

Gunhild Carling and Her Swing Band

Gunhild Carling is a jazzartist of the old breed, combining extraordinary skills on trumpet and trombone with vaudeville stunts. In her playing she shows heavy influences from Bix and Louie Armstrong as well as Billie Holiday. The songs are chosen from the classical swing repertoire with well known songs like “Sheik Of Araby” but also less performed numbers like “They All Laughed”.

In 2001 she formed her own band with local musicians from southern Sweden. The record “That’s My Desire” is recorded on a local pub in Lund, the university city in southern Sweden. All songs on the record are recorded in the same session and captures the magic of live music and the feeling that night.

Musicians:

Gunhild Carling: trumpet, trombone, blues harp, song
Max Carling: clarinet, violin
Ola Åkerman: trombone
Rasmus Kihlberg: drums
Ludvig Wennström: contrabass
Olle Larsson: piano



Info about the recording

The John Bull pub in Lund is a really small “L”-shaped place. The “stage” was set next to the entrance with the piano pushed to a wall. The room has a large coverage of rug and varying ceiling height, 2.5m->3.5m, resulting in an almost dead acoustic space; good for loud people but a bit dry for music. As Gunhild does not play the soft modern jazzmusic but rather a loud and wild swing music, the piano, bass and voice had to be amplified. I did the FOH at the same time as the recording using 2 dbOpera 412 loudspeakers, running the inserts from the mixer to the recorder. The stage was about 3x3m with piano on the left, pushed to a wall covering the entrance, drums on the right, bass up against the wall in the middle and the three other musicians in front spread evenly.

Gunhild had her microphone slightly forward compared to the others, allowing her to step back when playing loud.

The piano was in a really bad shape, actually it was thrown away a few weeks later! Luckily it seems like the 2 Shure sm57 microphones, positioned from the top in a spread about 1m, softened the piano a bit and the “metallic” sound was reduced.

Everything ran through a Behringer 2004A 8-channel mixer which was not enough for the 10 tracks needed so 2 extra preamps were used. 8 channels were recorded to a 24-bit ADAT xt and 2 tracks to a Sharp MD player which later were resampled and “hand” synced. One big problem with the setup was that because of the limited space everything needed to be close miced. The close micing led to the problem that gain on some instruments could not be reduced enough to avoid clipping in the recorder (the mixer lacked pad) so a limiter/compressor was inserted (Samson 4channel).

During the session the audience microphones, 2 old and bashed Pearl microphones, stopped working.

Drums were recorded with only 2 microphones, AKG 535 with pad engaged, in a setup close to NOS about 60 cm out in front of the kit and at about the height of the toms.

Ola Åkermans trombone was miced with an EV 257 from about 30 cm (when he remembered it being there). The clarinet was recorded with an old dynamic microphone of unknown brand, a budget copy of an old EV dynamic.

The other instruments including trumpet, Gunhilds trombone, blues harp, voice and violin was recorded with a Røde nt-3 small diaphragm condenser.

The contrabassist Ludvig had his own combo amplifier from which I took a line out. The sound of the bass is not very natural but on the other hand has no bleed, he also had problems with the microphone having loose contact. Actually there is a dropout in the end of Caravan where the microphone loses contact and the amplifier distorts. The bass you can hear on that spot is actually pasted from the first “verse”.

The postprocessing

All tracks were imported to and mixed with the digital multitrack program N-track. The recording was extremely dry, almost as a studio recording but with a lot of bleed. The sonic ideal was some kind of live concert feeling and Gunhild wanted it to sound “like the old recordings” so the search for believable reverberation began. The first mixing sessions and demo mixes used budget VST plugin reverb and of course everything sounded artificial. About that time I found out about CATT and FIRverb and contacted Bengt-Inge. He suggested that I took the dry mix, ran it through FIRverb where the reverb came from backward-facing microphones in the virtual room i.e. the rear microphones of a 5-channel mic setup catching that special “room sound” lacking when using close micing then mixed in these back channels. All the way through the record you can hear FIRverb. I am using the same filter throughout the whole record varying only the amount. Also, on some songs the lead instruments is treated with another reverb (Spin-Audio RoomVerb) as it would in a live situation. The reason behind not using the exact amount of reverberation on all songs is that I feel that I in that case would have to favour some songs and the others would suffer. The ideal concert hall varies a tiny bit...

Hope you enjoy the music!

Regards

Johan Blomé, producer and engineer

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