

The Jazz Chameleon Foreword

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The first collaborative meeting of Nordic jazz archives took place in 1980 in Stockholm, Sweden. Since then there have been eight archival meetings that can be called Nordic jazz conferences: Copenhagen 1984, Oslo 1987, Stockholm 1991, Copenhagen 1996, Oslo 2002, Odense 2004, Aalborg 2009, and Helsinki 2010 (see <http://www.jazzconference.net/archive/index.html>).

For years, the name of the conferences was only given in Nordic languages, for example “Nordisk jazzforskningskonferanse” and “Nordisk jazzforskning”. The change took place in 2009 in Denmark when the meeting was named in English. Most of the papers were also given in English. The 8th Nordic Jazz Conference was truly international in the sense that there were participants from eight countries.

In 2010, the NJC was for the first time held in Finland. This belated honour of hosting the conference might lead one to think that during the years Finnish researchers and archivists have not been so active in organising scholarly jazz meetings... Well, it is true that we should not have waited for thirty years. On the other hand, many Nordic scholars and archivists remember the Jyväskylä Summer Jazz Conference, which was held three times, in 1999, 2000 and 2001, in Central Finland. These conferences included Nordic Jazz Research Meetings and thus served as kind of replacement during the six-year period when the NJCs did not take place.

When The Finnish Jazz & Pop Archive decided to organise the 9th Nordic Jazz Conference, our aim was to try to follow the innovations

that had been introduced the previous year in Denmark. We had participants from eleven countries (for the NJC Helsinki 2010 report, including presentations and photo gallery, see http://www.jazzpoparkisto.net/tapahtumat/9th_njc/). This clearly reflected the new international nature and status of the NJC. One consequence of this was that most of the papers did not deal very much with Nordic countries. They focused however on a particular theme, the chameleon-like nature of jazz music and culture that has historically been typical also of Nordic jazz.

The chameleon theme was chosen to celebrate the fact that since its arrival on the public scene in the early 20th century, jazz has been characterised by a remarkable ability to cross musical, social and cultural borderlines. In terms of musical style and character, jazz has often crossed genre categories and undergone radical changes. In terms of geographical and cultural boundaries, one of the most notable developments in jazz has been the internationalisation of its sound. Furthermore, jazz has also been able to ‘travel in time’. The explicit recognition of traditions characterises jazz history: jazz music speaks to the past and is informed by what has been before.

What are these crossings really like? How have they changed during the history of jazz?

The papers of this collection aim to answer these questions. They range from historical themes (Bruce Johnson, Heli Reimann, Claire Levy) to musicological analysis (Christa Bruckner-Haring, Katherine Williams, Deborah Mawer) and aspects of global dissemination (John V. Ward).

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