



LISTAHÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS
Iceland University of the Arts

The Fragility of Faroese Jazz

Final report MMuS/NAIP: Arnold Ludvig 2019

Instructor: Erik Deluca, PhD

IUA - LOK020JTM: NAIP Professional Integration II

April 25th 2019

ABSTRACT

In this essay, I share my research on the history of Jazz in the Faroe Islands. This research includes participant observation and interviews with interlocutors. This essay concludes with a description of my current artistic practice and how it is inextricably linked to the Faroese jazz scene. It is my hope that this essay will stimulate a discussion amongst musicians, composers, historians, journalists, and audience members about the evolution and development of jazz in the Faroe Islands.

TABLE OF CONTENT

<i>ABSTRACT</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>TABLE OF CONTENT</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>THE AFRICAN DIASPORA</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>EARLY JAZZ IN THE FAROE ISLANDS - 1920-30</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>PERLAN</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>FOREIGN GUEST MUSICIANS</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>TUTL RECORDS - THE PERLAN SOUND</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>THE MAYOR'S BROKEN PROMISE</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>PHOENIX RISING</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>TÓRSHAVNAR JAZZ, FÓLKA OG BLUES FESTIVAL (1984-2003)</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>FAROESE JAZZ AND ITS CHALLENGES</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>JAZZ IN THE FAROE ISLANDS 2019</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>BLUEPRINT - PERLAN TO PRESENT</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>PRESENT TO FUTURE - QUINTET ALBUM PROJECT</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>RESEARCH ON FAROESE JAZZ HISTORY CONTINUED</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>BIOGRAPHY</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>DISCOGRAPHY</i>	<i>31</i>

INTRODUCTION

A pearl is a hard lustrous mass formed within the shell of a pinctada oyster. These pearls are often referred to as gems (precious stones). Interestingly, an important history of jazz in the Faroe Islands is contained within a club, in Tórshavn (the capital city of the Faroe Islands) called PERLAN (The Pearl).¹ This jazz gem cultivated an important era for the genre in the Faroe Islands. In the following essay, I will describe my research on the history of Jazz in the Faroe Islands as a participant, which began at PERLAN in 1981, when my first band, PLAY BOYS (later named PLÚMM) got permission to rehearse at the club.

In this text, I will document traces of this scene through my participation, primary sources, and through personally conducted interviews with key figures of the scene (most notably Kristian Blak,² Elin Brimheim Heinesen, and Brandur Øssursson).³ Havnar Jazzfelag (HJF), the first Faroese organized jazz association was founded in 1975, by Kristian Blak, Klaus Reistrup, Elin Brimheim Heinesen, Ívar Bæretsen and others. They began organizing weekly jazz concerts that year in a few different venues, that they rented in Tórshavn, such as Havnar Klubbi and B36 Húsið. In 1976, HJF began publishing their own jazz magazine, JAZZ TÍÐINDI (Jazz News). In 1977, HJF began recording and releasing Faroese jazz records and founded TUTL Records in 1979. From 1981 – 1983, PERLAN was the first and only steady HJF venue. I believe that this venue is the most important venue in the history of Jazz in the Faroe Islands.

¹ Tórshavn's jazz association, Havnar Jazzfelag (HJF) built up a steady and vibrant milieu at PERLAN and organized weekly concerts there, from 1981 to 1983.

² Rice, Timothy, James Porter, and Chris Goertzen. *Europe*. Garland Pub., 2000. page 470, "The Danish composer and pianist, Kristian Blak (b. 1947), went to the Faroe Islands when he was 25 years old and is now a major influence in local music life. He is responsible for the development of the Tórshavn Jazz Club; Players of Hoydølum, a folk-music organization; the record company TUTL; and the pan-Nordic performance group Yggdrasil"

³ I asked these jazz organizers if they were interested and willing to participate in my research through interviews. Kristian, Elin, and Brandur gladly obliged and have contributed immeasurable value to this paper through these interviews in 2019. They are genuinely excited that I am writing this history, because it has not been culled together. My research for this paper, with focus on the PERLAN era has inspired me to continue this research and write a full and comprehensive account on the entire history of jazz in the Faroe Islands for a later publication.

THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

In my research, I study how much knowledge the young Jazz musicians in the Faroe Islands, in the 1920s, actually had about the African diaspora and the roots of the music they were playing in Tórshavn. I have discovered that they played a variety of dance music, including music by Jack Hylton's Jazz Band from Britain, which I find sounds like an imitation of New Orleans jazz, but did they know where it actually came from?

One of the supreme ironies of the history of New Orleans jazz is that so much of it took place in Chicago.⁴ By the early 1920s, the center of the jazz world had clearly shifted northward. New Orleans musicians continued to dominate the idiom, but they were now operating far afield from their native soil. Well before the middle of the decade, a large cadre of major New Orleans jazz musicians were making their reputations in other locales — Jelly Roll Morton left New Orleans around 1908 ; Freddie Keppard departed in 1914 (if not earlier); Sidney Bechet in 1916, Jimmie Noone in 1917, King Oliver in 1918, Kid Ory in 1919, Johnny Dodds around that same time, Baby Dodds in 1921, and Louis Armstrong in 1922. These moves may have begun as brief stints on the road, but in the end proved all but permanent. Jazz was on the move and would sweep the world in the 20th century.

When I discovered jazz in the Faroe Islands, in 1981, I really thought that jazz in this country had started with HJF in 1975. Then I heard people at the club talking about these stories about early jazz on the islands in the 1920s. In 1992, HJF published articles by Erhard Jacobsen and Kristian Blak in *JAZZ TÍÐINDI* about early Faroese jazz for its members to read, but the general public remains uneducated about its history.

⁴ Gioia, Ted. *The History of Jazz*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Page 43. Accessed 16.03.2019.

EARLY JAZZ IN THE FAROE ISLANDS - 1920-30

Jazz had found its way from New Orleans to this little North Atlantic archipelago as early as in the 1920s, in the form of gramophone records. The Faroese public embraced jazz music as a mainstream cultural phenomenon, that revolved around social dancing. Far too little is known about this fact among young people in the general Faroese public today. I am also doubtful of the knowledge Faroese people have about the origins of jazz, as an African American art form. Only a few stories on the subject appeared in the local jazz club members magazine, back in 1992, but not in any of the mainstream media outlets.

The first Faroese jazz bands started in the 1920s. Faroese pianist, Andreas Restorff founded Jazzband Triumph, along with some of his schoolmates in 1926 at the age of 16. In an interview by Kristian Blak, for his 1992 article in *Jazz Tíðindi*, he recalls the beginning of his career as a jazz pianist. “We were very passionate about music. In the beginning, we had an alto saxophone, a bass-drum and a snare, a clarinet, two banjos, and a piano. We had ordered some of these instruments from Paris. Our very first dance gig was a “Lady’s Ball” for Føroya Banki (now Bank Nordic). Steingrím Winther, a guest at the ball told me, that he had never known how to dance, but that he couldn’t help it and had to dance to those rhythms we were playing.”⁵ By this account, it sounds like they were really swinging, like they did on those gramophone records.

In Kristian’s interview, Andreas explains that they learned the music by memory from listening to gramophone records with the latest popular music. He said that they rehearsed a lot and that they were serious about the music. They were ambitious young amateurs. Jazzband Triumph was very much up to date with the latest jazz out of Denmark. According to Andreas, they ordered these gramophone records from Denmark, with jazz bands that were mostly from England and Denmark. He does not mention any American names. The records were shipped to the Faroe Islands by the cargo ship, *Tjaldur*, that sailed between Copenhagen and Tórshavn on a monthly basis.

⁵ Andreas Restorff, Interview, *Jazzur í Føroyum í 1920-30*, *Jazz Tíðindi* 1980. Accessed 25.02.2019.



Jazzband Triumph. *Uttan iva kann sigast, at Goggan spratt úr hesum orkestrinum. Tónleikararnir á myndini eru frá vinstru: Verland Johansen, altsax (við einari bratsch frammanfyri), Christian Restorff, violin, Niels Restorff, altsax (sopransax hevur hann frammanfyri sær), Andrias Restorff við klaverið, hond undir kinn, Niels í Stórustovu, baritonsax, og uttast til høgru við trummurnar situr Johan Ziska (leggið til merkis ljóskontaktirnar á stórutrummu. Tøkniligir snillingar hava verið tá í tíðini, eins og nú!).*

JAZZ TÍÐINDI 2/1992 15

JAZZBAND TRIUMPH, founded in 1926, Jazzur í Føroyum 192-1930, Article in Jazz Tíðindi 2, 1992

Jazzband Triumph played mostly dance gigs at Havnar Klubbi, the oldest of its kind in the Danish Kingdom.⁶ They also played at parties for banks and companies and at weddings. Andreas does not mention any specific song titles, but the instrumentation suggests that they played music that sounded like New Orleans jazz. He recalls that they played dance music, like waltzes, rhumbas and jazz. I wonder if they listened to records by Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Kid Ory, and others out of New Orleans. The question is how much they knew in 1926 about the backstory, the origins of this new art form that was sweeping Europe. It seems that it was a matter of following that new trend, rather than recognizing that it was indeed an African American art form.

Jazzband Triumph changed their name to GOGGAN in the 1930s and kept on playing until 1976, with a break during WWII. In 1972, Brandur Øssursson formed TÓRSHAVNAR STÓRBAND (Big Band), which he conducted until 1979. Interestingly, this band included Andres Restorff, the pianist from Jazzband Triumph and Goggan. In my interview with Brandur,

⁶ Havnar Klubbi, founded in 1799. HJF often rented this venue for jazz events in the 1970s and 1980s. Accessed 25.02.2019.

he said, “The big band never became a professional band, but we enjoyed playing quite a few jazz arrangements”.⁷ He recalls playing Glenn Miller medleys and Ellington tunes, such as Mood Indigo.

In 1994, Faroese saxophonist and music teacher, Eirikur Skála revived TÓRSHAVNAR BIG BAND and continued the work of Brandur Øssursson and Andreas Restorff before him. In 2011, they released the album, “Úr Sangskattinum” with popular Faroese standards arranged by pianist/composer/arranger, Magnus Johannessen. The band is still very active today. In January 2019, they played music by Faroese composers at the Nordic House, for Vetrarjazz (Winter Jazz) Festival 2019.⁸ They played music by Herluf Lutzen, Magnus Johannessen, Hans Petur í Brekkunum, Atli Petersen and myself, Arnold Ludvig.



Tórshavnar Big Band, Vetrarjazz 2019, Nordic House, photo: Tórshavnar Big Band facebook page

Although there were periods with little or no activity, it is interesting to see the connection that Andreas Restorff, Brandur Øssursson, and Eirikur Skála have to this one jazz band, that has morphed through time and has survived extinction for nearly one hundred years in the Faroe Islands, almost as long as jazz itself.

⁷ Personal skype interview with Brandur Øssursson on 14.02.2019.

⁸ "Tórshavnar Big Band - Kunning.fo." http://kunning.fo/event_show.php?Id=7812&l=fo. Accessed 24.04.2019.



PERLAN 1960. Photo by Birthe Bech. (Owner: Birgar Johannesen)



PERLAN 1981. Brandur Øssursson playing alto saxophone at a jazz session. Jazz Tíðindi 2, 1981

PERLAN

Although only a short stint between 1981-83, the PERLAN era was arguably the most creative and productive era in Faroese jazz history. I believe this, because it was a steady venue, presenting 3-4 weekly concerts and the stage was always ready for use, fully equipped with a drum set, bass- and guitar-amps, a Fender Rhodes, and an upright piano. I remember hearing rehearsals almost every time I walked by PERLAN. Kristian Blak and the HJF founders named the organization Havnar Jazzfelag and people referred to the club as either PERLAN or JAZZURIN. It started as a club for people interested in jazz, but HJF was and still is, a very open minded club with lots of room for other genres, such as folk and rock.

One of the main objectives of the jazz club was to invite foreign jazz, rock, and folk musicians to collaborate with Faroese musicians, to record albums, and perform with them at the club. At the time, these collaborations lifted the level of musicianship among the local musicians and inspired the next generation - my generation, to become like them one day. Foreign guests, such as Danish bassist, Jens Jefsen, and others, occasionally held jazz workshops at the club and taught local musicians the basics of jazz. In the off hours, PERLAN was used as a rehearsal space, which provided the necessary consistency to the jazz scene, where local musicians spent more time and energy than ever before, on improving their jazz chops. This was a big leap from those makeshift venues in the past, that HJF used to rent for one night at a time.

Páll Poulsen, author in *JAZZ TÍÐINDI* was very optimistic in his article about PERLAN being the epicenter for rhythmic music in the Faroe Islands. He wrote about there being no shortage of support from politicians, banks, and funds for sustaining the scene. He says, in closing: “During the 6 years of HJFs existence, an evolution has taken place in the Faroese jazz and rhythmic music scene. This is largely thanks to the many international musicians that HJF had invited to PERLAN. They helped make the Faroe Islands visible in Europe, mostly in the Nordic states, as a “jazz-nation”.⁹

Part-time guitarist, Janus Petersen had a more pessimistic view on the state of the jazz scene in 1979, two years before the PERLAN era. He said, in an interview, “If you play folk music, you might get a cultural grant to make an album, but the politicians deem jazz to be noise in their ears. If you play in a dance band, you can make a bit of money on the side, but I think that we should get organized and create a musicians union and fight for better conditions”¹⁰.

Conditions had clearly improved with PERLAN as the epicenter, but it was still a non-profit organization with a voluntary workforce who sacrificed a lot of their time and energy

⁹ Páll Poulsen, “Perlan - Epicenter for rhythmic music in the Faroes”, *Jazz Tíðindi*, 2, 1981. Accessed 21.03. 2019.

¹⁰ Janus Petersen, “A musicians union would help, say young musicians”, *Jazz Tíðindi*, 1979. Accessed 21.03.2019.

on keeping the jazz club alive. HJFs economy was relying on income from membership fees, ticket sales at the club, and cultural grants. Besides administering the club, all proceeds went towards paying visiting foreign musicians' fees and travel expenses. The goodwill from Tórshavn City Hall at the time allowed for HJF to use PERLAN rent free, which made things easier on the clubs economy.

HJF was first and foremost driven by a collective interest in jazz among musicians and others. The local jazz musicians also played other genres in other bands, like dance bands to make a bit of money from playing music. The jazz-club mixed up their event schedule from time to time and organized dance nights on weekends with popular local dance bands. This was a means to make some extra money to help the club's economy.

síða 14 Jazztíðindi

Vitjanir hjá Jazzfelagnum gjøgnum árin:

Hvat er tað, sum hevur sett dóm á Jazzfelagið? Utan Jazzfelagið ber illa til at hugsa sær allar tær fjølbroyttu og kendu vitjanirnar frá útheiminum. Longu frá byrjan av vísit felagið at tað tordi at taka stig til og skipa soleiðis fyrri, at heimskendir tónleikarir innan rytmiskan tónleik fingtu høvi at koma higar.

Fyrsta útlenska vitjanin, Jazzfelagið fekk, var Karsten Vogel úr Danmark. Tað var í juni 1976. Hetta var tó ikki fyrstu ferð Karsten var í Føroyum, og tað skuldi seinni og ofta vísa seg, at tað heldur ikki var seinastu ferð. Hann er ein av teimum útlendingunum, sum hava vitjað oftast aftur higar. Haraft- rat luttekur hann á fleiri plátuinnspe- lingtonum, ið Jazzfelagið og Tuti hava staðið fyrri.

Í mars mánað sama ár kom heims- kendi jazz-tónleikarin til Føroya at vitja Jazzfelagið, og má hetta sigast at vera ein søgulig hending hjá felagnum. Hóast áhugin ikki var av tí mesta (200 fólk til konsertina), so var tað eitt stórt stig, ið felagið tók við hesi innbjóðing. Hjá teimum, ið vóru til konsertina varð hetta eitt satt upplivsi.

Í juli '77 kom danski bólkurin «Drivhuset» á vitjan. Hesin bólkurin spældi bæði rock- og jazztónleik. Teir spældu í Havn og í Fuglafirði. Seinni um heystið vóru fleiri aðrar vitjanir úr hinum Norðurlondunum. M.a. var ein norskur leiðbeinari í jazztónleiki her í nakra dagar. Um somu tíð vóru

triggið andar norðurlenskar jazz- vitjana til Jazzfelagið. Norski bass- spælarin Bjørn Alterhaug var her í eina viku í august. Fyrst í september vitjaði Arild Andersen Kvartett í nakra dagar. Bert fíra dagar seinni var kendi danski ragtime klaverspæl- arin Peter Fahrenholtz og vitjaði Jazz- felagið.

1978 var ikki av teimum stóru árunum hvat útlenskum vitjanum «Þvíkur. Men tað sum man ikki fær í negd, fær man í kvalltíð. Í apríl hetta árið var danski bólkurin Bazar her og vitjaði við kendari manning úr Savage Rose. Hesin bólkurin spældi alt frá jazz til bulgarskan fólkatónleik m.a. beat og rock eisini. Seinni hetta árið, í november, var danski kontrabasstúr- in Jens Jensen og vitjaði Jazzfelagið. Meðan hann var her vórðu skeið í bass- spæli hildin og undirtakan var góð. Hann spældi eisini til konsert saman við Ólavi Øster og Kristiani Blak.

1979 gjørdist aftur eitt ár við nógvum vitjanum uttanefir. Eitt, ið sermerkti hetta árið var, at felagið beði vitjanir lár øllum hinum Norðurlondunum uttan Álandi. Vitjanirnar í 1979 vóru við: Bjørn Alterhaug og Carl Håkon Wandeland, Astmund Bjørken og Svein Væren úr Norra. Mwendo Dawa úr Svøríki. Eero Koivistoinen úr Finlandi.



Karsten Vogel.



Dexter Gordon.

Skjótt kom rættilig gongd á útlend- sku vitjanirnar. Longu tað fyrsta hálfva árið vóru ikki færri enn fýra útlenskar vitjanir til Jazzfelagið. Um- framt Karsten Vogel komu Niels Husums Sextet og Beaver Service úr Danmark og Lektalaget úr Svøríki. Árið 1977 gjørdist ikki minni fjølbroytt og áhugavert hvat viðlekar útlenskarar vitjan. Í januar mánað hetta

Article in Jazz Tíðindi 2, 1981.¹¹

¹¹ Foreign guests to HJF over the years include well known Danish saxophonist, Karsten Vogel and the legendary African American saxophonist, Dexter Gordon, who visited in 1977. Accessed 10.04.2019.

FOREIGN GUEST MUSICIANS

In 1981, JAZZ TÍÐINDI kept the jazz-club members up to date with articles about the jazz-club's activities in PERLAN and ambitious album projects. I felt a sense of excitement in the air. Something new and different was happening in Faroese music that I wanted to be part of. HJF boasted about new album projects with people like Danish saxophonist and composer, Karsten Vogel, who was a frequent guest of the club. The club's history of invited foreign guests include the likes of legendary, African American saxophonists, Dexter Gordon in 1977, John Tchicai, and jazz violinist, Claude "Fiddler" Williams,¹² in 1980.

Danish bassist, Jens Jepsen was asked about his experience of PERLAN, when he played there with local musicians: "It is a decent venue to play in - quite nice. It has a cozy vibe and people seem to thrive here. HJF has created the basis for the Faroese jazz scene in PERLAN".¹³ It was a vibrant milieu for young and aspiring musicians at the time. PERLAN offered the best of the best, of both local musicians and many well known jazz musicians visiting from abroad. It was incredible. It inspired me to dream of becoming like them, make my own music, release it on TUTL and perform it at PERLAN.¹⁴



Herluf Lützen, Jóhannus á Rógvu, Jens Jepsen and Sunleif Rasmussen, PERLAN 1981

¹² NEA National Heritage Fellowship, Claude "Fiddler" Williams Bio, "In 1989 was inducted into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame" <https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/fellows/claude-fiddler-williams>. Accessed 12.04.2019.

¹³ Jazz Tíðindi 2, 1981 - Interview with Danish jazz bassist, Jens Jepsen. Accessed 12.04.2019.

¹⁴ I discuss how PERLAN inspired me further, in the chapter, BLUEPRINT - PERLAN TO PRESENT (page 23)

HJF worked closely with the folk band, Spælímennirnir Í Hoydølum (SDH) and the folk music association. The jazz club reflected a kind of artsy hippie culture common in Scandinavia in the 1970s and 80s, where jazz and folk musicians intermingled. Students from Tórshavn's college often attended workshops and jam sessions at PERLAN, exploring the jazz, rock, folk, and blues genres. Kristian Blak explained, "We were cultivating a semi-academic milieu at PERLAN, where our foreign guest musicians gave concerts and workshops".¹⁵ This gave local musicians the opportunity to explore the current trends in the countries around us. PERLAN played a part in fostering folk singers/musicians, such as Kári P (Petersen) and Hanus Johansen, who became some of the best known Faroese folk artists.

The PERLAN milieu directly influenced the sound of new Faroese music in the 1980s. This sound started to appear on records, such as FRÆNDUR's first and second albums, which included singer, Hanus Johansen and Danish saxophonist, Holger Laumann, who was a frequent guest at the club. Holger Laumann¹⁶ is arguably the most famous foreign musician, in Faroese jazz history. In 1989, we recorded the debut album, Terji & Føstufressar, with PLÚMM & Holger Laumann, which was released in February 1990 and went on to become the best selling album in the history of Faroese music. This album has a jazzy flavour that reflects PERLAN's influence on the PLÚMM musicians and it includes the unmistakable signature sound of Holger Laumann's tenor and soprano saxophones, characteristic of the PERLAN sound.

¹⁵ Personal skype interview with Kristian Blak on 05.02.2019.

¹⁶ "Holger Laumann | Discography & Songs | Discogs." <https://www.discogs.com/artist/758016-Holger-Laumann>. Accessed 24.04.2019.

TUTL RECORDS - THE PERLAN SOUND

The very first jazz record on TUTL was the single vinyl, CALYPSO in C, by Holger Laumann & KRÆKLINGAR released in 1977, with CHERRY TREE, on the B side. Between then and 1982, TUTL released the jazz LPs, JAZZ í FØROYUM 1, 2, and 3. The compilation album, JAZZ í FØROYUM (1977-1982) released in 2015 represents the productive and vibrant milieu, that HJF had created, which reached its high point during the golden age at PERLAN. My discovery of the existence of Faroese jazz came about in 1980, upon hearing some of these early TUTL records, while hanging out with my PLAY BOYS band mates. Then later, in 1981, after hearing the music from those records being played live at PERLAN, by some of the same musicians, I fell in love with that sound. When I listen back to these records now, I always get images of PERLAN in my mind.



Kræklingar (FO) & Holger Laumann (DK) Earliest jazz records released in the Faroe Islands. (TUTL)¹⁷

The PERLAN sound can be described as being a Nordic/folk/latin/rock/jazz sound with influences from Faroese, Danish, and Swedish folk songs mixed with influences from modern fusion and American jazz. The latin, rock and fusion elements undoubtedly came in the wake of successful American bands, like Weather Report, Santana, and others at the time. Traditional African-American jazz elements, like the swing-feel came into play with local band, Brandur Øssursson's Septet, who mostly played American jazz standards. Everything else was played with a straight eighth-note feel, except when they played in 6/8 or 12/8 time. Ólavur Øster, guitarist in Kræklingar, said, "What we were playing at PERLAN was not straight-ahead jazz, it was more like FUSION".¹⁸ This is true of the original music on the earliest records released on TUTL, between 1977 - 1982.

The PERLAN sound was co-created by those respective composers/musicians, Kristian Blak (piano), Karsten Vogel (saxophones), Holger Laumann (saxophones), Jóhannus á Rógvu

¹⁷ Jazz í Føroyum. (1977-82). Tutl Records HJF 1/2/4/9, 2000, CD. Accessed 10.04.2019.

¹⁸ Ólavur Øster, 2011, "Minnist Tú Enn? 5:13", TV series on Faroese music, KvF 2011 <http://kvf.fo/dokumentarurin?sid=16389>. Accessed 10.04.2019.

(bass), Ólavur Øster (guitar), Thorben Kjær (piano), Jesper Thorup (drums), and musicians like Kolbein Simonsen (bass), Jan Jacobsen (drums), Sunleif Rasmussen (piano), Eskild Romme (saxophones), Ernst Dalsgarð (flute), Elin B. Heinesen (vocals) and many others.



Kristian Blak and Karsten Vogel, Jazz Tíðindi 1979

THE MAYOR'S BROKEN PROMISE

Since before WWII, PERLAN was a very popular restaurant in Tórshavn, until its closing down in 1972. It was located on the second floor in an old wholesale storage building near the harbor, a prime location between Sjómansheimið (Seamen's Hotel) and Havnar Kirkja (Church of Tórshavn). It had a certain nostalgic charm to it. I remember my parents generation talking about PERLAN from the old days and those famous big pork-chops they used to serve there. Tórshavn City Hall had taken over the decaying building after its closing in '72 and its destiny hung in limbo, as they couldn't decide what to do with it. It was no longer in good condition and had lost its former glory, but it sure was a shiny pearl, a gem, for the jazz club.

In 1981, Mayor Poul Michelsen had granted HJF permission to use it as their jazz club and to keep the name PERLAN. He did this upon suggestion by Gunnar Hoydal, City Hall architect.



PERLAN being demolished in 1983 (Photos: "Minnist Tú Enn", TV series on Faroese music, Kvf 2011)

Mayor, Poul Michelsen had promised and assured HJF that he would find a new location for the jazz club, if anything were to happen to PERLAN. That promise was broken¹⁹. In 1983, the Mayor was pressured both politically and by the public, to get PERLAN demolished. It seemed that he listened to the complaint of the famous Faroese author, William Heinesen. Why did William, of all people, go against PERLAN? In 1971, William Heinesen published, *The Lost Musicians*²⁰ (Heinesen 2006), a famous novel inspired by jazz musicians in Tórshavn, in the 1920s, and recounted the poor conditions they worked under. One of these musicians was William's own brother, clarinettist, Stig Heinesen, who became a professional classical musician

¹⁹ Article, "*Perlan gone without replacement venue as promised*", in Faroese newspaper, 14. SEPTEMBER, page 7, 21.09.1983. Accessed 20.04.2019.

²⁰ "The Lost Musicians by William Heinesen : Our Books :: Dedalus Books" 30.11.2006, <http://www.dedalusbooks.com/our-books/reviews.php?id=00000183>. Accessed 24.04.2019.

in Copenhagen, in the 1930s, after having played jazz in the Faroe Islands. In a conversation I had with Faroese jazz guitarist and good friend, Leivur Thomsen, about his research on PERLAN in 2016, he said: “One would have thought that William Heinesen would have sided with the musicians, but instead, he influenced Poul Michelsen, to no longer approve of the jazz club’s activities and ordered the demolition of the building, thus supporting the Mayor’s attempt to kill off jazz in Tórshavn”²¹.

City Hall defended its decision stating that the building was in such bad shape, that they had to take PERLAN down, before it would collapse on itself. According to Kristian Blak, it wasn’t *that* bad, furthermore, City Hall had just changed the roof a few months earlier. Well, like Frank Zappa once said, “Jazz is not dead, it just smells funny”²². With the sweet smell of their hollow victory, City Hall was never able to kill off jazz in Tórshavn, but the demolition of PERLAN, on September 17th, 1983, dealt a devastating blow to HJF.

²¹ Personal telephone conversation with Faroese jazz guitarist, Leivur Thomsen on 24.03.2019

²² Comment by Frank Zappa, “Jazz is not dead, it just smells funny”, Jazz - Reddit." 18.12.2011 https://www.reddit.com/r/Jazz/comments/nh2e5/jazz_is_not_dead_it_just_smells_funny_frank_zappa/. Accessed 08.04.2019

PHOENIX RISING

A major shift had taken place with PERLAN gone in 1983. Most of the local musicians, who played jazz from the beginning of the jazz club in 1975, had given up playing jazz, arguably because of the lack of consistency in the jazz scene after PERLAN, which had served as a rehearsal space in a creative milieu. In the mid 1980s, myself, and my generation's musicians, such as PLÚMM members, Leivur Thomsen, Rógvi á Rógvu, Finnur Hansen, and Magnus Johannessen became the new young torchbearers of jazz, in the Faroe Islands. All of us in PLÚMM had a burning desire to play jazz and our focus had also shifted towards the new jazz festival, Tórshavnar Jazz, Fólka og Blues Festival. We had followed the festival since it started in 1984 and were spending a lot of time practicing jazz, both as a band and individually, dreaming of playing at the festival with PLÚMM.

During this post PERLAN era in the mid 1980s, HJF occasionally organized jazz concerts in some rented venues, such as Discoteque TIFFANI or DALLAS. I got my first opportunity to become an active participant at the HJF jazz club in 1986, when I played for the first time, with the legendary saxophonist and composer, Holger Laumann, at Discoteque TIFFANI. I learned a lot about jazz basics from playing with Holger, an educated musician and music teacher, at The Royal Academy of Music in Århus, Denmark. PLÚMMs confidence grew from these experiences, we really began to believe that we were just as good as any jazz musician from abroad, and began to see the possibility of becoming professional jazz musicians. That is the difference between our generation and the previous ones.

TÓRSHAVNAR JAZZ, FÓLKA OG BLUES FESTIVAL (1984-2003)

In 1984, Astri Luihn wrote the article, “Fra hytte til palass” (From shack to palace), she refers to the major shift that had happened in Tórshavn. The weekly live jazz events at PERLAN, had been reduced to only one week of live jazz at the new annual jazz festival. The article was printed in the program for the first edition of Tórshavnar Jazz, Fólka og Blues Festival organized by Brandur Øssursson. Luihn wrote, “Now it is all over. Only some rocks left, where the barometer of Faroese music once stood. Dear politicians. Please, let this be the beginning of an interesting music history, and not the end”²³.

Luihn²⁴, a Norwegian painter and visual artist living in Tórshavn was a regular at the old PERLAN. She recognized that the milieu there had inspired Brandur Øssursson to create the new jazz festival. In my interview with Brandur Øssursson about this, he said, “Kristian Blak and I, and others, often had conversations at PERLAN about creating a jazz festival”²⁵. When I asked Kristian about this, he replied, “If I had to choose, I’d rather have jazz every week, than only one week each year”²⁶. Kristian was reluctant to have the jazz club involved with the festival, arguably, because that was not the main purpose with the club, and it was a very low point for HJF. Feelings were still hurt by the demolition of PERLAN and the Mayor’s broken promise.

Brandur Øssursson took it upon himself and created the annual festival, that lasted 20 years, from 1984-2003. The festival became the new platform, one week each year, for local and invited foreign musicians, while the local jazz scene had lost its capacity to operate on a weekly basis. The festival was very attractive for both musicians and audiences. It took place at the “palace”, the newly built, NORDIC HOUSE, a huge cultural center with several stages, amazing facilities for concerts, and a hall capacity of over 400 people.

Faroese audiences almost immediately embraced jazz music as a respected art form and showed up in great numbers at the festival. Suddenly, they could hear and experience jazz in a very clean and fine venue. Jazz had become a cool thing in the Faroe Islands. Since the PERLAN days, our ambitions to play at the festival had grown over time. In 1987, PLÚMM premiered at the festival with all original music. We had made it. We were recognized as serious musicians by some of our role models who played at the festival that year, like Danish guitarist, Pierre Dørge, from New Jungle Orchestra, and others.

²³ Astri Luihn, 1984, “*Fra Hytte til palass*”, Article in Tórshavnar Jazz, Fólka og Blús Festival Program

²⁴ “C.V. - Curriculum Vitae - Astri Luihn, Faroese Painter.” http://www.luihn.com/cv_curriculum_vitae.php. Accessed 23.04.2019.

²⁵ Personal skype interview with Brandur Øssursson on 14.02.2019

²⁶ Personal skype interview with Kristian Blak on 05.02.2019



Tórshavnar Jazz, Fólka og Blues Festival 1984-2003 logo designed by Ingvør Nolsøe: HJF was in 2015 given permission to use the logo for their annual Vetrjazz (Vinter Jazz) Festival.

PLÚMM played at the festival each year after that and met many international musicians who made a difference in our lives. In August, 1990, I met Icelandic saxophonist, Sigurður (Siggi) Flosason. He played at the festival with the musicians from the Icelandic fusion band, Mezzoforte, in a band called Fimm Menn Og Ein Kona. Through some effort, Siggi managed to convince me to apply and study jazz at Tónlistarskóli F.Í.H. in Reykjavík, starting in September of that year. I was reluctant at first, because I wanted to go to Copenhagen, but, I applied, got in, and went for it. This changed my life. Three years at F.Í.H. gave me new tools and the keys to open all kinds of new doors. I began composing and improvising with a deeper understanding and clarity of this art form. I felt that I was becoming a real jazz musician. I was starting to live out my dream. None of this would have happened without the existence of PERLAN and Tórshavnar Jazz, Fólka og Blues Festival.

FAROESE JAZZ AND ITS CHALLENGES

To appreciate the challenges that the Faroese jazz scene faces in its fight for survival, it is important to look at the social economic climate that shapes the culture in the Faroe Islands. Since the late 19th century, the fishing industry shaped and nurtured a working class mentality that dominated Faroese culture. Even as late as in the 1980s, music was generally only considered to be a hobby or a function for social dances, but not a profession. The religious moral authority still prohibits music and dancing on any holy days. The alcohol law was finally reformed in 1992, but the prohibition law from 1906, led to an uncivilized alcohol culture in the 1980s. These factors constituted to a very backward society, compared to other Nordic cultures.

One of the aspects that made HJF attractive to me, was their liberal attitudes and openness towards different cultures. In the early 1980s, PERLAN provided a space where individuals could explore and create art in a safe environment and exercise freedom of expression. This ethos was in direct opposition to the working class mindset and the rules of religion. For example. HJF was fined 10.000 DKK for having organized a jazz event on a holy day, in May 1985. On behalf of HJF, Páll Poulsen responded with an article in the Faroese news paper, 14. SEPTEMBER, that the event was indeed legal, because it was a private club event. However, the sheriff didn't budge and applied the rule of law regarding Holy Days.²⁷

HJF was organized as a private club, so that they could legally serve alcohol to its members and thus create an atmosphere, like that of a “normal” jazz club, everywhere else in the world. But PERLAN was arguably seen by the power establishment as having a threatening influence on the culture.



Óli Breckmann, Article, DAGBLADID, May 11th 1983, source: infomedia-dk

²⁷ Páll Poulsen, Article in Faroese newspaper, 14. SEPTEMBER, on 22.01.1985. Accessed 18.04.2019.

Even the word “PERLAN” would come to have very different meanings for different people at the time, depending on who you asked. The jazz club was used as a political football at times. This friction sometimes played out in the media. For example, the right-wing politician and journalist, Óli Breckmann, of Fólkaflokkurin (the Liberal Conservative Party) ran a propaganda article on May 11th, 1983, in his party’s paper, DAGBLAÐIÐ against a peace demonstration, in which he wrote, “Perlu-trøll og Setur-snobbar í ørindagongu fyri KGB”²⁸, (in English: Pearl-Trolls and Academic-snobs running errands for the KGB). The socialist party’s paper, SOSIALURIN, responded with a counter article, siding with the peace demonstrators.

The HJF jazz club faced a lot of challenges, right from the start in 1975, and into the 1980s. The number of new members of HJF was on the rise in the 80s, but not for the “right” reasons, though. One reason was that the jazz club was open, even after closing hour of the regular venues. Many of the new members didn’t actually like jazz music, but just came for the beer. The jazz club had also become infiltrated with drunks, which didn’t help the jazz club’s image.

Elin B. Heinesen and Kristian Blak spoke about some saboteurs among these new members. They recounted several episodes where the situations were “not without danger”. Elin recalled an evening when two big strong men came to the jazz club and began bullying the jazz-lovers. She asked them to please leave, but they lifted her up and held her upside down from a window high above the parking-lot pavement, until she agreed that they could stay. Kristian remembers, “I got my nose broken by one of these bullies and I was also threatened at knife point once, just outside the club after a jazz event.”²⁹ Crazy stories of violent behavior.

Even racism played its part. Elin B. Heinesen recalls, “I offered to make a 12 part radio series on jazz history and was granted the green light by Sonne Smith at Útvarp Føroya, the Faroese National radio station. However, after the 8th part had aired, the radio boss, Niels Juel Arge, told me, personally, that there would be no more of that “negara musikk” played on this station”³⁰ - a straight out racist remark.

In 1983, when PERLAN was gone, many people, including co-founder, Elin B. Heinesen decided to leave the Faroe Islands out of frustration with the country’s backward society. Elin remembers, “Tórshavn had become intolerable, so I moved to reside in Copenhagen, where I was free to express myself”.³¹ The jazz festival really helped to educate the Faroese people about jazz

²⁸ Óli Breckmann, Article in the Faroese newspaper, DAGBLAÐIÐ, on 11.05.1983. Accessed 18.04.2019.

²⁹ Personal skype interview with Kristian Blak on 05.02.2019

³⁰ Personal skype interview with Elin Brimheim Heinesen on 06.02.2019

³¹ ----- interview with Elin Brimheim Heinesen on 06.02.2019

and things have progressed for the better since 1984. The drinking culture in The Faroe Islands has evolved into a civilized culture, since the reformation of the alcohol law in 1992.

JAZZ IN THE FAROE ISLANDS 2019

So far, HJF has survived all opposition, for over 40 years. Kristian Blak's undying passion and incredible stamina has been its backbone. Together with the TUTL label, the jazz club remains a resilient driving force in the Faroese jazz scene till the present day. HJF has organized the weekly Tuesday Jazz evenings at Hvonn/Hotel Tórshavn, since 2008 and has organized VETRARJAZZ, the annual winter jazz festival in Tórshavn, since 2009.

BLÁBAR - Jazz & Blues Bar opened on July 27th, 2017 and is the first privately owned venue of its kind in the Faroe Islands. It is the new epicenter of the jazz scene in Tórshavn. In 2014, City Hall opened REINSARÍÐ, a concert venue in an old renovated wooden building with good acoustics. REINSARÍÐ and BLÁBAR have helped HJF to gradually increase its concert activities in recent years. Although in a fragile environment, the jazz scene is perhaps thriving better than ever before, with a rise in the number of young jazz musicians.



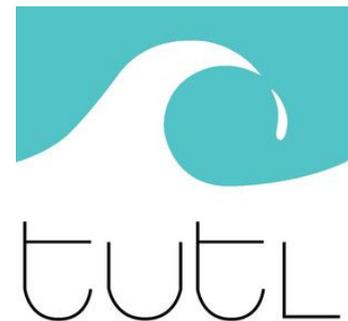
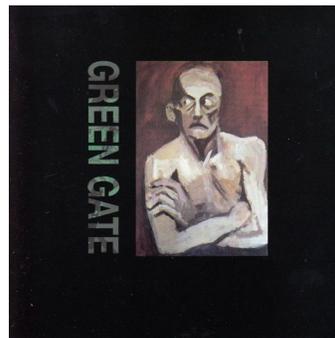
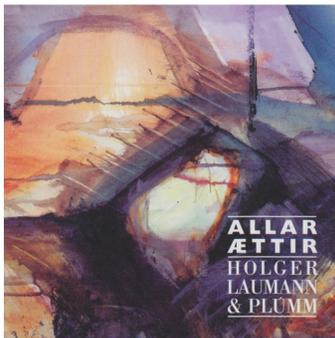
Blábar 2018, Dánjal á Neystabø Jazz, Photo, Arnold Ludvig

BLUEPRINT - PERLAN TO PRESENT

When I reflect on my current artistic practice, I trace it back to PERLAN, the first thing that inspired me to take up jazz. The PERLAN era had provided me with the blueprint of what became my artistic practice till this day. Discovering PERLAN in 1981, at the tender age of 13 was truly like finding a pearl - a gem, in the shape of a guiding light towards a whole big world of jazz.

In this essay, I will document reflections on my current creative process and album project with my new band, Reykjavík based, Arnold Ludvig Quintet and the “jazz seed” that was planted in me at PERLAN.

In the mid 1980s, I began playing jazz at HJF events with PLÚMM, Holger Laumann, Kristian Blak, Lennart Kulgren and others. In 1990, I began studying jazz at F.Í.H. in Reykjavík and spent three years learning basic jazz theory, ear training, and playing in school combos and big band. In the 3rd year, I learned jazz arranging and wrote my first big band work, Old Times, which I performed at the 1993 RúRek Jazz Festival in Reykjavík, with the F.Í.H. Big Band.

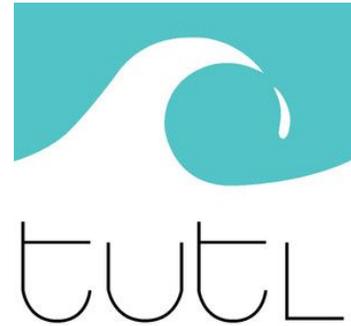
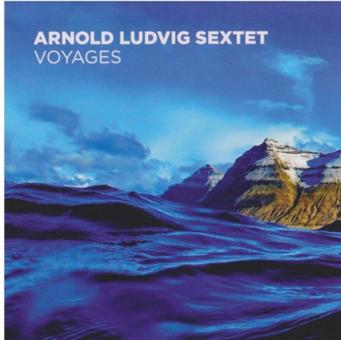


These two albums mark the beginning and continuation of my artistic practice as a jazz composer.³²

In 1995, I furthered my jazz studies for 2 years at McGill University in Montreal, where I lived until 2003. I developed my approach to composing during the Montreal years. I composed about 20 jazz tunes, during a long process using everything I had learned from the start beginning with PERLAN and throughout my studies in Reykjavík and Montreal. I worked mainly as a freelance bassist in Montreal and gained amplex of experience by playing jazz, funk, RnB and blues with many great local musicians, many of whom were African-Americans.

³² PLÚMM & Holger Laumann released the jazz album Allar Ættir/All Directions on TUTL in 1991, including my first 3 jazz compositions. The same line-up released GREEN GATE in 1998, that included my composition, Pastel Shades.

In 2003, I distanced myself from jazz, because I felt burned out and uninspired. I also felt that I still hadn't matured enough to realize the dream of making an album with my own music and with my own band. The desire got re-kindled in 2010, when I spoke with Togolese guitarist, Alain Apaloo, based in Copenhagen, about making an album with my own music.



VOYAGES and ICELAND are my first and second albums with my own jazz compositions.³³

³³ In 2013, I released my debut album, VOYAGES and the second album, ICELAND, was released in 2016, both on TUTL Records, with my Copenhagen based sextet. With these two albums and quite a bit of touring with the sextet, I finally felt that I was back on track and living my dream, fully.

PRESENT TO FUTURE - QUINTET ALBUM PROJECT

In September 2017, I founded ARNOLD LUDVIG QUINTET during my first semester in the NAIP programme. I am extremely lucky to have four of Iceland's greatest jazz musicians in my quintet with Sigurður Flosason, Jóel Pálsson, and Einar Scheving, including Kjartan Valdemarsson, whom I already knew from my time as a student at FÍH, back in the early 1990's. My original idea with this band was just for the purpose of "keeping the fire burning", by playing some gigs with my own jazz compositions from the two albums, which I released with my Copenhagen based sextet. However, I quickly realized that I could work on an album project, with my new quintet and record new original music.

The creative process towards this album is, in part built upon the experiences with my first two albums, but with a sharper focus on collective intuition and interplay. Since the first gig at Múlinn Jazz Club, on November 15th 2017, the quintet has played fifteen concerts in total in Iceland and the Faroe Islands. This series of concerts over the last eighteen months has been a process of strengthening the communication between the musicians through playing my music.

This has been a long process of exploring different tempos, moods, and energies of my music, while giving each other space to express our personal interpretations of the tunes, through solo improvisations and collective improvisations at times. The process has inspired me to consider various characteristics of the band members, when composing for this album project.



Arnold Ludvig Quintet 2018 at Maggie's Café, FO, Photo, Hans Kristian Eyðunsson Hansen

During the tour of the Faroe Islands in June 2018, we performed five concerts in three days, with only one rehearsal the day before. This was one intense run during which the band made massive strides in our development of our interplay. Kjørtan had to play on a Nord keyboard at three of the five concerts, which inspired me to take the sound into a more electric and even electronic direction.

During the spring of 2019, the quintet played once again at Múlinn, Kex, and Bryggjan, in preparation for this project's final NAIP concert at Garðabæ Jazz festival 2019. In June 2019, I will begin a six month composition period financed by a working grant from the Ministry of Culture, in the Faroe Islands. In July and August, the quintet will perform three concerts with new compositions at the 2019 Summartónar Festival in Tórshavn. I am planning to record the album in late 2019 and release it on TUTL Records in early 2020.

RESEARCH ON FAROESE JAZZ HISTORY CONTINUED

In conclusion to my research on the history of jazz in the Faroe Islands, I have come to realize the massive importance it has, especially to Havnar Jazzfelag (HJF), the driving force behind the current day jazz scene. I have decided that I must continue this work, with the purpose of gathering all that is Faroese jazz history, in one place, before it gets lost. My aim is to coordinate the research in collaboration with Kristian Blak, HJF, and all key figures in the scene. The goal is to get the history of jazz in the Faroe Islands published as a book and to make it into educational material for the Faroese music schools and the University of the Faroe Islands. Jazz education in the Faroese music schools began in the mid 1990s and jazz history has not yet become part of that. I believe that this book will stimulate the discussion about jazz in the Faroe Islands and potentially help its progress towards a sustainable future for all its participants, be it musicians, composers, arrangers, songwriters, authors, historians, journalists, all those behind the scenes and its audience.

BIOGRAPHY

Arnold Ludvig, born in Tórshavn, Faroe Islands, February 27th 1968 started playing the bass at age 12, in 1980 and became interested in jazz in 1981, at the PERLAN jazz club in Tórshavn. He started playing and studying jazz in 1986. Arnold made his debut at Tórshavnar Jazz, Fólka og Blues Festival with PLÚMM, in 1987. His interest grew into a strong lifelong passion and took up jazz studies at F.Í.H. in Reykjavík, in 1990. Arnold furthered his jazz studies at McGill University, in Montreal, from 1993-95. He was later discovered by African American singer, Geraldine Hunt and played upright bass, 3 nights a week, with Geraldine Hunt & The Arnold Ludvig Trio, at the famous Biddle's Jazz Club, in Montreal, from 1999-2003, including performances at jazz festivals and cultural houses. Arnold was also a much sought after musician and worked as a freelance bassist until 2003. By the end of 2003, he moved back to the Faroe Islands and took a distance from jazz, because of a burnout. Arnold moved to Copenhagen in 2007 and found the spark again in 2010, where he formed the Arnold Ludvig Sextet and began working on his debut jazz album, VOYAGES, released on TUTL Records, in the Faroe Islands, in 2013. His sextet released their second album, ICELAND, in 2016 and received 2 Faroese Music Award nominations, for Soloist of the Year and Band of the Year. Arnold is currently working on his debut album with his Reykjavík based quintet and continuing research on the history of jazz in the Faroe Islands.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper is in part based on information derived from interviews with key persons in and around the Faroese Jazz Scene, both present day and veteran musicians and scholars on this subject. I would like to express my deepest thanks to Erik Deluca for his quality instructions and patience, Berglind Maria Tómasdóttir for her guidance, and Iceland University of the Arts and NAIP for this opportunity. I would also like to thank Kristian Blak, Elin Brimheim heinesen, Brandur Øssursson, Leivur Thomsen, Eiríkur Skála, Herluf Lützen, Heðin Z. Davidsen, Ole Wich, Suni Merkistein, Hans Petur Hansen for their contributions. Last, but not least, I wish to thank my dearest wife, Anna Iachino, for all her love, patience and endless support and encouragement, for having introduced me to the NAIP programme in the first place.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Rice, Timothy, James Porter, and Chris Goertzen. *Europe*. Garland Pub., 2000.
- Gioia, Ted. *The History of Jazz. Second Edition*. Oxford University Press 2011.
- Restorff, Andreas. *Jazzur í Føroyum í 1920-30*. Jazz Tíðindi 1980.
- Tórshavnar Big Band. *Tórshavnar Big Band spælir føroyskt*. Kunning.fo, January 2019
<http://kunning.fo/event_show.php?Id=7812&l=fo>
- Poulsen, Páll. *Perlan is the epicenter ...*, Jazz Tíðindi, 2, 1981
- Petersen, Janus “*A musicians union ...*”,. Jazz Tíðindi, 1979
- Williams, Claude. “*1989 Jazz Hall of Fame*”. arts.gov/honors/heritage
<<https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/fellows/claude-fiddler-williams>>
- Jefsen, Jens. *Interview with Danish jazz bassist*. Jazz Tíðindi 2, 1981
- Laumann, Holger. *Discography & Songs*. Discogs.com
- Øster, Ólavur. *Minnist Tú Enn? 5:13*. TV series on Faroese music, KvF 2011
<<http://kvf.fo/dokumentarurin?sid=16389>>
- Article, *Perlan gone* Faroese newspaper, 14. SEPT. page 7, 1983
- Heinesen, William. *The Lost Musicians*. Dedalus Books. 2006
<<http://www.dedalusbooks.com/our-books/reviews.php?id=00000183>>
- Zappa, Frank. Famous quote: “*Jazz is not dead, it just smells funny*”. Jazz - Reddit, 2011
- Luihn, Astri. *Fra Hytte til palass*. Tórsh. Jazz Festival, Programm Article, 1984
- Luihn, C.V. - Faroese Painter. luihn.com/cv
- Poulsen, Páll. Article in Faroese newspaper, 14. SEPTEMBER, on 22.01.1985
- Breckmann, Óli. Article in the Faroese newspaper, DAGBLADIÐ, on 11.05.1983

DISCOGRAPHY

Jazz í Føroyum. (1977-82). Tutl Records HJF 1/2/4/9, 2000, LP/CD

Terji & Føstufressar. (*Terji & Føstufressar*). TFF 001, 1990, LP/CD

PLÚMM & Holger Laumann. *Allar Ættir/All Directions* Tutl Records HJF 1991, LP/CD

GREEN GATE. *Green Gate*. Tutl Records HJF 025, 1998, CD

Arnold Ludvig Sextet. *VOYAGES*. Tutl Records HJF 146, CD

Arnold Ludvig Sextet. *ICELAND*. Tutl Records HJF 446, CD