



The Rainbow Band. Directed by John Surman

The Rainbow Band – how did it start?

Well, the idea came from Jan Erik Kongshaug originally. He and I were sitting together enjoying a beer in Bergen when we were there recording with the Bergen Big Band. He said that from time to time the main studio at Rainbow would be sitting empty in the evenings after daytime sessions had finished – and what a shame it was. There there was this great playing space with no music going on and did I have any ideas? I remembered that when I was packing up my things in England prior to moving over to Norway I had found a pile of 8 piece arrangements from the old octet that I ran in the sixties. I thought it might be fun to play through some of them again. Jan Erik agreed, and so we decided to see if we could put an occasional band together. For this we owe a great vote of thanks to Roger Johansen, who bravely volunteered to phone around a few musicians to see who might be interested and once we were up and running, continued to check on players availability from week to week whenever we could manage to get together. The musicians that you will hear on this CD formed the core of the band – but we also had occasional visits from Jens Fossum and Dave Edge – many thanks to them too!!

So what about the music?

Once I'd dug out the old arrangements I found that there were lots of parts missing and photocopied pages that had faded away – so some rescue work was called for. There were two pieces that I particularly wanted to restore. The first was an arrangement by Alan Cohen of Thelonious Monk's "Off Minor" and a piece by Eddie Harvey, originally written for the alto player in my octet Mike Osborne, called "The Wizard". I have tried to retain the feeling of the original charts and hope that Alan and Eddie won't be too distressed at my repair jobs. The two pieces of mine "One Last Waltz" and "Going for a Burton" are exactly as written in 1967. The waltz might be better known in it's vocal version – "It Could be Hip" as sung by Karin Krog from time to time. Not all the arrangements date back to the sixties however. I asked my old soul-mate John Warren if he could send me a copy of a composition of his that I had played some time before called "My Sketchy Spanish", (a tribute to the great Miles/Gil Evans "Sketches of Spain" album). Typically generous, JW sent me not only that piece but eight other great compositions of his, which we've all enjoyed playing immensely – he is such a great (and underexposed) composer and arranger.

How did the recordings come about?

I suppose you can take the man out of the studio, but you can't take the studio out of the man! When we all arrived for the first play through we were surprised to see that Jan Erik had set up all the recording gear as if it were to be a recording session as well – "I might as well just record the sessions – might be fun to listen back later – but we just carry on and have fun". And that's exactly what we did. So over a period of several months we got together, more or less once a week, and just played. In fairness to all the musicians involved, I have to say that none of us intended that this music would be released as an album – so what you are listening to is simply musicians having fun playing music that they enjoy playing. However when Jan Erik sent me a CD in the post almost a year after the get-togethers had ended, I was amazed at how good the group sounded. It seemed a shame that the recordings would never be heard outside of Rainbow – so here they are.

John Surman

John Surman bs / ss

Håvard Fossum as

Atle Nymo ts

Marius Haltli trp

Harald Halvorsen trb

Jan-Erik Kongshaug g

Andreas Bye drms

Frode Nymo as

Knut Riisnæs ts / fl

Roy Nikolaisen trp

Jørgen Gjerde trb

Erlend Slettevoll pno

Stig Hvalrygg b

Roger Johansen drms

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