

The Montmartre, 1959-76

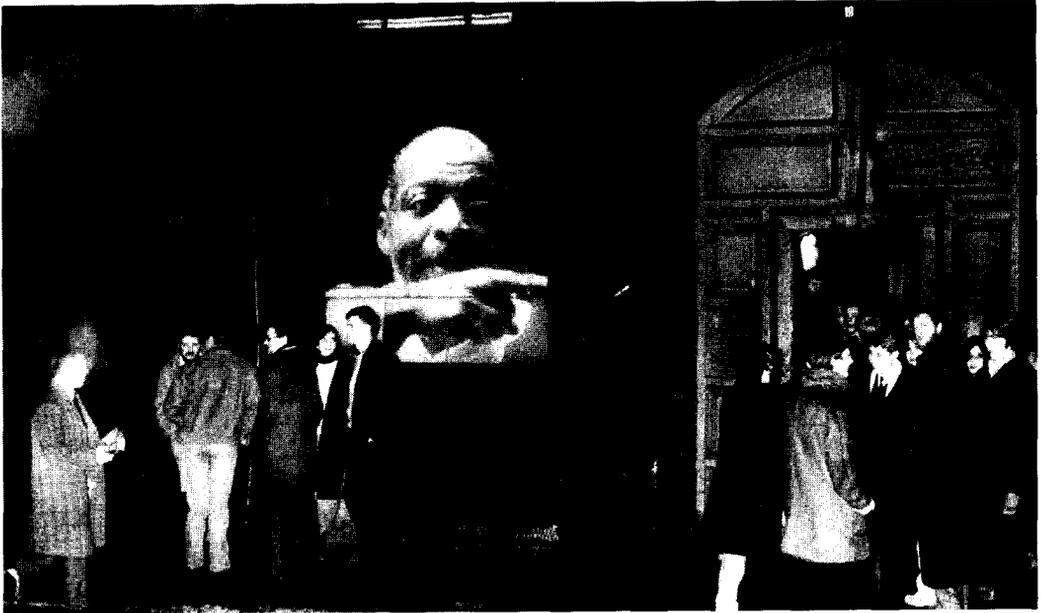
Toward a history of a Copenhagen jazz house

By Erik Wiedemann

Walking along Gothersgade from Kongens Nytorv you take the second street on your left and stop before the second building on your right. You are now standing in front of number 19 Store Regnegade, 1110 Copenhagen K., an anonymous-looking address, comprising an office on the ground floor and owner-occupied flats on the upper floors. The gateway is normally closed, entrance is not invited.

How different from an earlier period, when the gateway was open, and one could pass through an entrance to the left inside it, thus arriving at a restaurant in the space which has now been made into an office. Especially during the years from 1959 to 1976, thousands of people, Danes and foreigners, musicians and music lovers alike passed through this entrance and some of them spent thousands of hours in this place. For many of them, including this writer, those years form an unforgettable part of their lives, providing them with some of their greatest musical experiences ever. Others, who came less often, nevertheless shared something which was, at that time, still unique, the possibility of listening to some of the greatest jazz musicians at close range, often several nights in a row.

From 1959 to 1976 the restaurant occupied a central position in the jazz life of Copenhagen, and Denmark. It arranged visits to Denmark by many of the leading American musicians, often lasting several weeks, something previously unknown in this country. Many of these musicians also visited other parts of the country, and the existence of the restaurant was instrumental in causing quite a few of them to choose Copenhagen as their residence and base of operations in Europe. Among the most important may be mentioned tenor saxophonists Stan Getz, Dexter



During the years 1959-76 the photostat of Count Basie pointing to the entrance of Café Jazzhus Montmartre at 19, Store Regnegade was the only indication that this was the address of an internationally famous jazz venue. Anders Dyrup, the proprietor of the first Montmartre, found the Basie photo in "The Count Basie Story", a Roulette double album (RB-1). A later and more representative choice might have been a photo of Dexter Gordon, who, more than any other musician, was identified with the Montmartre. Ole Kiilerich took this photo of the famous facade on December 23, 1967, a Saturday night when violinist Finn Ziegler was on the program, accompanied by the house rhythm group, Kenny Drew, Niels Henning Ørsted Pedersen and Al Heath (Polfoto).

Gordon and Ben Webster, pianist Kenny Drew and bassist Oscar Pettiford. During some years in the early 'sixties, a number of avantgarde musicians also had better working conditions here than in the USA, for instance pianist Cecil Taylor, tenor saxophonists Albert Ayler and Archie Shepp, and trumpeter Don Cherry. Through accompanying the American musicians, several Danish musicians also received optimal jazz schooling - bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen being an especially illustrious example - and Danish jazz musicians also found working conditions which had not hitherto existed in Denmark. Thus, the restaurant came to be the most important single factor in the establishing and flowering of professional jazz music in Denmark since about 1960.

At the time of writing, it has been twenty years since the restaurant closed, so it may be time to try and recall what happened - and particularly what music was played - during those years. For an accurate survey of the music played it would have been extremely useful to have a book on hand like the one Jens Jørn

Gjedsted compiled about the programs presented at the second incarnation of Montmartre, the one in Nørregade, during its first ten, and most important, years.¹ Besides photos, insider memories, interviews and quotes from reviews, the aforementioned book contains day-by-day listings of the bands which played at this Montmartre between 1976 and 1986.

To establish a similar listing for the first Montmartre would involve more research time than has been available for the present project. Instead, I have relied upon my personal recollections and my own reviews and notes published in the Copenhagen daily *Information* during the period, supplemented by similar material from a number of friends and colleagues. For a survey of the most important and characteristic musicians and bands that played the Montmartre between 1959 and 1976, this should suffice, but a more thorough and detailed examination in book form would definitely be useful.

I. 1959-60: Anders Dyrup's Montmartre

A dance restaurant by the name Montmartre had existed in the Store Regnegade building for some decades before it was changed into a jazz house, and it had often been used for musical gatherings. In my history of early Danish jazz, there is a photo of such a gathering on the premises in November of 1931. Several leading Danish jazz musicians of the time are part of a ten-piece *ad hoc* band.² During the latter part of the 'fifties, at least two Copenhagen jazz clubs (for members) rented the place for their arrangements, the *Blue Note* and the *Club Montmartre*, and one of the leaders of the latter club, architect Anders Dyrup, decided to buy the place and make it into a jazz restaurant (open to the general public) under the name *Café Montmartre*. Dyrup had the premises renovated and decorated by a group of young Danish artists, M 59, who created a decorated wooden lattice under the roof and a series of large relief plaster masks on one of the walls.

The place opened on February 16, 1959, with *George Lewis* and his band of veterans from New Orleans. The idea of using traditional jazz in the restaurant may be seen as a continuation of the music policy of the *Club Montmartre*, and names like the New Orleans clarinetist Albert Nicholas, blues pianist and singer Champion Jack Dupree (also from New Orleans, incidentally), and Papa Bue's Danish New Orleans band pointed in the same direction. More in line with the musical future of the *Café Montmartre* were more contemporary names, starting with the American pianist and singer *Mose Allison* (with Danes Erik Moseholm and William Schiöppffe on bass and drums). Most important for the image of the new place, however, was tenor saxophonist *Stan Getz*, who was added to the Allison

program and on one memorable evening played in a duo with Allison. Getz had taken up residence in Denmark in the autumn of 1958, and, with bassist *Oscar Pettiford*, he became the musician most associated with the Montmartre during its first year. Pettiford lived in Copenhagen from the summer of 1959.

Getz and Pettiford were at first united in a quartet in June-July, 1959, the pianist being a young Swede, *Jan Johansson*, the drummer usually Joe Harris instead of the more famous Kenny Clarke, who did not arrive from Paris as planned. In August, Pettiford became the leader of the first of several prominent Montmartre house trios over the years (this one with Jan Johansson and William Schiöppfe, the leading Danish drummer at the time). Kenny Clarke finally showed up in October, but disappeared after a few days, so usually Schiöppfe or a young Danish drummer, *Jørn Elniff*, had the job. There were other good American soloists during this first year, expatriates such as trumpeter Benny Bailey and tenor saxophonist *Don Byas* in September and October, singer *Helen Merrill* in November. Then, after a new Stan Getz engagement in January, the Montmartre was closed for renovation on February 1, 1960. It had been in existence for almost one year.

Evidently, the project had not been an financial success, even though it had received lots of attention and had attracted a new public. Ironically, during the period when the Montmartre stayed closed, another new jazz house in Copenhagen, Vingaarden, enjoyed quite some success with programmes in which new Danish jazz (particularly the group called Jazz Quintet '60) had a prominent place. During this period Oscar Pettiford unexpectedly died in Copenhagen at the age of only 37, in September 1960, and in January 1961, Stan Getz returned to the States. With these musicians gone, and with 1960 and 1961 passing by without signs of a reopening, the hope of seeing the Montmartre resume its activity gradually faded.

II. 1961-74: Herluf Kamp-Larsen's Montmartre

Then, in late 1961, Harold Goldberg, a little known American jazz pianist living in Copenhagen, suggested to Herluf Kamp-Larsen, who for years had waited on, among others, a jazz-loving public of Copenhagen nightbirds at a series of pubs,³ that they buy the Montmartre - or rather A/S Amagerautomaten, the corporation which owned the Montmartre - from Anders Dyrup. Thus, the *Café Montmartre* reopened under new ownership on New Year's eve, 1961. The opening attraction, American tenor saxophonist *Brew Moore*, was such a success that, according to Kamp-Larsen,⁴ Goldberg found it unnecessary to change the program. This

created the first of several disagreements over the musical policy, and after about one year, Goldberg left the partnership. In March 1963, the name was changed to *Jazzhus Montmartre*.

Kamp-Larsen turned out to be an excellent jazz house leader. His musical taste favoured musicians of the post-war period, but did not exclude the great swing soloists, and, what was more surprising, he also wanted to present the younger musicians of the New York jazz avantgarde, which had started to manifest itself in the years around 1960. A number of Danish musicians of the generation who had broken through from the late fifties on were also used, mostly as accompanists, but in some cases also as leaders with their own local groups. Yet it was the American soloists and groups who constituted the main draw. Some of them were exiles, who could be sent for without large travel expenses, and, thanks to the existence of the Montmartre, some even came to live in Denmark, as Getz and Pettiford had done. Others had to be flown in from the States, and in these cases Kamp-Larsen took advantage of special SAS roundtrip tickets, which made it possible to have a soloist or group for three weeks, during which they might be passed on to the Blue Note in Paris, Ronnie Scott's in London, or Gyllene Cirkeln in Stockholm, preferably on Mondays, which were off-nights at the Montmartre, anyway.

In order to get work permits for the American musicians, a corresponding number of Danish musicians had to be employed, a stipulation which was met, partly by using Danish accompanists, partly by having Danish groups on the programmes, especially on Mondays, and not least of all by having local musicians play during the hours after midnight. At least by the autumn of 1962, both types of programs were a tradition.

From the outset, Kamp-Larsen had the ground floor of the main building (the restaurant) at his disposal, while the second floor was used as a wardrobe for the musicians; later on, a sound studio was established, adjoining the wardrobe, and used for radio transmissions and various recording purposes. For a time, Freddy Hansson (later the proprietor of the Sweet Silence Studio) resided here with his tapes, several of which contained live music from the ground floor. The property also included a rear building, in which Kamp-Larsen had the ground floor (used as a store room) and the second floor (for periods this was also used as living quarters by musicians) at his disposal. Also in the rear building was the workshop of a person who became quite important to the jazz house. This was Ole Sliber (Ole Ingemann Olsen), an expert at grinding surgical instruments, who also acted as Kamp-Larsen's right hand and proxy.⁵

For some years, everything seemed to go quite well, considering that public support was non-existent and the programmes made no commercial concessions.

The first signs that everything was not well with the economy came in 1970. In April-May, several Danish groups donated their fees to the jazz house, and in November, a late opening (with music from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m.) was tried, but after a few months the program reverted to 10 p.m. - 2 a.m., then one hour earlier. In 1971, again in April-May, for a whole month, a series of Danish groups donated their fees, and at the same time the Dansk Jazzmusiker Forening (Association of Danish Jazz Musicians) took over the programming responsibility. In 1972, the Association instigated a new action, where 3-400 musicians in 60-70 bands played for about a month in January-February; then in March, finally, some public support arrived, with the Ministry of Culture granting 25.000 kroner towards a much needed renovation, and the local authorities giving 20.000 kroner to facilitate visits by American musicians.

There were several reasons for the financial problems. Flight tickets had become more expensive, and more American musicians demanded that they bring their own accompanists instead of using local ones. Starting in 1971, guests under 18 were prohibited entrance. And perhaps the interest in jazz was not as wide-spread as ten years earlier. Anyway, by August 1974, the accumulated debts had grown to proportions which made the jazz musicians' association withdraw from the co-operation; after Dexter Gordon had ended an engagement on September 7, the place was closed; and in November, almost 13 years after he had started in Store Regnegade, Kamp-Larsen declared himself bankrupt.

Artistically speaking, his years at the Montmartre had been exceptionally prolific with thousands of musicians visiting the stage, many more than can be mentioned in this survey. However, it does not take much looking into the annals to see that *Dexter Gordon* is the musician who more than any other was associated with the first Montmartre. He arrived in October, 1962, and could be heard at intervals until the very end, in 1976. No other soloist appeared as often or had as extended engagements. In particular, his three summer months in 1963, 1964 and 1965 plus two in 1967 were something previously unheard of. Then his presence began to be taken too much granted - not that familiarity exactly bred contempt, but the fact that one could go and listen to Gordon in Store Regnegade night after night was no longer as sensational as earlier on. Nevertheless, he was still heard more often than other American soloists, sometimes for longer periods, such as his four weeks in August-September, 1969.

Gordon's years in Denmark form the pinnacle of his career, his most creative and mature period. He was 39 when he arrived, in the midst of an artistic come-back, and 53 when he moved back to the States and a popular come-back. Considering Gordon's habits, it is hardly surprising that he ran into trouble with

Danish authorities during his stay. In January 1967 he was denied a working permit because he had received a narcotics sentence in Paris after a process which had made it impossible for him to play at the Montmartre during the Summer of 1966. After massive protests by Danish cultural personalities, the working permit was granted after all, and Gordon played the Montmartre in June and July of 1967.

From our point of view it is of particular interest that a series of recordings document Gordon's playing at the Montmartre, including six CDs of radio transmissions during the Summer of 1964, and three CDs of live recordings, made in July 1967. The intense atmosphere of Gordon's engagements and the indefatigable creativity of his solos are well captured in these recordings. Furthermore, Gordon exerted a profound influence on the jazz capabilities of several young Danish musicians who accompanied him during these years, not least of all bass player Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen (still 16 at the prime of his first encounters with Gordon) and drummer Alex Riel.

One other great bop musician heard at the Montmartre was pianist *Bud Powell*, starting in February-March, 1962. Powell was certainly past his time at this time, but still capable of extremely moving moments, not least when he was accompanied by NHØP (15 at the time) and drummer Jørn Elniff, who outdid himself with Powell. Unfortunately, there are no records of Powell at the Montmartre, but a series of CDs from the Golden Circle in Stockholm give an impression of Powell's live-playing at this time.

A number of other American musicians with a special relation to bop made this group of soloists stylistically dominant. Next to Dexter Gordon, tenor saxophonist *Johnny Griffin* was the most frequent guest, partly because his hot-headed playing became very popular with the Danes, partly because, living in Paris since 1963, his travel expenses were not excessive. He first came in 1964, in April and in November-December, both times accompanied by drummer Art Taylor, another American expatriate living in Paris. Griffin was back in March and August 1967 and was heard annually between 1972 and 74; later on, he has played countless times in Copenhagen.

In the same group of musicians several other tenor saxophonists should be noted, among them Lucky Thompson (March 1962 and August 1968), multi-instrumentalist Roland Kirk (October 1963 and December 1966), Booker Ervin (October 1964 and June 1969), Yusef Lateef (August-September 1966, August 1967, June-July 1968, and October 1971), Jimmy Heath (September 1967 and October 1969), Clifford Jordan (November 1967 and April 1969), Hank Mobley (April 1968), Joe Henderson (September 1968 and August 1973), and above all, Sonny Rollins (September 1968). A number of altoists should also be mentioned:

Sahib Shihab, who lived in Sweden and Denmark from 1961 and who, in September, 1963 was introduced at the Montmartre; Leo Wright, in Europe since 1963, who played the Montmartre in January-February 1964, and Phil Woods (July 1968 and August 1969).

Other instruments were not represented in such numbers, but at least five trumpeters and four pianists should be noted, the trumpeters being Kenny Dorham (December 1963), Donald Byrd (with Dexter Gordon, August 1965), Art Farmer (with and without Lee Konitz, September 1965, and without, August 1968), Carmell Jones (with Ben Webster, then Brew Moore, May-June, 1966), and Charles Tolliver with the fine drummer Jimmy Hopps (July 1969 and February 1970). The pianists are Horace Parlan, who arrived in April 1972 and stayed on in Denmark, the legendary Joe Albany (April 1973), Duke Jordan (November 1973), who followed Parlan's example, and finally Al Haig (December 1973).

Musicians with a background in cool jazz were less generously represented, but tenor saxophonist Brew Moore reopened the Montmartre on New Year's Eve of 1961 and, having settled in Copenhagen, returned many times until his death, following an accident in Tivoli, in 1973. His more famous colleague, Stan Getz, returned to his old domicile in April 1970, but actually became a more frequent visitor to the Nørregade-Montmartre. Pianist Bill Evans came thrice for a few days' visits with his trio, in November 1969, June 1970, and November 1973. More than any other musician, however, alto saxophonist *Lee Konitz* represented the cool tradition at the Montmartre. He first came in September 1965, playing with Art Farmer (as previously mentioned) and returned in April 1968, and in May 1969. His most memorable visit, though, came after the Kamp-Larsen period, and will therefore be dealt with in the coming section.

American musicians like the above, with their roots in bop music and cool jazz, certainly dominated the Montmartre programs. But Herluf Kamp-Larsen's catholic tastes made room for other styles, too. Of the great swing soloists who appeared in Store Regnegade, *Ben Webster*, more than anyone except Dexter Gordon, became associated with the Montmartre. The former Ellington tenor, then 55, had moved to Europe in December 1964, because of unsatisfactory working conditions in the States, and in January 1965, he debuted at the Montmartre, returning in December of the same year in company with two other tenors, Don Byas and Brew Moore. Until 1969, Holland was his home base, then he moved to Copenhagen, which was his address until he died in September 1973, while playing an engagement in Amsterdam. His mature playing with a special mastery of ballads was heard at intervals at the Montmartre, though not with the frequency and the extended engagements of Dexter Gordon.

In March 1965, two months after Webster, another swing veteran - also 55 - arrived: violinist *Stuff Smith*. As with Webster, this was his first visit to Denmark and with his unorthodox way of playing the violin, as well as through his meetings with a Danish follower, Svend Asmussen, he created a lot of interest. In June-July, 1966, he was again at the Montmartre, but his health was waning and in September 1967 he died in West Germany, but was buried in Denmark, which he had made his last home.

Of other swing masters, former Ellington cornetist Rex Stewart (August, 1966) and trumpeter Roy Eldridge (October 1973) should be mentioned, as well as Coleman Hawkins (February 1968, a little more than a year before his death), and two of his tenor pupils, exile *Don Byas* (past his prime, but still a vigorous soloist when he returned to the Montmartre in January 1963, through many repeat performances - and Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis (May 1967). And quite a reunion took place in June 1971, when alto master Benny Carter shared the stand with Ben Webster.

In order to provide first-rate accompaniments for most of the above-mentioned soloists, who normally did not bring their own rhythm groups, Montmartre at an early stage instituted its own accompanying group, the house rhythm section. This gradually grew out of a circle of accompanists, and from 1963, *Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen*, then not yet 17, was the permanent bassist; in 1962-63 William Schiöppffe was at the drums, which for the next three years were taken over by *Alex Riel*. Bent Axen, the first permanent pianist, was succeeded by the Spanish (or rather Catalan) virtuoso *Tete Montoliu* in October 1963, and in October 1964, *Kenny Drew*, who had relieved Montoliu for the three first months of 1964, took over from him on a permanent basis until 1970, when more varied local accompaniment trios (and more capable local rhythm people) became the norm. In 1966 and again in 1969-70, South African *Makaya Ntshoko* tended the drums, which in 1967-68 were expertly taken care of by *Al Heath*. More than mere accompanists, these musicians contributed to the musical standard at the Montmartre on a par with the best soloists.

The house rhythm group, however, was not suitable for accompanying American avantgarde musicians, of whom the Montmartre presented quite a few. It started with pianist *Cecil Taylor* for four weeks in November 1962, the longest engagement by far that he had ever had. With him were altoist Jimmy Lyons and drummer Sunny Murray, but no bassist. In the absence of a steady beat and tonal contours, which a bassist might have provided, the ametrical and atonal aspects of Taylor's music were emphasized, piano and drums engaging in a series of free duets, with the alto appearing from time to time in Parkerian exercises not quite in style. Taylor's unorthodox virtuosity and expressionistic playing created much

interest among younger composers and followers of European avantgarde music, and the association for new music (Det unge Tonekunstnerselskab) arranged a special Taylor concert at what is now the Betty Nansen Theatre. Not the least exciting part of the Taylor engagement was the fact that a young and at that time quite unknown tenor player by the name of *Albert Ayler* often sat in with the group. Unfortunately, no recordings exist of the Taylor-Ayler partnership, partly because a planned studio recording at Radio Denmark came to nothing, while the tapes for a visually ludicrous studio telecast have been lost.

Next autumn saw another important American avantgarde group, the *New York Contemporary Five* with trumpeter *Don Cherry*, tenor *Archie Shepp* and Danish alto player John Tchicai, who had been living in New York since late '62 (the bassist and drummer were not quite as interesting). Even though Shepp had played with Cecil Taylor in 1960, this group drew more inspiration from Ornette Coleman, Cherry's earlier employer. It was heard for two weeks in September 1963, and returned for three more in October. Shepp then was a soloist with the house rhythm group for the second half of November, while the other four musicians returned to New York.

The avantgarde tradition continued in the autumn of 1964, when the *Albert Ayler Quartet* played for two weeks in September. Ayler had made his first American records shortly before and was acquiring a small following in his home country. With Don Cherry on trumpet, Gary Peacock on bass and Sunny Murray on drums, this was the most homogenous avantgarde group yet heard at the Montmartre, one of the best representations ever of Ayler's music, with its unusual mixture of futurism, spirituality, folklorism and complexity. Ayler, Peacock and Murray came back for a few days in late October, Cherry having gone to Paris. Cherry was around again in 1965, most notably playing Thelonious Monk compositions with soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy and the house rhythm section through most of May. There was also a short visit by composer George Russell and his Swedish sextet in April, and in the first half of November, pianist *Paul Bley* appeared with his American trio (Bley returned in September 1972, for a collaboration with Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen). These 1965 visits presented a rather moderate kind of avantgarde music, whereas the *New York Art Quartet* with John Tchicai and trombonist Roswell Rudd had more of the real thing in October - unfortunately with the American bassist and drummer replaced by less able musicians from this side of the ocean.

The last important avantgarde visit was that of *Don Cherry's Quintet*, for the whole of March 1966. Though the personnel was not quite up to those of Cherry's three American Blue Note LP's of 1965 and 66, much of Cherry's post-Coleman

music, with its long collages, was captured by this group, with Argentinian tenor Gato Barbieri, German vibist Karl Berger, Danish bassist Bo Stief and Italian drummer Aldo Romano. After that, there was not much avantgarde jazz at the Montmartre, and a short visit by tenor player Frank Wright's Quartet (with altoist Noah Howard, pianist Bobby Few, and drummer Mohammad Ali) in September 1970, mostly served to show that the "new thing" of the 'sixties was rapidly becoming an old thing.

From 1970, when the Montmartre started to suffer from financial problems, there was a change in the sense that several groups playing in various contemporary styles showed up for short visits, often for just a day or two. Among them were neo-neo-bop groups like the *Harold Land-Bobby Hutcherson Quintet* (May 1970) and *Freddie Hubbard's Quintet* (September 1970, and again in March 1973); more or less electrified groups in post-Miles Davis styles like the *Tony Williams Lifetime* (June 1971, and in August 1972), *Herbie Hancock's Sextet* (July 1971, and March 1972), *Weather Report* and the *Mahavishnu Orchestra* (June 1972), and *Chick Corea's Return to Forever* (September 1972); a post-Coltrane group like *The McCoy Tyner's Quartet* (July 1973); and *The Charles Mingus' Quintet* (August 1972); there were also visits by big bands, like *Gil Evans'* (June 1971, and July 1974) and that of *Thad Jones/Mel Lewis* (July 1974); one soloist should also be mentioned here: pianist *Keith Jarrett* (September 1972, and (possibly) August 1973). Several of these visits were marvelous experiences, but because of their relative brevity they somehow did not become part of the Montmartre mythology on a par with those of, say, Dexter Gordon, Cecil Taylor and Ben Webster.

Montmartre's international reputation and its influence on Danish jazz life was primarily due to its programmes with American musicians. However, a number of musicians from other foreign countries were of importance, too. First among these must be mentioned South African pianist Abdullah Ibrahim, then still known as *Dollar Brand*. He first showed up with his trio in May 1963, the first foreign name to play the nightshift (1:30 - 4:30 a.m.). For his next engagement, an entire month in March-April 1964, Brand graduated to the evening program, but for the second half of his four weeks in January 1965, he was again relegated to the nightshift, to make room for Ben Webster's première. When he returned for three weeks in September-October 1969, he again had his drummer, Makaya Ntshko, who had, in the meantime, been a member of the house rhythm group. In 1972, when Brand spent the summer season in Denmark, he had particular success in May-June, playing with Don Cherry and giving solo concerts. His powerful and spiritual playing had a very strong influence on his young Danish colleague, Jan Kaspersen.

Another South African exile group was *The Blue Notes*, led by pianist Chris McGregor and including two musicians who often returned to the Montmartre, bassist Johnny Dyani and drummer Louis Moholo, the latter for some periods a member of the house rhythm group. The Blue Notes were first heard several times during July 1965, then returned for most of April 1966.

Interestingly, during its heyday very few musicians from our neighbouring countries played the Montmartre. However, Swedish baritonist and composer *Lars Gullin* was an early guest, playing with Brew Moore as early as September 1962, and for a while living in the rear building. Eight years later, Gullin was again united with Moore. His fellow-countryman, trombonist Eje Thelin, played with his internationally famous quintet in May 1963, and in October 1966, he returned as a soloist. In this connection I should also mention the Swedish-Turkish group *Sevda*, which appeared in March 1972 and September 1973, making a special impression largely on account of its violinist, Salih Baysal.

Finally, Polish pianist and composer *Krzysztof Komeda* had two notable engagements: two weeks in April 1963, with a quartet (including tenor Jan Wroblewski and bassist Roman Dylag), and four weeks in February 1965 with a quintet (with trumpeter Tomasz Stanko and tenor Michal Urbaniak). And in the first half of December 1969, French violinist Jean-Luc Ponty played with the house rhythm group.

Apart from these non-American visitors quite a few Danish soloists and bands were heard at the Montmartre, but since the main policy was based on American musicians, the Danes were normally relegated to Mondays and to the night programmes, unless, that is, they were part of the house rhythm group. By September 1962, we thus find a regular Monday quintet led by *Max Brüel* (playing soprano sax at this time) and *John Tchicai* (alto), and with Niels Brøndsted (piano). With a background stretching from cool jazz (Lee Konitz being a common inspiration) to Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane, this was probably the most advanced Danish jazz group at the time. After Tchicai left for New York in late 1962, Brüel continued with Ray Pitts (tenor) in his place; and by September 1963, Brüel had a quartet with Brøndsted which continued until November 1964. Of later Monday groups with Brüel, a sextet with Bent Jædig (tenor) in the summer of 1965 should be mentioned.

On the nightshift, pianist *Atli Bjørn* was, by September 1962, the leader of a trio which for several years had Benny Nielsen (bass) and Finn Frederiksen (drums) as permanent members, so that this was, in practice, the night house rhythm section, which was used to accompany various soloists. In 1962 and '63, one of

these was vibraphonist Louis Hjulmand, then considered one of the leading young Danish soloists. Tenors Bent Jædig and Ray Pitts were heard with the trio in 1964, Brew Moore in 1965, and in '65 and part of '66, Bjørn's trio often alternated with that of Niels Brøndsted. In October 1966, pianist *Teddy Tengstedt* (with Bo Stief on bass and Simon Koppel on drums) took over the night job and continued until November 1967, when live music was replaced by a night discotheque. To compensate for this loss of opportunities for Danish musicians, a series of Sunday afternoon concerts was instigated in the autumn of 1968 and under the management of Peter Mikkelsen, presented a lot a Danish groups. After a pause during the summer of 1969, the series was continued the next season under the title of "Jazzspejlet" (the jazz mirror).

Around 1960, only a limited number of Danish jazz musicians had achieved significant skills as soloists, but by the early 'sixties, some were beginning to reach European standards. This was reflected in the Montmartre programmes, where trumpeter *Allan Botschinsky*, who from 1959 had been a mainstay of Jazz Quintet '60 at Vingaarden, started leading a quintet with Bent Jædig (tenor) in 1964, and not only on Mondays; this continued with Ray Pitts on tenor from June 1966. In December of 1968, Botschinsky was a member of Underground Railroad, a quintet which was the first important Danish fusion group and included Pitts on tenor, Kenny Drew (on organ!), Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen on electric bass, and Bjarne Rostvold on drums; in January 1969, no less a figure than Philly Joe Jones, formerly with Miles Davis, had a short stint on drums with the group. With its normal personnel, it was heard again in March 1969, and, with Ole Kock Hansen instead of Drew and under the name of Trouble, in April of 1970.

In November 1964 another trumpeter, *Palle Mikkeltborg*, had taken over the Monday job from Brüel-Brøndsted, and in 1965-66 he normally played the Monday (later Thursday) night engagement with a trio or quartet. From January through June of 1967, Mikkeltborg fronted Teddy Tengstedt's trio on Thursday nights, and by December 1967, Tengstedt and Stief were parts of the (Alex) Riel/(Palle) Mikkeltborg Quintet, which was heard on Mondays with Swedish tenor player Bernt Rosengren. With Niels Brøndsted on piano, the quintet, which had continued on Mondays at the Montmartre, won first prize at a Montreux Jazz Festival competition in June, 1968, and, as part of the prize, the group was invited to take part in the Newport Jazz Festival a month later.

Of later Mikkeltborg groups to play the Montmartre, the Riel/Mikkeltborg Octet had its premiere in March 1972, after three months changing its name to the R/M V8 (after a popular vegetable drink); in April 1972, Mikkeltborg was heard with a Danish-Norwegian All Star group, with Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek and

drummer Jon Christensen plus Danish pianist Thomas Clausen and bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen; and in the first half of 1974 he often played with Jesper Zeuthen (tenor) and Kasper Winding (drums) in *Witch Doctor's Son*, led by South African bass player Johnny Dyani.

Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, who played such an important role in the house rhythm groups, also had jobs as a leader, starting with a sextet in 1965. During the spring of 1974, he had a quintet with Allan Botschinsky, pianist Ole Kock Hansen and Alex Riel.

Many other musicians who were or became part of the Danish jazz establishment ought to be mentioned, especially after 1970, when the number of professional musicians with at least a European standard had grown considerably and the most important bands with a contemporary orientation were heard at intervals. Instead of going into this, I should like to point out two other tendencies in which the Montmartre played a particular role.

One concerns Danish avantgarde or free jazz. The Brüel-Tchicai quintet in the autumn of 1962 had reflected *some* of the developments in American jazz in the years around 1960, especially Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor and their breaking down of traditional forms. However, it was left to another group of musicians to draw more radical conclusions from these renewals. This was symbolized, so to speak, when "a young quartet" replaced what was then a Brüel/Pitts-quintet on Mondays, starting in March 1963. A few months later Brüel was back, but the young group, now known as the (Franz) Beckerlee Quartet kept their Monday job, even if it was limited to the first hour of the evening, 8 to 9 p.m. In 1964 it changed its name to the *Contemporary Jazz Quartet*, keeping its Monday hour and gaining a small group of local listeners, who were particularly interested in Beckerlee's alto and Hugh Steinmetz' trumpet, reflecting their American idols, altoist Ornette Coleman and trumpeter Don Cherry, as well as the instrumentation of the 1958-61 Coleman Quartet with its bass/drums foundation.

During the engagement of the Albert Ayler Quartet in September 1964, the CJQ played the first hour of the Ayler evenings, then reverted to sharing Mondays with Brüel as before. But in November, in another significant change, both groups were replaced by a new quintet of a rather more conservative persuasion, led by Palle Mikkelborg. The public for the CJQ had remained very restricted and remained thus, even after the Q had come to mean *Quintet* with the addition of tenor player Niels Harrit in 1966. In 1969, Beckerlee finally gave up, the group was dissolved, and as an electric guitarist under the influence of Jimi Hendrix, he commenced a new career by starting up the somewhat more successful rock group *Gasolin'*.

This was also the time of Danish rock-jazz, as represented by three groups which all included jazz musicians playing in a strongly rock-influenced style while keeping their jazz credentials. One of these groups, Burnin' Red Ivanhoe, had no special connection to the Montmartre, but the other two had. The oldest of these, *The Maxwells*, had started as a rock 'n' roll group around 1963, but in 1966 they added horns (trombonist Kjeld Ipsen, saxophonists Bent Hesselmann and Torben Enghoff) and started working with impulses from jazz as well as from Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention. In the spring of 1968 the group added saxophonist Niels Harrit and took over the Montmartre Mondays from the Riel/Mikkelborg group, staying on for several months. It again had the Monday job in the autumn of 1969, but by the end of the year, Ipsen and Harrit had left the group, which was dissolved in 1970.

The third of the rock-jazz groups, *Blue Sun*, mainly had a jazz background when it was started in the summer of 1969 with bassist Poul Ehlers as its leader. Among the other six musicians were two who went on to become leading Danish solists, saxophonist Jesper Zeuthen and pianist Jan Kaspersen. An important inspiration for Kaspersen and the rest of the group was the music of Dollar Brand, and in the spring of 1970 - after *Blue Sun* had played for two weeks in March - a collaboration was planned with the South African pianist. After a few days in May, however, following a dispute about the group's fee, *Blue Sun* withdrew from the arrangement. The group disbanded in February of 1971.

During the period when *The Maxwells* played *The Montmartre*, and inspired by concerts in Denmark by American rock groups in the late sixties, light shows were introduced in *Store Regnegade*. John Jørgensen gained quite a reputation with his light projections, which stressed that the jazz house was still abreast with current developments in the world of music.

III. 1975-76: The end

Even though *The Montmartre* had closed in September 1974, the jazz house was not quite dead yet. On February 27, 1975, partly renovated, it reopened under new management, without the programming expertise of the jazz musicians' association, and without the public support which had been administered by the association. Since March 1963, its name had been *Jazzhus Montmartre*, but now it reverted to the *Café* designation. By November of the same year, nevertheless, it was already for sale, and in late January 1976, a group of six prospective buyers presented themselves. They never got the chance to carry on the tradition, as the

owner of the premises, Alex Friedman, a lawyer, preferred to make the upper floors into apartments, and the ground floor into an office.

Thus, on Sunday, February 15, 1976, the last music was played at the address. Several Danish groups took part in an extended program, starting at 5 p.m., but Dexter Gordon, who was supposed to have taken part in the funeral session, could not make it due to illness. He had, however, been there when the Montmartre opened for its last round in late February 1975, and fittingly, his accompanists were the Kenny Drew Trio with Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and Ed Thigpen (drums).

Even though in its last Store Regnegade reincarnation the Montmartre did not have the resources of its best earlier years, some valuable music *was* played during the last year. There were still some great tenor players on the stage, Gordon returning with the Drew Trio in April and May, Clifford Jordan being heard with his own quartet (with pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Billy Higgins) in April, and Johnny Griffin coming by with Art Taylor in May. Jimmy Heath was even heard twice, in March and in October, both times as one of the Heath Bros. (the other two being bassist Percy and drummer Al), with Kenny Drew added on piano in March and Stanley Cowell in October.

Then there was Duke Jordan in early March, the Elvin Jones Quartet in June, and the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Big Band in September. However, the most memorable engagements were probably those of saxophonists *Warne Marsh* and *Lee Konitz* in December 1975, the last important visits before the place was closed a month and a half later. Marsh was brought to Denmark in November by the Danish non-profit organization Jazz Exchange (like Duke Jordan two years earlier), and after his solo debut at the Montmartre, the opportunity arose for a reunion with Konitz, his old co-student and partner from the Lennie Tristano days around 1950. The two had not played together for ten years, and at first neither of them was too enthusiastic about the project. Furthermore, the excellent Danish accompaniment chosen for them was not stylistically compatible, but when Marsh and Konitz returned between Christmas and New Year they had found each other and brought a British-American rhythm group which knew how to accompany them. Fortunately, this last Marsh/Konitz group was captured live at the Montmartre, a memory of the final collaboration of two great saxophone players and of the last great jazz visit to Store Regnegade.

In closing, it should be mentioned, though, that in February 1976, a few weeks before the curtain went down, *Palle Mikkelborg* introduced one of his most important groups. This was Entrance, at this point comprising Palle Nehammer (tenor), Thomas Clausen (piano), Bo Stief (bass) and Kasper Winding (drums).

So, by February of 1976 the old Montmartre was dead, to the deep regret of jazz musicians and jazz public. A new Montmartre was born seven months later, at another address (41 Nørregade, the former location of Adlon, the night-club which had housed the first Danish jazz band of some renown back in 1923) and with a new person at the helm, Kay Sørensen, who came to be known affectionately as “Jazz-Kay.” This Montmartre existed until 1994, but had become less and less of a jazz house since the death of Sørensen in 1988. In 1977, Jazz-Kay had been awarded the prestigious PH (Poul Henningsen) prize for his contribution to Danish jazz life. In a gesture typical of his generosity, he passed on the prize to Herluf Kamp-Larsen, who certainly deserved it.

From music in the bop and neo-bop mainstream to great swing masters to sixties-avantgarde to cool jazz to modal music to fusion, and from American to Danish to other-European to African jazz - those were the main elements in the musical spectrum covered by Café/Jazzhus Montmartre during the Store Regnegade years. With few exceptions, this was accomplished without commercial concessions, the music being the main consideration for the people in charge. Twenty years after the gateway was closed to musical activities, “the old Montmartre” remains an unsurpassed chapter in the history of Danish jazz life.

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Music at the Montmartre on records

The music that was played at the Montmartre in Store Regnegade has to a large extent been documented on records. Some of these contain live recordings done on the premises, others are taken from radio transmissions that were taped by enterprising collectors. The following list is an attempt at a chronological survey of this material, but does not go into details concerning personnel and individual titles on the records. Nor have all releases been included; the perspective on releases is a Danish one, and when an LP has been transferred to CD, only the latter issue is listed.

For the few LPs the label is mentioned; CDs are identified by their prefixes, as follows: *BLCD*: Black Lion; *MBCD*: Magnetic; *SCCD*: SteepleChase; *STCD*: Storyville - while *846.630-2* is a Mercury CD box.

1962

- Nov. 23 **Cecil Taylor**: Live at the Café Montmartre. Debut DEB-138.
- Nov. 23 **Cecil Taylor**: Nefertiti, The Beautiful One Has Come. Debut DEB-148.
- Nov. 28 **Dexter Gordon**: Cry My a River (also Atli Bjørn, June 3, 64).
SCCD-36004.

1963

- Jan. 13-14 **Don Byas**: A Night In Tunisia. BLCD 760136.
- Jan. 13-14 **Don Byas**: Walkin'. BLCD 760167.
- Oct. 3 **Sahib Shihab**: Conversations. BLCD 760169.
- Oct. 28 **Roland Kirk**: The Complete Mercury Recordings. 846.630-2 (11 CDs)
- Nov. 11 **Archie Shepp/The New York Contemporary Five**. STCD 8209.
- Nov. 21 **Archie Shepp-Lars Gullin**: The House I Live In. SCCD-36013.
- Dec. 5 **Kenny Dorham**: Scandia Skies. SCCD-36011.
- Dec. 19 **Kenny Dorham**: Short Story. SCCD-36010.

1964

- June 3 **Atli Bjørn**: Cry My a River (also Dexter Gordon, Nov. 28, 62).
SCCD-36004.
- June 11 **Dexter Gordon**: Cheese Cake. SCCD-36008.
- June 25 **Dexter Gordon**: King Neptune. SCCD-36012.
- July 9 **Dexter Gordon**: I Want More. SCCD-36015.
- July 23 **Dexter Gordon**: Love For Sale. SCCD-36018.
- Aug. 6 **Dexter Gordon**: It's You Or No One. SCCD-36022.
- Aug. 20 **Dexter Gordon**: Billie's Bounce. SCCD-36028.

1965

- Jan. 30 **Ben Webster:** Stormy Weather. BLCD 760108.
Jan. 30 **Dollar Brand:** 'Round Midnight At the Montmartre. BLCD 760111.
Jan. 30 **Dollar Brand:** Anatomy of a South African Village. BLCD 760162.
Jan. 31 **Ben Webster:** Gone With the Wind. BLCD 760125.
Mar. 18 **Stuff Smith:** Live at the Montmartre. STCD 4142.
Apr. 15 **Brew Moore:** If I Had You. SCCD-36016.
Apr. 29 **Brew Moore:** I Should Care. SCCD-36019.

1966

- March **Don Cherry:** Live at "The Montmartre", Vol. I & II. MRCD 111 & 112.

1967

- Mar. 30-31 **Johnny Griffin:** The Man I Love. BLCD 760107.
July 20 **Dexter Gordon:** Both Sides of Midnight. BLCD 760103.
July 20 **Dexter Gordon:** Body and Soul. BLCD 760118.
July 21 **Dexter Gordon:** Take the "A" Train. BLCD 760133.

1971

- Sep. 2 **Hampton Hawes:** Live at the Montmartre. BLCD 760202.

1972

- Mar. 23 **Sevda:** Live at Jazzhus Montmartre. Caprice RIKS LP 41.
Aug. 5 **Jackie McLean:** Live At Montmartre. SCCD-31001.

1973

- Jan. 11 **Ben Webster:** My Man. SCCD-31008.
Jan. 12 as for Jan. 11.
Apr. 19 as for Jan. 11.
Apr. 25&30 **Joe Albany:** Birdtown Birds. SCCD-31003.
July 20-21 **Jackie McLean-Dexter Gordon:** The Meeting. SCCD-31006.
July 20-21 **Jackie McLean-Dexter Gordon:** The Source. SCCD-31020.

1975

- Dec. 3,4,5 **Warne March-Lee Konitz:** Live at the Club Montmartre, Vol. 1. STCD 8201.
Dec. 3,4,5 **Warne March-Lee Konitz:** Live at "Montmartre", Vol. 3. STCD 8203.
Dec. 27 **Warne March-Lee Konitz:** Live at "Montmartre", Vol. 3. STCD 8203.
Dec. 27 **Warne March-Lee Konitz:** Live at the Club Montmartre, Vol. 2. STCD 8202.

NOTES

1. Gjedsted 1986.
2. Wiedemann 1982, I, 202.
3. For a taste of this milieu, see Christiansen 1994.
4. Interview, January 26, 1996.
5. A whole article could, and perhaps ought to, be written about the many people in Kamp-Larsen's employ who contributed to the proceedings, behind or in front of the curtains. Apart from Ole Sliber, some of them were waiters Harvey Sand, Keld Fjordside and Kai Führer, bartender Jens Bloch, cloakroom attendants Hakkedak (Jan Klitgaard Sørensen) and Winnie Christiansen, and in the kitchen, Susanne Knudsen (nee Andersen), Helene Mikkelsen and Mae Mezzrow (widow of Mezz M.).