Svend Asmussen: Phenomenal Jazz Fiddler

By Richard J. Brooks

Svend Asmussen, the world-renown jazz violinist, is by all measures a most remarkable person. This spry eighty-eight year old is still performing! I was thrilled to see his two superb performances at the Oslo Jazz Festival on August 11 and 12, 2003. He has been in the music and entertainment business for over seventy years and has recorded over thirty albums.

Svend was arrested by the Nazis in 1943, and only a stroke of luck saved his life. As a result, the world has benefited from his artistry as a versatile entertainer and artist: a jazz violinist and singer, a band leader and arranger, a film actor, and an artist (paintings and drawings). His movies are still shown regularly on Danish television. There is even a winding street named after him on the isle of Bornholm in Denmark. Its name is the Danish equivalent of “Asmussen Swing.”

His latest CD, Still Fiddling, was released in 2002 and is currently available. Asmussen has played jazz violin with such jazz greats as Fats Waller, the Mills Brothers, Josephine Baker, Edith Piaf, Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Joe Venuti, Stéphane Grappelli, Bucky Pizzarelli, John Lewis, Kenny Drew, Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, Lionel Hampton, Toots Thielemans, Alice Babs, and Ulrik Neumann.

On April 17 and 18, 2002, I was honored to interview him at his home in Copenhagen, Denmark. He shared many personal and musical experiences with me, and I left with an even greater appreciation for one of the greatest talents I have ever met. While Svend said he had forgotten a lot, his memory for details amazed me.

Svend (pronounced “Sven,” the “d” is silent) Asmussen’s jazz violin style is truly unique and instantly recognizable. Stéphane Grappelli once told my friend Ed Wadsworth (violin with Hot Strings of New Orleans) that Svend was his favorite jazz violinist — a master of the odd interval. That is because his musical phrasings, or choice of notes, are based on the styles of horn players, not string players. Just as horn players must pause in order to breathe, pauses accent their playing.

Svend Discovers Jazz

Svend was born into a musical family on February 28, 1916, in Copenhagen, Denmark to parents of German origin. Svend had three brothers (Ernst, Johan, Andrea) and a sister (Grethe). At twelve, Ernst gave up on the violin because it was “no fun to watch his seven year old brother surpass his abilities so quickly,” so he took up the piano [Bent Henius’ 1963 biography of Svend Asmussen].

Among Svend’s earliest jazz recollections was that of the great saxophonist Coleman Hawkins playing “Talk of the Town” on the piano in Svend’s family living room. Svend was sixteen, and Hawkins had a great time humoring Svend about his ukulele and toy saxophone! Svend began violin lessons when he was seven years old, but by sixteen, he stopped his formal musical training.

This was also around the time when Svend first heard the 1927-1928 recordings made by Joe Venuti, the father of jazz violin, and Eddie Lang. Svend was “absolutely impressed.” Svend mastered Joe’s four-string violin technique: the bow is taken apart, the bow stick is placed under the violin, and the bow hair is placed over the four strings, allowing all strings to be played simultaneously. Svend was very well-known locally because of his “trick” fiddling, which helped to establish his reputation as a very talented musician. By the time Svend was nineteen, he was becoming a known musician playing at dances.

Svend began his professional career in 1933, singing and playing violin and vibes [online profile at www.oldies.com/artist/view.cfm/id/3400.html]. His first recordings date back to 1934. Svend’s solos are reminiscent of Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang’s “Stringing the Blues” made in the late 1920s. However, his musical life turned upside down the following year when he heard Stuff Smith. Stuff later became a personal friend. “He’s still my man,” Svend said. Stuff changed Svend’s way of thinking about music: “Yes, you know — the phrasing to play jazz on the violin. Stuff — he didn’t really treat the violin as a violin. He treated it as a horn and as a vocal. That’s what I try to do. When I play ballads, I try to play as Sarah Vaughan sounded, or Dinah Washington. When I play a jazz number, I try to sound like Lester Young or Clark Terry.”
Svend wasn’t expected to be a professional musician. Svend was supposed to be a sculptor and later, a dentist. When his interest in art, sculpture, and science diminished because of his musical activities, his parents suggested a career as a dentist. After one year at dentistry school around the age of twenty, Svend said to his parents: “I can’t stand that any longer. I can’t see my future as a dentist.” At the same time, he was developing a reputation and earning money as a musician.

In a compromise with his parents, however, he returned to the original plan to be a sculptor and attended the Royal Academy in Copenhagen. During one of his sculpture classes, the director of the academy mentioned to him that he had seen a newspaper article about his playing dance music at a restaurant. When the director learned that Svend was earning twice as much as he was as the Academy Director, he encouraged Svend to continue playing!

Svend’s technique and style (his choice of notes) is astounding. His virtuosity was recognized and appreciated by all the jazz greats with whom he played. His accomplishments are even more remarkable when one realizes that he is basically self-taught. When asked whether he ever considered a career in classical music because of his outstanding technique, his reply was, “My technique is not for classical playing. The real classical technique you must acquire between your seventh and twelfth years — inside those five years. That’s the period where you have to study eight hours every day. And I studied only fifteen minutes a week [for his weekly lessons].”

**Multi-Instrumentalist and Multi-Stylist**

Svend plays many instruments besides the violin, and many other styles besides swing jazz. His father used to bring home records from Budapest. Svend was first introduced to new musical styles in 1937, at a local club in Copenhagen that booked a Hungarian Gypsy orchestra and a Brazilian music band.

In 1938, he played swing dance music on a Scandinavian cruise ship. Those were luxury cruises lasting for months at a time, and were for very wealthy travelers. Many of the big names in jazz worked on luxury cruise ships. Svend said that in all of his worldly travels, the best food he ate was aboard those ships.

Josephine Baker was also performing on that 1938 cruise ship along with a Brazilian drummer from Rio de Janeiro. This is where he first learned this style of music, and where he took lessons from a tambourine player during intermissions.

His facility at this style is evident in three tunes he wrote: “Fiddler In Rio” and “Calypso Colombo” [CD: Fiddling Around, 1993, Imogena IGC039], and “Cocoanut Calypso” [CD: At Slucafter, 1989, Phontastic PHONT-NCD 8804]. Svend also recorded “Limehouse Blues” and “Sweet Sue” with the great Argentinean guitarist Oscar Aleman [two CDs: Acoustic Disc ACD 29]. Svend modestly remarked, “I know a few things about Brazilian rhythm and Argentine tangos.”

Svend also plays the alto violin (like an enlarged viola tuned the same as a viola), tenor violin (a baroque instrument tuned one octave below a violin; its size is between a viola and a cello), viola, cello, bass, guitar, mandolin, piano, vibraphone, flute, standard drums and conga drums, and the musical saw. In 1964, he and Alice Babs, the famous Swedish singer, were awarded the best European album of the year for their LP *Scandinavian Songs with Alice and Svend*. On it, Svend played all the instruments and arranged all the songs. It was recorded with about twenty-five overdubs and mixed on three- and five-track multi-track tape recorders under Svend’s supervision.

Multi-track recordings were made possible by the German invention of the tape recorder, discovered at the end of WWII, and by Les Paul’s invention of sound-on-sound recording. Les Paul also invented the solid-body electric guitar in 1951. He is alive and well today at eighty-eight (born the same year as Svend), and occasionally still performs in New York. Svend was an early experimenter of musical electronic effects along with his contemporary Les Paul. In the 1950s, Svend was experimenting with overdubbing on four-track machines in order to supplement his on-stage performances, and with Wa-Wa pedals that he used with Toots Thielemans ["Toots and Svend" or "Yesterday and Today," 1972] and on the Resource LPs [Resource, Asmussen/Thigpen Quartet, recorded 1973, SONET SLP-2551].

**The Consummate Entertainer**

Svend is a consummate entertainer and is not satisfied with just being a fiddler and band leader. His rapport with the audience is legendary and humor pervaded his shows. Svend said, “They pay just to watch. If they don’t have a good time, you can’t expect...”
them to come next time.” His on-stage antics would have the audience all shaking hands with their neighbors.

Using his multi-track tape recorder, Svend recorded backgrounds for many on-stage performances during the ’50s and ’60s. Examples include orchestrations with Svend recording all the string parts, five harmony voices of Alice Babs so she could accompany herself on the sixth (middle) part, and special sound effects for the band’s skits which were followed by songs related to the skit.

Svend’s band practiced hard to synchronize the skit with the prerecorded sound effects. Recordings of horses and guns accompanied skits of western brawls followed by western-like songs such as “Ole Oleanna” [En Kvall med Svend & Ulrik, 1962, RCA International] and “Ten Thousand Miles.” The following is an excerpt from a 1966 show performed in Glassalen (the Glass Hall) at Tivoli. The band members are dressed in western costumes and hats.


[Svend plays an old-time sounding square dance fiddle tune with shuffle bow followed by these syncopated words: Come on pardner, that’s no fun, better put down your shootin’ gun. Tune your fiddle, join the band, the best band in all Texas land. Wonderful music made by me, in the Death Band Valley Symphony. Come on ladies, swing your skirts, don’t mind about dust and dirt. [More fiddling]

In another skit in the same show, Svend practices his tennis using his fiddle as the racket. Svend swings his fiddle and the audience hears the pre-recorded sound of a tennis ball being hit. After several hits, we hear the loud sound of glass breaking everywhere. The joke is a huge success as it was performed at Glassalen, the glass hall, in Tivoli.

The most ingenious and humorous skit that I’ve heard about is one where the audience is able to hear the thoughts of the band members. The house lights are turned off and a spotlight shines on Svend’s face. He asks the audience to concentrate on his thoughts because there will always be some who misunderstand him. With the spotlight on him, Svend slowly plays the classical melodramatic-sounding “Avant de Mourir.” In the background, a pre-recorded voice slowly speaks “Svend’s thoughts” in a deep tone and in Danish: “I’m wasting my talents on this audience. They don’t really understand my music.” The spotlight shifts to the bass player who is playing along with the slow tune and the voice offers his thoughts. He is only thinking about eating food and what his next meal will be. The spotlight moves to the vibraphone player who is only thinking about money for his family and how stingy Svend is about paying his band. At last, the spotlight moves to the drummer and the audience hears a can with rocks banging away — an empty head.

When asked where he gets his ideas, Svend said, “I had a lot of thinking about ideas, inspiration from different fields, from other kinds of music, like the idea of the audience hearing our thoughts. I did imitations of Italian dance orchestras. I thought of how to dream up funny situations based on music, so musicians always would find it interesting, and people who were not musical had something to laugh at at the same time. My trouble was always to find new ideas — one a year at least, for a completely new thing. It’s difficult in a small country with the same audience always. The press are always after you to renew yourself.”

Svend is a great singer and is fluent in English and several other languages. He acknowledges, “I always had a sort of love for singing. [But] I wasn’t born with a singing voice.” Many would dispute that assertion. He sang the lead in his band. Other members contributed to the two-, three-, and sometimes four-part harmony vocal arrangements. When asked if the other band members enjoyed singing, he said, “Yes, I threatened them to do it whether they could sing or not.” [laughter]

Svend taught himself the art of arranging for voices (human and instrument) by listening to popular American vocal groups of the time. They included the Mills Brothers, the Modernaires (which became the HiLo’s), the Boswell Sisters, the Singers Unlimited, Paul Whiteman’s trio with Bing Crosby, and The Smoothies, also known as Babs and her Brothers (no relation to Alice Babs).
The Swe-Danes Era — Fame and Fortune (almost)

Svend came closest to fame and fortune with his group the Swe-Danes. “We had a colos-
sal success, especially in Sweden. We were on the edge of it [fame and fortune] with the
Swe-Danes — not because I’m a jazz fiddler — because we were entertainers.” The Swe-
Danes were a huge phenomenon traveling throughout the U.S. and Europe between 1959
to 1961. They appeared on the Ed Sullivan show several times, and played the Palladium
in London, the Olympia in Paris, and the Coconut Grove in Los Angeles. Their concerts in
California were well attended by LA’s professional studio musicians.

The Swe-Danes were essentially a vocal trio group with some hot fiddling for added fla-
vor. They included Svend, Ulrik Neumann, who was Svend’s Danish boyhood friend who
played in his band throughout the ’30s and ’40s, and the Swedish singer Alice Babs, who
was becoming famous for her fabulous voice and from the movie “Swing it Mister Teacher.”
Hence the name Swe-Danes.

Among their most requested songs was the “Swe-Dane Symphony” in which they mim-
icked a whole orchestra with just their voices. It was terrifically difficult to do. Svend did
all the vocal and instrument arrangements for the trio.

However, after three years of almost constant work, the personal demands were too much
for the three. In Svend’s words: “We couldn’t think of a future traveling around in Ameri-
can night clubs — and being away from our children and wives. So we said ‘no’ to offers
of staying in the U.S.”

Following the Swe-Danes, Alice went on to record with Duke Ellington, and Svend and
Ulrik formed a two-man show that toured for a couple of years. “Ulrik and I went on and
made sort of an entertaining vaudeville show — just the two of us plus an instrumental trio
and a couple of girls on the stage. I think we played our two-man show — it must have
been around a thousand times. So we knew it pretty well.”

Svend continues to have great admiration for Alice, describing her voice as “angel-like,”
“She made a comeback in Sweden a year or two ago — with a huge success. She is
seventy-eight now and sounds like she always did.” Alice turned eighty on January 26,
2004. In 2003, she was presented with the Swedish government’s medal Illis quorum for
her “outstanding and long service as a singer in different musical styles, and for her warm
and positive artistry.” [www.jazzfacts.com]
World War II and The Nazi Invasion of Denmark

World War II was responsible for some of the darkest hours of Svend’s life. In 1940, the Nazis invaded Norway and Denmark and terrorized civilians by the public hanging of men and women who opposed the Nazi occupation. In Germany, they burned as many American jazz records as they could. As Daniel Morgenstern said, “It was kind of symbolic of America, and freedom, and as the Nazis never failed to point out, it was black music, and it was Jewish, and to them it was a negroid, Bolshevick, Jewish conspiracy against culture. [www.allaboutjazz.com/journalists/morgenstern4.htm]

However, the Nazis permitted some jazz music to be played in Denmark. Svend owned a food and music club in Copenhagen called the Blue Heaven. It was the first club in Denmark to have jazz music jams, and became very popular until food and drink rationing made it unprofitable to run. While the Nazi’s official policy was anti-jazz, Nazi jazz enthusiasts were among Svend’s fans in his club. That may have saved his life.

On August 29, 1943, Svend was arrested by the Nazis along with two to three hundred other well-known people. He was neither a politician nor a “freedom fighter,” but just a famous entertainer. He was never given a hearing, nor was he ever told why he was arrested.

Svend spent some time in a Copenhagen prison, and was shipped to a prison in the center of Berlin where he spent three months in isolation in a bug-infested cell. “You were isolated. The door was never opened. And you were isolated from the only company you had. Everything was taken away from you — your watch, everything — no reading material. That was a terrible psychological strain.”

From his third floor cell, Svend could hear the guards running down the stairs for cover whenever the British troops bombed Berlin. Of course, the prisoners remained locked in their cells. Prisoners were terrorized by hearing other prisoners being shot. For hours on end, the Nazis made him look at pictures of bald shaven people asking if he recognized them. He didn’t know any of them. Svend remarked, “Nobody asked about human rights at that time in the Nazi prisons.”

In December, he was released just as mysteriously as he was arrested — without explanation. In his own words: “Suddenly one day they came into the cell and said, ‘Tomorrow you go home to Copenhagen.’ That’s the first time I broke down into tears.” Two weeks after his release, the whole prison building was bombed and almost everyone was killed. Svend thinks there might have been an anti-Nazi Gestapo agent that helped him and several hundred other Danish people get out of the German prisons.

Musicians Union Prevents U.S. Engagements

One of the reasons that Svend is not better known in the U.S. and internationally is the political consequence of the policies of Mr. James Petrillo, former President of the U.S. Musicians Union. Benny Goodman had been impressed with Svend’s recordings, and in 1948 he asked Svend if he would consider coming to the U.S. to play with him. Svend agreed.

To play in Benny Goodman’s band, musicians had to be members of the union. However, union policies required foreigners to live in the U.S. for one year and have a sponsor to pay them before they could join the union. In Svend’s words, “That means you had to spend a year in America without playing or making any money. Petrillo was the head of it, and it was the strongest union in the world at the time — the Musicians Union.”

In 1950, Goodman visited Copenhagen where his group played the first set. At intermission, Goodman sat in the front row and enjoyed Svend’s group that included Toots Thielemans (guitar and harmonica), Zoot Simms (sax), Dick Hyman (piano), and Ed Shaughnessy (drums). Goodman wanted to bring the whole group to the U.S., and spent an evening phoning New York from Copenhagen (expensive in 1950!). But Goodman was unsuccessful in trying to convince Mr. Petrillo to let Svend work in the U.S.

A Chronicle of Svend Asmussen’s Music

The purpose of this section is to give the reader a glimpse into Svend’s music and his diverse musical styles. Although Svend excels as a swing jazz fiddler, he also played classical music as a featured guest with orchestras, and he experimented with bebop and American fiddling music styles.

Svend’s first hot jazz violin solos were recorded in 1935. He played in the Joe Venuti four-string style on “Tiger Rag” (1935) and later on “Auld Lang Syne” (1946). In 1936, he recorded with Ulrik Neumann on guitar, and Victor Borge (known then as Borge Rosenbaum) on piano and vocals.

By 1938, Svend was becoming known as a “hot jazz fiddler.” That year, he started playing on Scandinavian cruise ships where he met Josephine Baker. That is where he first learned about Brazilian drum rhythms and Argentine tangos, and where he took
tambourine lessons. In 1938, he recorded with Oscar Aleman in Copenhagen.

In 1940, he recorded “June Night,” which eventually became Svend’s theme song. Among the hottest pieces recorded in 1941 was Duke Ellington’s “Ring Dem Bells.” The Danish Resistance Museum in Copenhagen plays Svend’s version in its multimedia tribute to the sacrifices the Danes made during the Nazi occupation of Denmark.

American jazz was extremely popular in Europe after WWII. Music publishers, who wanted to sell their sheet music and records to a Scandinavian audience, hired local musicians like Svend to record the Danish versions of American popular tunes. In those days, musicians were paid a fixed fee to play on a record. They never received royalties. Svend and his band were just grateful to be working in the music business.

In 1945, Svend began performing in a “show band” — what he refers to as Vaudeville Theater where he performed many comedy skits. In 1946-1949, Svend appeared on BBC television (London). He also worked with the famous singer Edith Piaf in 1947. In the 1940s through the 1950s, Svend appeared with his band in several films where they usually played comedy roles as musicians. These shows are still being aired on Danish television today. [www.def-musikportal.dk/musik-portal/emnet/jazz/svend.zap, www.beta.webyoda.com/dumboozle/svend/svenfilm.html]

By the end of the ‘40s, Svend had developed his uniquely personal musical style with sophisticated vocal and instrumental arrangements. Grappelli’s description of him as the “master of the odd interval” is apt. The names of three of his LPs (10” 33 rpm records) describe his music perfectly: Rhythm Is Our Business, Svend Aasmussen and His Unmelancoly Danes, and Svend Aasmussen Plays Hot Fiddle.

In 1950, Svend met Benny Goodman, who was unsuccessful bringing him to America. In 1953, Svend became a big hit in Germany with his “modern” music. The mid-’50s found him traveling around the world playing dance music for millionaires aboard cruise ships. From 1959-1961, he toured with the Swe-Danes.

In 1961, Svend and Ulrik Neumann (guitar) recorded the Danish Imports LP. This LP is notable because: 1) it was just the guitar and violin; 2) he played his sweet-sounding Guarnerius; and 3) the standards were all very carefully worked out with almost no improvisation taking place. “Honeysuckle Rose” sounds like a ballad! In 1962, their vaudeville performance was released as the En kvall med Svend and Ulrik LP.

The ’60s was the decade when Svend recorded with John Lewis (1962), Duke Ellington (Jazz Violin Sessions, 1963), Stéphane Grappelli (1965), and Dieter Reith (organ, 1967). One biographer suggested that “Despite the earlier interest of Benny Goodman, it was the Lewis recording session that drew widespread attention to his talents.” [www.oldies.com/artist/view.cfm/id/3400.html] In 1966, he recorded on the famous Violin Summit LP with Stuffy Smith, Stéphane Grappelli, and Jean-Luc Ponty.

Of worthy note is the unique 1964 album Scandinavian Songs with...
The early 1970s were also a time of electronic experimentation. He and Ed Thigpen (drums) recorded the Resource album in Copenhagen in 1973. It is mostly a rock-n-roll and electric blues LP with heavy drums, electric bass, mini-Moog synthesizer, electric organ, and electric fiddle with Wa-Wa pedal and reverb electronic effects.

In the mid 1970s, he recorded two classical LPs: Amazing Strings and Telemann Today. The cover of the latter is a reproduction of Svend's painting of Telemann playing drums and looking much like George Washington in a white wig, with a long draping purple robe, and dressed in blue jeans and cowboy boots made to look like an American flag. This was also the decade that he spent playing unconventional chamber music programs with improvisations on chorales and vocal music in hundreds of churches.

In 1981 in Copenhagen, Svend was a special guest on Benny Goodman's last recorded live performance. [Svend's name is misspelled as Sven Osmussen. Still available.] The 1980s also brought him to the U.S. several times, where he recorded with Bucky Pizzarelli (June Night, 1983), Teresa Brewer (On the Good Ship Lollipop, 1983), and David Grisman (Swingin' with Svend, 1987).


In the 1990s, Svend formed the band with which he still plays today: Jacob Fischer (guitar), Jesper Lundgaard (bass), and Aage Tanggaard (drums). Svend describes his current band as, "Being with three wonderful musicians — with a jazz musician’s sense of humor. Now with a guitar player — he’s fifty-two years younger [Jacob Fischer] but the age difference disappears when we are playing together." Jacob Fischer is one of the most outstanding guitar players in the business. He has won numerous awards and is famous throughout Scandinavia. [www.toucheumidity.se/fischer.html] This band recorded Fiddling Around (1993), Fit as a Fiddle (1996), and Still Fiddling (1999).

In 1992, Svend played the voice of "Kong Morfeus" in the Danish version of Little Nemo. [www.beta.webyoda.com/dumboozle/svend/svenfilm.html]

Svend Asmussen Today

At eighty-eight, Svend is still playing music. His Still Fiddling CD, recorded in 1999, was released on Svend’s eighty-sixth birthday: February 28, 2002. [www.storyville-records.com/asmussen.htm, www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=9982] There is an interesting story about the two Jewish melodies on it. In Svend’s own words: "One of the tunes was sung to me by Edith Piaf when we worked together in Oslo in 1947. After the show, we were invited out and we had red wine. I would bring my fiddle along and she would be singing. She said you must play that tune on your fiddle. I was not very interested at the time. I was into Stuff Smith and playing American jazz. Fifty years later it popped up when I heard David’s CD [20th anniversary of the David Grisman Quintet, www.acousticdisc.com/acd_html/acd20.html]. I said to myself, 'What was that tune that Edith Piaf sang to me — My Yiddish Momma?' It turned out that [at] least the guitar solo was a little masterpiece on our recording."

In 2003, Jim Lowe’s website tribute to Svend listed over twenty-five performances in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, however in 2004, he only performed once. [www.dumboozle.com/svend/svendex.html] Svend said of his July 31, 2004 show, "It was very well received. We got a standing ovation."

In February, 2004, Svend made a generous donation of his memorabilia to the Carl Nielsen Academy of Music in Odense, Denmark. My visit there in October revealed over 200 historical photographs and a box full of newspaper articles covering Svend’s entire career. Svend is currently proofreading a biography of his life which will probably be published in early 2005.

Svend Asmussen lives and breathes music. His remarkable career spanned almost the entire history of jazz music and leaves us with a wonderful legacy of over seventy years of recorded music. He plans to continue performing for his favorite audiences — listening audiences in small jazz clubs.


The author welcomes your comments, and may be reached by email at RichardBr@yahoo.com.

[Richard Brooks lives in Palo Alto, California, and works in high-tech in Silicon Valley. He is active in the Santa Clara Valley Fiddlers Association, and plays bluegrass, swing jazz, and as many Svend licks as he can.]
The author acknowledges with deep appreciation the following people:
- Morten Langkilde for his 2001 photos of Svend Asmussen, and Inge Methling for authoring the article published in Denmark's Politiken newspaper on July 14, 2001.
- Bent Henius, who, in 1963, authored the only biography of Svend Asmussen that I am aware of. It offers a personal look into Svend's career supplemented by many wonderful pictures.
- Jim Kirkland, who provided the transcription to “Swing Manouche,” and for his comments about this article.
- Paul Anastasio, for his contributions to the transcription and for his comments about this article.
- Joel Glassman for his comprehensive Asmussen discography (http://music.calarts.edu/~chung/artists/Svendisco.html).
- Aage Tanggaard, drummer in and manager of Svend's current band, for his friendship over the years, and for his comments about this article.
- Ellen Bick Meier for her comments about this article.
- Frank Büchmann-Møller, Archive Director and Librarian, Carl Nielsen Academy of Music, Odense, Denmark for access to Svend's archives and his comments about this article.
- David Fishe for his 1997 interview of Svend Asmussen on his Jazz Scene radio show in Oslo, Norway (www.jazzscene.no/).
- Dan Holbrook for sharing many rare Svend discs with me.
- David Grisman for bringing Svend to the U.S. in 1987, and for recording some outstanding music with him.
- Bjørke Falgren for helping me obtain the photo scans from Svend's personal collection.
- Ann Brooks (mother) for proofreading this article numerous times.
- Last but not least, Svend Asmussen, who was kind enough to share his life's experiences with me, and who remains a source of musical inspiration.

Svend Asmussen Discography by Joel Glassman
1935-1955 A collection of 15 CDs of 78s (Swan and Thora)
Musical Miracle-Vol. 1: 1935-40 (Phonastic 9306)
Phenomenal Fiddler-Vol. 2: 1941-50 (Phonastic 9310)
Vol. 6 of Danish Jazz: 1937-1944 (Storyville SLP 415)
[film] En lille tilflydelsed - includes SA group featured on 3 songs (1939)
SKOL! (American LP of 1950s cuts not incl. on the Swan collection) 1955
[film] Naar katten er ude - includes SA with Ulrik & Grete Neumann (1949)
"Svend Asmussen and his Unmelancholy Danes" (Angel ANG6000)
Hot Fiddle (Parlophone) 1953
Rhythm Is Our Business "SA and his Unmelancholy Danes" (Angel ANG6001)
Hot Swing Fiddle Classics (Folkyrlik 9025) LP includes several SA 78s
Scandinavian Imports (duets w/Ulrik Neumann) 1959
"Standards" (Metronome) 1958
Erie Moseholm Presents Jazz Strings-Jazz string Quartet (Sonet SXP 2011) 1958
Scandinavian Songs with Alice Babs (SweCD CMCD 402)
SweDanes: Pa Begaran (CMCD 6107) Vocal group
SweDanes: Scandinavian Shuffle
Jazz på Ungerska - Jan Johansson and Svend Asmussen (Heptagon)
The Fiddling Viking (Columbia) overdubbed "easy listening" string sections
Dansons à Copenhagen 7" EP Vargal 5312 (France)
Buddy Cole and Svend Asmussen [title?] Warner Bros 1109 (1961)
Svend Asmussen and his Sextet TELE SLE 14187 (Telefunken) 1961
European Encounter-John Lewis w/Svend Asmussen (Atlantic 90533-3)
Jorgen Ingmann LP: En kväll med Svend och Ulrik 1962 RCA LPM 9929
When You're Smiling
Duke Ellington's Jazz Violin Session (w/Grappelli,Nance, and SA on viola) 1962
Sathima Bea Benjamin "A Morning in Paris" (Enja ENJ-90392) 1963 SA "pizzicato violin"
"Ett Musikalsk Dokument" (CBS 52451, Swe 1960s)
[book] "Svend Asmussen" by Bent Henius Chr. Erichsens Forlag 1963
Two of a Kind (w/Stephane Grappelli) (Storyville SLP 4088) 1965 Jazz

Spring 2005