

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN ABOUT THE SCANDINAVIAN 'PIRATES'?

1: Radio Nord Philip Champion

The Radio Nord Revival broadcasts for the 50th anniversary of the station's start have raised interest in this station. I'd already heard airchecks of Nord, such as on "Nordsee goes DX" with A.J. Bereins on RNI. I bought the English version of station founder Jack S. Kotschack's book "The Radio Nord Story." If you got the offshore 'bug' in the mid 60s -I started listening intently from late August 1966- then, like me, you probably assumed Radio Nord was a Swedish pop pirate with music just before the 'beat boom' (Merseybeat etc) with chatty djs and plenty of jingles. However, that does not seem to be an accurate picture.

Listening to the opening hour being played 50 years after it first went out showed there was a rather different station sound. Their website led to one by offshore fan Ingemar Lindqvist which has lots of old Nord tapes plus some from the other Scandinavian pirates. He was just 12 when he heard Radio Nord and it left a lasting impression on him. His website is at <http://radiohistoria.jvnf.org/index.htm> and though it is Swedish you should be able to find your way about it. You can translate blocks of text by copying and pasting; try 'Translate Swedish into English' and you'll find a few online translators like Google's. For airchecks click on items marked 'Hor'. He has also made a number of useful comments on the draft of the article so I will quote them using speech marks.

In this article I'll try to describe the sound of the station which isn't apparent in Kotschack's book. I've tried to avoid repeating information in his book too.

Being English we tend to think the station name sounded like '*Ray-dio Nord*' (rhyming with 'cord') while it was more like '*Rad-dio*' -then a cross between '*Nord*' (as in cord and '*noo-rd*' ('oo' sound as in 'noodle'.)

One thing Radio Nord had was plenty of jingles, mostly sung by a combination of males and females in a traditional style with light orchestral backing. A lot were composed by Henry Fox who hired very competent session singers -up to two females and four males. In fact the website plays about 25 jingles one after the other. Their jingles were typical of early 1960s easy listening music. When you think of what we were listening to in 1961 the Light Programme had no jingles and we probably had little more from Radio Luxembourg with its gong, and jingle (or mini-song) "This is Radio Luxembourg/The great 208/Your ring-a-ding station of the stars." In fact Nord has a jingle - The Radio Nord Medley- which is more like a mini -song too, about "Lyssna.(Listen to) Radio Nord" which is to the tune of "Bye, Bye Blackbird!" Three other jingles were familiar as they were to the tune of "Bring Back My Bonny to Me". "The Lambeth Walk" and "Oh When the Saints Go Marching In." No doubt the use of jingles was down to backer Gordon McLendon who owned a number of American stations. With so many jingles how little they were used in the programmes is surprising.

The opening taped two -hour programme of March 8th 1961 shows that **Radio Nord was more a middle of the road station**, like Britain Radio in 1966/67, with a few pop records every now and then. In fact they had commissioned "Kärleken i Rymden." (=Love in Space/the Air)-the Radio Nord Valsen (waltz) -sung by an older male. Very 'square' and not what a pop station would do! Funnily enough, I found myself tapping my fingers to it later on... In an e-mail to me Ingemar adds that it was written by Evert Taube who was and still is a very popular national poet/troubadour in Sweden. In Swedish the audience was told they were listening to "Europe's most modern radio station." An analysis of 33 records in that programme gives: orchestral 36% + other instrumental 6% = total instrumental 42%; easy listening Swedish 'popular' or 'schlager' music sung equally by females or males 27%; MoR -6%, Pop -German 3%, American 9%, Swedish pop cover versions 6% =total pop 18%, Greek 3% and Italian 6%. A few conclusions can be drawn. About one third of the music was sung in Swedish. What is surprising is the amount of instrumental music played -not far short of half. There were more instrumentals in the UK pop charts in those days anyway but I suppose if you added the output from the Light Programme then you would have found a lot of instrumental music heard on radio here. They varied from light to lively orchestral pieces with people like Mantovani. The MoR 6% included a record from Steve Lawrence & Eydie Gorme "Side by Side." The cover records each had a Swedish female singing "Rubber Ball" or "Save the Last Dance for Me." Some of the Swedish 'schlager' makes for pleasant easy listening. The Italian records remind us that Latin records were popular then, in a MoR style. I listened to other shows like Saturday afternoons "Melodiposten" from 11 days later and the mix was the same: a vocal "Old Man River", an orchestral cha-cha and later a tango, pop with John Horton "North to Alaska" and a Mexican/Latin number "Tequila". Adverts were every two or three records.They used a mix of male and female, sung and spoken and some

were quite lively. The opening day finished as planned at 1800 then it returned at 0600 next morning on a full schedule.

It seems Kotschack didn't want to use well-known names or even identify the announcers until the station had an identity of its own. Ingemar told me more about the first voices heard: "It is Gert Landin who introduces Jack Kotschack's speech. The speakers' voices afterwards --there are several --are Lennart Atterling and I also remember that Henry Fox appears --the man who created most of the Radio Nord jingles, song texts, compositions, arrangements, direction and also recording production) --but there are several voices.

Jingles were used sparingly. In the opening programme I counted two jingles and two Radio Nord voiceovers/promos. In 38 minutes of a Saturday afternoon "Melodiposten" 11 days later there was just one jingle though a 25 minute clip of another programme had two jingles. In a 33 minute clip of the bottom half of the "Topp 20" there were no jingles yet you would have expected this to be one show where they might be played more than usual. Ingemar thinks the lack of jingles here was because they might have interfered with the sponsors' interests; between every other song the announcer talked partly about the record being played and the name and product of the sponsor. A number of times the dj or announcer as they were called told listeners that this was "Europe's most modern radio station."

Presentation of programmes was straightforward though not formal. This was not the era of chatty djs or waffle. In fact, links between records were usually quite short which kept the music flowing. Announcers told listeners (in Swedish), "You're listening to Swedish commercial radio, Radio Nord." Hourly news broadcasts started on April 12th.

As with later offshore stations there were changes to programmes. Barbro von Horn's weekday hour at 0900 geared towards women was replaced in the summer by a two hour show by a new female dj. The schedule as of September 8th 1961 was: **0600 "Nordmorgon"** -Sten Hedman, **0900 "A La Carte, A La Chris"** -Christina Wahlström in which she included recipes etc, **1100 "Melodispegeln"** -Lennart Atterling and Gert Landin with 'soft, caressing music', **1300 "Siesta"** -Kaj Karlholm, **1500 "Låten Fran Båten"** (=Songs From the Boat) -Larsan Sörenson with a guest giving his/her choice of music, **1800 "Toner för Miljoner"** (=Tones for Millions) -music for all the family with Gert Landin, **2000 "Rendez-Vous"** -Kaj Karlholm, **2200 "Välkommen Ombord"** (=Welcome aboard) -live from the 'Bon Jour', **2400 -0600 "Rhapsody in Blue"** -night music. So was Radio Nord the first 24 hour offshore station, five or so years before Radio Essex?

There were special shows. **Fridays** 1915 -2000 "Välj Själ" (=Take Your Pick) -Gert Landin with schlager (happy, tuneful music) and some from the Topp 20, plus interviewing a guest, **Saturdays** 1100 -1400 "Programmet Utan Namn" (=Untitled Programme !!), 1400 -1800 "Melodiposten" (=Melody Line) -Lennart Atterling, 2000 "Club Nord" -dance music, **Sundays** 0100 Kaj Bjerke with jazz, 1100 -1200 "Minnenas Melodier" -popular classics with Lennart Atterling, 1500 -1800 "Låten Fran Båten" -Larsan Sörenson with a studio guest. Wednesdays 2000 -2130 was the station's most popular show "Radio Nord's Topp 20 +10" presented by Gert Landin.

They soon had some changes. On September 22nd a new Saturday show came on 1000 -1300 "Larsans Lördagsträff" (=Saturday Meeting) where Larsan Sörenson was joined by anything from one to five guests though Gert Landin took it over two months later. While Larsan ran the show it had "great humour." From Sept. 29th "Nordmorgon" was split into two parts, the first hour then the second from 0700 presented by Kaj Karlholm. From October 6th this segment was done by Larsan Sörenson. New was "Buona Sera Italia" with Lennart Atterling on Mondays 1830 -1900. Listening to a tape of the latter it seems to be seven or eight easy-listening Italian records of a style you would expect from the early 1960s: some female, some male plus an orchestral 'cha-cha' piece. There was an ad. every three records. There were spells of talking for a couple of minutes as Lennart talked about aspects of Italian life with "sweet voiced Italy expert" Monica Hylinge. This show was later scrapped as it wasn't as popular with listeners as Kotschack expected. By late October "Nordmorgon" became a live show from the "Bon Jour" with the newsreaders playing records and giving the news. At the same time the live weekday evening show was halved. It now went out at 2000 with Kaj Karlholm's two hours put back to 2100 then Larsan with night music at 2300. The jazz show was now doubled to two hours and moved to the more listenable time of Fridays 2200 -2400. In its place on Saturdays at 0100 was "Musikalisk Odysseé" with Gösta Sturmak. From October the weekday afternoon "Siesta" was extended by an hour to 1600 and it seems that it could be live from the ship or else Kaj Karlholm on tape. By mid -December it was definitely all live. By early January the "Nordmorgon" team, depending who was on board, comprised Kaj Bergstrom, Kaj Branje, Lasse Bjarke and Lasse Nestius. Kotschack realised that "live broadcasting gave more life and presence."

As with the Dutch and later British pirates most of the broadcasting staff were young with a few older ones to help them along. In their 20s were newsreaders Lars/Lasse Nestius (21), Kaj Berke (24) and Kaj Branje (27), while transmitter engineer/occasional dj Kenneth Agehed was 20 and advertising copy writer/occasional dj Lars Grunberg was 23. While it might seem unusual to have young men in their 20s on an easy-listening station we later had the same with Britain Radio and Radio 390. Nord's youngest dj was 19-year old Sten Hedman who was put on breakfast with his lively manner. Rather more mature were newsreader Seve Ungemark (29), djs Ivo Grenz (29) noted for his calm style, Louis Chrysender (29) who became Programme Manager, Elsa Prawitz (29) who had a late night show "Elsas Nattkajuta" (=Elsa's Night Cabin), Larsan Sörenson (30), Kaj Karlholm (39) a newsreader who later did "De Tio", dj Lennart Atterling (30) who also later became Programme Manager, Barbro von Horn (41), her replacement Chris Wahlström (44) and 45 year old Chief Engineer Thure Lennart Anderson. Both Ivo Grenz and Lennart Atterling came from Skånes Radio Mercur, the former having been SRM's first dj. In charge of it all was Managing Director Jack S. Kotschack aged 46 when Nord opened.

Radio Nord had several chart shows. Most popular and long-running was the Wednesday evenings "Topp 20" It started two days after opening and was presented by Gert Landin though Larsan Sörenson took it over in late November. The hits were a mix of American, Swedish and British records. The chart was voted by listeners sending in three choices, later five, whereas the official Sveriges Radio station which set up to compete, Melodyradio, used a jury. Sometimes there was a studio guest. This show was sponsored and advertisers certainly got plenty of airtime. Listening to half of this show with 10 records in the countdown the dj spoke with a female representative of the shampoo advertiser after the second, fourth, sixth and ninth records! I bet fans of the chart got a bit sick of the ads and just wanted to hear the hits! To give you an idea of the music played American examples were "Goodbye Cruel World" by James Dean, Ray Charles "Hit the Road Jack" while the UK gave Helen Shapiro "Walking Back to Happiness." From November 12th they added "De Tio" (*Day Tee-Oh* =The 10) which was suggested by two Jönköping record dealers. This was a Top 10 of Swedish language records (just as the Dutch later had their "Nederlandstalig Top 10.") It went out Sundays 1715 -1800 with Kaj Karlholm for its first week then changing to 1015 -1100. From March 1962 Gert Landin took over the show. This too was sponsored: there were six spots for the advertiser in the one I heard. After the 10 records were played there was a rundown of clips from No.10 to No.1 then an interview with the guest artist -presumably the one at No. 1. "De Tio" was more lively programming than the previous Sunday morning of more or less classical music which was little different from the official Sveriges Radio. "Probably this had been as they were a little too worried about being perceived as vulgar if they had played popular music in the middle of Sunday worship time. The radio audience was not accustomed to such entertainment at this time. In order not to offend any opinion they chose to play a light and melodic selection of classical music. But eventually they broke with this caution and dared to introduce this rather innocent Swedish popular chart programme." They also had a tip show. At first this was "Välj Själv" on Fridays 1800 -1845 though in September it changed to 1915 -2000. Later it became "Radio Nord's Veckan Topptips" with Gert Landin. When Gert took over the Topp 20 Larsan took over this show -a swap. At first it featured 10 records then later varied between 11 and 12 though once it had 13 records in the list! While the presenters of these chart shows were all in their 30s -Larsan 30 with "his fun and classy style", Gert 35 and Kaj 39 back in the UK when Alan Freeman launched "Pick of the Pops" in the same year he was 34.

Larsan Sörenson presented the final show on Radio Nord with a special edition of "De Tio" which ended, deliberately, with "Hit the Road Jack" before the Tx was switched off.

Ingemar sent me some interesting comments about how the station developed. "In the earlier stages of Radio Nord they relied a lot on pre-recorded voice features and it could be frequent variations on whose voice was heard from time to time. Later they developed the programming to more produced and single-person announced shows. Also, from autumn 1961 a growing number of live broadcasts were introduced from the M.S. "Bon Jour." I think that Radio Nord was the offshore pirate that introduced the possibility of live broadcasting. During the 16 months Radio Nord existed they developed a lot, from the beginning when they had a rather stiff style, but later on the programme was announced in a much easier-going style.. I think Larsan Sörenson helped a lot in this. He had worked as a cabaret artist and an early form of stand-up comedian. I believe Radio Nord was the first offshore pirate to discover that it was possible to broadcast live out from the ship, that it was possible to use a turntable on board. Before they examined this possibility everyone assumed that turntables could not be used in such a rocking environment. They all assumed that the needle arm would jump immediately and lose track. What they discovered was that the ship rocking, even in fairly rough weather, was not that hard and jerky and the

needle arm remained on track mostly without any problems."

On his website Ingemar writes that ex-Radio Nord staff have told him that it was a really fun time and gave them experiences which they did not have in their subsequent careers.

In Gerry Bishop's "Offshore Radio" book most stations have a list of 'Broadcasting Staff' but Nord is one of the few without one. So using Kotschack's book and Ingemar's website I've tried to come up with a list of staff who were heard on the air. Those who were on at the start in March 1961 are denoted with an * whereas those on at the close on June 30th 1962 have **. First, *Announcers/DJs who recorded shows in Stockholm*: Their shows were recorded two or three days beforehand. * Gert Landin ** (He was on Nord throughout its time on air and was the first Programme Director -that post lasting a few months), * Leonnart Atterling (also fourth PD summer 1961 -Feb. 1962 when he left), * Louis Chryander (also did live shows from the "Bon Jour", ad copywriting and was also PD), * Sted Hedman ** (had to leave for national service in Dec. 1961 but was given leave in June 1962 and returned for Nord's final weeks), * Ivo Grenz, * Barbro van Hoorn (had left by summer 1961), actress Chris Wahlström (from summer 1961), Larsan Sörenson ** (May 1961, was last dj heard June 1962), Thim Gunnar (autumn 1961), Pierre Westermann, Lars Grumberger, Per Nyström and Anders Burman who co-presented "Metronomenytt" sponsored by Metronome Records between at least Dec. 1961 and June 1962, folk singer Harry Brandelius who had a two-hour Friday evening show which was dropped after the second one, actress Elsa Prawitt who did "Elsa's Night Cabin" on Saturday night at midnight, Rolf Björling who did light classics Sundays 11 am -2 pm, Gösta Sturmak (also advertising salesman), Lars Grünberger (mainly worked on advertising copywriting but did a few programmes). *Studio technicians later also given programmes*: Kaj Bierke (engineer July-August 1961 and did jazz programmes), Gunnar Heilborn. *Transmitter engineers*: * Bengt Törnkrantz (did a test tape aired on very first tests on February 21st 1961; he later had a very successful career at Swedish TV, working with Ingmar Bergman among others) and Kenneth Agehed (Tx engineer who did occasional broadcasts). *Newsreaders/live djs*: * Sewe Ungemark (until July 1961), * Björn Fredrik Höyer (News Director until early summer 1961), * Kaj Karlholm (worked on land and ship between at least April 1961 and February 1962), Kjell Bergström (Joined by spring 1961, was also News Director from the autumn, left spring 1962), Hans Palm (summer 1961), Jörgen Einestad (summer 1961), Lars Nestius (was a summer relief in 1961 but stayed until April 1962), Lars Branje (by Sept. 1961, left just before closure), * Ove Sjöström Tx engineer who did news bulletins when Lars Nestius and Lars Branje were ill), Bjorn Peter Krupenin (sound engineer who also did some broadcasts in spring 1962), Kaj Häger (June 1962 when Nord was very short of newsreaders and landbased djs). *Also heard*: MD Jack S. Kotschack on the opening broadcast (and he became the fifth PD), assistant record librarian Monica Hylinge who joined Lennart Atterling on "Buona Sera Italia" and Larsan Söenson on some "Topp 20" shows plus international singers like the Swiss female singer Lys Assia and Paul Anka who recorded a one-hour show each in Nord's Stockholm studios talking about their music. *Worth mentioning*: Henry Fox (second PD plus Advertising Manager, jingles etc) and an American Ron Baxley who was a short-lived third PD for two or three months in summer 1961. The balanced of different musical styles in the programming had a lot to be with head record librarian Raya Ravell-Valtonen who had previously been a singer with the Harmony Sisters trio. The names will mean more for those who can see the photos and listen to the recordings on Ingemar's website.

I did enjoy finding out more about Radio Nord, thanks to the Radio Nord Rival broadcasts and Ingemar's website. A pirate but not as I expected it to be. I'm very grateful to Ingemar Lindqvist not only for the information on his website but also for answering my e-mail queries, checking my article and providing more interesting comments on Radio Nord. Next time I'll look at the other Scandinavian pirates.