwegians don't have enough Christmas songs? "Just kidding – they've got lots" says Jan. "But the album does include the Swedish *Almas vagg visa* ('Alma's lullaby'), which is actually a tune composed by me. So we cheated a bit and gave it a Norwegian name."



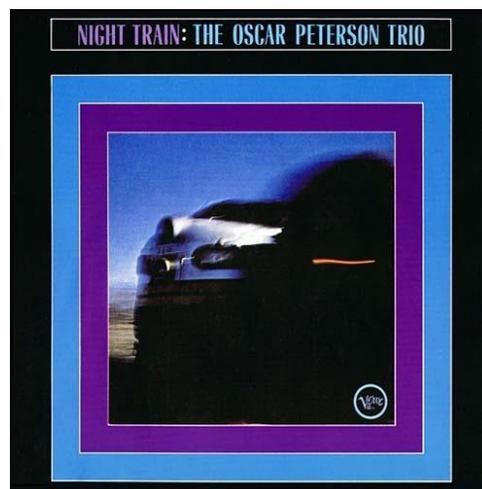
"Oh, and we sneaked in a Danish song masquerading as something from Norway. Honestly, though, I promise you it's an album that's Norwegian at heart..."

EMI asked Georg, Arild and Jan to make the follow-up after the success of *Jul på Svenska*. "The CD was critically well received and did nicely from a commercial standpoint, selling nearly 10,000 copies. Not bad at all for a Christmas jazz record in Scandinavia. There's also going to be a tour: Norway, Germany perhaps – but probably not Sweden."

So, expect *Jul på Dansk* in a couple of years' time, and then the boys will have covered all of Scandinavia.

Fifteen influential recordings

If you've ever read anything about how the young Jan Lundgren first got into jazz, you'll know the story about one of his piano teachers telling him to buy a copy of Oscar Peterson's *Night Train*. JLN wanted to know which other classic piano jazz recordings have influenced Jan. This is his top 15.



- Oscar Peterson - Night Train (Verve)
 - Bill Evans - Portrait in Jazz (Riverside)
 - The Amazing Bud Powell Vol.2 (Blue Note)
 - Bengt Hallberg - Dinah (Philips)
 - McCoy Tyner - Trident (Milestones)
 - George Shearing - Grand Piano (Concord)
 - Erroll Garner - That's My Kick (MGM)
 - Herbie Hancock Trio with Ron Carter & Tony Williams (Columbia)
 - Dave Brubeck - Time Out (Columbia)
 - Jan Johansson - Jazz på Svenska (Heptagon)
 - Keith Jarrett - Standards Vol.2 (ECM)
 - Billy Taylor - Jazz at Storyville Vol.2 (Roost)
 - Hank Jones - Upon Reflection (Verve)
 - This is Hampton Hawes Vol.2 The Trio (Contemporary)
 - Art Tatum - 20th Century Piano Genius (Verve)
- Is there anything missing from Jan's list that surprises you? What are the jazz piano greats with a particularly special place in your own collection? Please do write in to guyjones@friendsofjanlundgren.com and let us know.

Collaborations (No1): Jan tells JLN why he loves working with...

...Jacques Werup

Two middle-aged men are on a stage somewhere in the south of Sweden. One plays the piano, and the other recites poems in Swedish. Sounds like an odd combination, right? Wrong.



“Jacques Werup is a Swedish icon, one of our country’s finest poets. He’s a master of the Swedish language and I love his way of writing. He also plays – the saxophone and the clarinet – and he sings.

“Jacques has his own unique style in doing all three of these things, and he has a big, big personality. I feel very honoured to work with him.

“The idea behind our collaboration is actually very straightforward – a blend of jazz and poetry. So I might play a few tunes solo, Jacques will declaim some of his clever and often very funny poems, and then we come together as a duo at various points with Jacques playing or singing – or a bit of both. We always finish with the lovely song Jacques wrote, *Tack för allt* (‘Thanks for everything’), which I ‘stole’ for the final track on *Man in the Fog*.

“Our collaboration works because of the interaction between us. That doesn’t only happen while we’re playing together. There’s interaction in the silence too, when I’m sitting at the keyboard listening to Jacques speak, and vice versa.

“Jacques and I have been collaborating since 2003 and we’ve often involved other artists. Our first project was with the great Swedish singer Lill Lindfors, and we’ve performed with several others since then, including Timbuktu, the Swedish rapper. He’s fantastic fun.

“Do you have to speak Swedish to enjoy our concerts? I don’t think so. I met a British guy who came to a performance we did in Stockholm last October who told me he loved it. He didn’t understand a single word Jacques was saying. But he could tell he was in the presence of what he called ‘an electrifying force!’”

Want to become a Friend of Jan Lundgren?

It’s simple and it costs nothing. Just send an email to guyjones@friendsofjanlundgren.com, stating clearly in the subject line ‘New member’. Please also make sure that the email includes your first name, last name, town where you live and country where you live. Then we’ll log you on our database, ready to let you know when the Friends of Jan Lundgren starts putting its plans into action.

We might also begin emailing this newsletter directly to the Friends, as well as placing it on www.friendsofjanlundgren.com. So why not type the email address above into your computer’s address book? That way you can avoid the Friends’ communications being treated as spam by your email provider.

You can come off our mailing list at any time by sending us an email with the word ‘Unsubscribe’ in the subject line. And make sure too that you let us know if you change your email address.



Photo ACT/Zigga Koritnik

Some Friends' favourites

We asked some of the Friends to write in and tell JLN what their favourite Jan Lundgren track is. Email guyjones@friendsofjanlundgren.com with your own favourites.

'Yesterdays', Man in the Fog (2013)

"To me, it's the best track on the whole album – but it's not on the CD. It's a bonus track that's only available by downloading the album from iTunes. It shows Jan's astonishing technique and his amazing inventiveness. I have no idea why it's not on the CD..."

Ola Winberg, Stockholm, Sweden

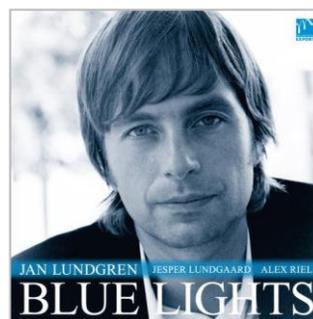
Editor's note: now you know, Ola!



'Take me in your arms', Blue Lights (2003)

"A lovely tune given the quintessential Jan Lundgren treatment: subtle, warm, melodic and with that light touch that characterises all Jan's playing. I personally think Blue Lights is the best album Jan recorded with his former Trio, and I listen to it a lot."

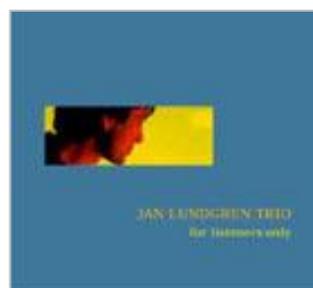
Alex Williams, Los Angeles, United States



'Time to leave again', For Listeners Only (2001)

"An original Jan composition and such a great song. It swings but it's slightly wistful, reminding me of times, places and people long gone. Interestingly, I've noticed that Jan has started to play it again at Trio gigs. Good to see that he still likes it!"

Joakim Areblad, Gothenburg, Sweden



'Once in a while', An Intimate Salute to Frankie (2005)

"Not knowing much about Jan and nothing at all about Putte Wickman, I discovered this fabulous album by accident in a Stockholm record shop while on a business trip. The shop had a CD player for customers, and I stood there playing the beautiful opening bars of *Once in a while* again and again until the guy behind the counter told me to stop!"

Geraldine Brodie, London, United Kingdom

