

Carl Lindström and the Lindström labels in Scandinavia.

By **Björn Englund** (May 2008)

Carl Lindström (1869-1932) was a mechanical genius, who, although he apparently had no formal technical schooling, played an important part in the early years of the recording industry. *The Carl Lindström GmbH* (later AG) was one of the leading companies not only in Europe, but also in Asia, Africa and South America, and in Scandinavia it was second only to *The Gramophone Company*.

Carl Elof Lindström was born in Södertälje (a city about 10 miles south of Stockholm and now the site of the Scania-Vabis truck company) on June 26, 1869 (not 1867 as reported previously). His father was (Frans) Oskar Lindström (August 3, 1846 – January 10, 1928) and his mother Sofia (Mathilda) Karlsson (February 15, 1849 – December 22, 1919). There were five brothers; Oskar (Gunnar) (1874-19??). He went to sea early and ended up in New Zealand. Thore (Gustaf) (1867-1948). He started a music shop in Södertälje in 1919 and in 1922 he had the Stadion label, which featured Södertälje artists. The records were pressed (and perhaps recorded) by the Skandia firm in Sundbyberg (which was taken over by Odeon in 1923, see below). Johan [later John] (Edvin) (1879-1950). Sixten (Henning) (1883-1887). Per (Ivar) (1885-1940). In 1911 he and Thore took over the father's factory: *Lindströms Axel- och mekaniska fabrik* in Strängnäs. (Thore was only a "silent partner", having moved to Södertälje in 1910 and he left the firm in 1918 and started his shop as explained above.) Three sisters: Ida (Helena) (1871-19??). Signe (Helena) (1881-1883). Signe (Maria) (1888-19??).

Oskar Lindström came to Södertälje in 1867 and studied at the technical school and later was employed by the Atlas works. In 1877 he moved with his family to Strängnäs and started his firm mentioned above, becoming an important supplier to the Swedish army and was also an fire inspector for the Swedish railways.. Carl Lindström constructed on his own a telephone line between the home and the factory around 1885 and was certainly a pioneer in this field. He also built a dynamo at the same time which provided electrical light in his father's factory. He left school prematurely in December, 1882, Though his brothers attended various technical schools, there is no evidence that Carl did so. But his brother John had some technical books which had belonged to Carl, so he probably studied on his own.

He worked in his father's factory, but moved to Stockholm in January 1891 and on June 5, 1892 he left for Stettin, Germany (now Szczecin, Poland). Most probably he did not stay there, but continued directly to Berlin and in 1896 started his own firm (*Mechanische Werskstätten für Musik und Sprache*) and was soon developing phonographs and later gramophones. (Some sources claim he started another smaller firm already in 1893.) The firm was successful, but in 1903 there could have been a failure as he had given a large credit to a Russian firm that was not paid. Fortunately in January 1904 *Carl Lindström GmbH* was founded by Max Straus and Heinrich Zuntz who provided the capital and actually ran the company. Lindström worked on the technical development. According to Straus he was both hard of hearing and unmusical. Lindström actually stayed for only a decade, leaving in 1914 and starting his own small firm. Zuntz soon died and was replaced by Otto Heinemann. The company expanded rapidly, became a joint-stock company on 1908 (*Carl Lindström AG*) and in 1910 and 1911 acquired among other the Beka, Dacapo, Favorite, Fontipia, Gloria, Lyrophon and Odeon labels. In 1911 the 30 cm Parlophon label was launched. There were now two principal recording divisions, Beka/Parlophon and Odeon (*The International Talking Machine Company*). The former had a strictly numerical matrix series and used the Parlophon

label for 30 cm issues and the Beka label for 25 cm issues. The “2” matrix prefix indicated 30 cm (from 12 for 12 inch). From 1928 Beka was replaced by red Parlophons for 25 cm issues. The Odeon division had already from 1904 used letter prefixes to indicate reording locations: B for Berlin, A for Amsterdam, P for Paris etc. The sizes were 18-19 cm, 27 cm, 30 cm and 35 cm (B, XB, XXB, XXXB etc). When the Jumbo label was launched in 1908 it was 25 cm and had a Bo prefix. We should interpret this as B + zero (from 0 in 10 for 10 inch). The zero prefix was added in many countries when the 25 disc was launched (Mo, Po, Jo, Vo, Buo, Go, Wo, Ro, So, Co, Lxo, Aoo, Pho, Fo).

Recordings in Scandinavia began in 1912 in Denmark and Sweden, 1913 in Norway but not until 1929 in Finland. (Already in 1907 a Swedish title had been recorded in Berlin: *Kring julgranen. Wästgöta polska*, Odeon 64258/coupling 64275.) In the acoustic era Odeon made only 25 cm recordings in Sweden, 25 cm and a single (unissued; XXNw 421, test exists) 30 cm title in Norway, but in Denmark quite a number of 27 and 30 cm titles were also made. The prefixes were Sto for Stockholm, Gto for Gothenburg (as noted above, the final digit is a zero, not the letter o), Kpo, XKp, XXXKp for Copenhagen (25, 27 and 30 cm), Nw and XXNw for Kristiania (from 1925 renamed Oslo) and Hf for Helsinki/Helsingfors (recordings began in 1929 at Hf 23; Hf 1-22 were probably recorded in Stockholm or Berlin). (In the electrical era Danish Odeon forgot that 30 cm issues should be XXXKp and used XXXKpo instead.) From 1925 15 cm children’s records were issued on the Odeonette label (using the Stm prefix in Sweden). The Cezar label leased Odeon titles which had been reduced to the cheap green label series. In 1923 Swedish Odeon took over the Skandia label in the Stockholm suburb of Sundbyberg and its offices and pressing plant and also its engineer Gustaf Jonason. He signed his acoustic recordings “J” in the run-off area and his electrical titles “JS”. (Most recordings in Scandinavia were made by German engineers from 1909 to 1929, but Jonason made all Swedish Odeon recordings from 1924 to 1926 and even in Oslo in February 1925.) He also made the recordings for Parlophon and Homocord (after that label had been taken over by Lindström), Columbia and in 1932 for HMV. (His signature also appears on Finnish Odeons and Estonian Columbias; it is unclear whether these were recorded in Helsinki and Tallin or in Stockholm.)

Beka made recordings in Scandinavia from 1909, but Danish opera singers may have recorded in Berlin for Beka prior to this. The Beka branch also made 15 cm Mignon recordings and recorded for the Swedish Harmonium label in 1919 and 1920 and for the Rolf Succès label in 1920. Beka recordings were also leased to a number of mail-order labels including Matador, Norrlandsskivan, Skön-ton, Stjärn-rekord, Svenska stålbolaget. From January 1921 the label name in Sweden was changed from Beka to Ekophon and in 1927 Ekophon was replaced by the Parlophon label. The first 25 cm Parlophon issues came in Denmark in 1924, when the black Parlophon Junior label replaced Beka.

Beka and Odeon made separate recording expeditions from 1909 to at least 1919. The first proven common expedition was in August 1927 when Odeon and Parlophon made their first electrical recordings in Sweden (a few titles appeared on both labels). But right up until the mid-1930’s a large number of titles were recorded by Scandinavian artists in Berlin for the Lindström labels. (The Odeon Sto 3000 block, for instance, was reserved for Berlin recordings.)

After British Columbia took over the Lindström firm in 1926, they used the Western Electric electrical recording system, indicated by the W matrix prefix. They soon developed their own, indicated by £ and there also was a £W prefix, apparently indicating a combined system. (From 1933 the Berlin recordings had a P prefix, indicating still another system.) The £

system was used in Sweden from the time Odeon had a permanent studio (November, 1929) until March 1, 1935. From the next session (April 6, 1935) the Columbia moving-coil system was used, indicated by a square after the matrix number. This was due to the EMI merger of 1931 and from 1935 to November 1937 an engineer from British EMI made all the Scandinavian recordings for HMV, Columbia and Odeon (and their subsidiary labels). The moving-coil system had started already 23.1.34 for Danish HMV, 30.1.35 for Swedish HMV. After the outbreak of war the Lindström firm in Berlin took direct control over the Scandinavian Odeon labels. The £ system replaced the moving-coil system from November 1939 and the £ symbol is visible on the discs until 1942.

HMV, Columbia, Odeon, and Parlophon(e) had used different local agencies, but from 1957 they were all represented by Skandinaviska Grammophon AB in Sweden.

The Lindström 78 rpm labels in Scandinavia:

Denmark:

Beka, Odeon, Mignon, Parlophon Junior, Parlophone, Scala and produced for **Corona, Helofon, Schou, Tono Radio Record**

Finland:

Homocord, Imperial, Kristall, Odeon, Parlophon

Norway:

Odeon, Parlophon, Scala

Sweden:

Astoria, Beka, Ekophon, Homocord, Jumbo, Kristall (after August, 1937), **Mignon, Odeon, Odeonette, Parlophon, Scala** (originally an independent label) and produced for **Cameo, Cezar, Dacapo, Dixi, Grand, Harmonium, Hemmets härold, Matador, Norrlands-skivan, Resia, Rolf Succès, Silverton, Sirius, Skön-ton, Stjärn-rekord, Svenska stålbolaget, Tellus, Vaktornet**

In the 1930's a peculiar form of recording was done in Berlin: Danish and Finnish artists added their vocals to previous instrumental recordings by orchestras such as those of **Dajos Béla** and even **Harry Roy** (from British Parlophone). These show the -0 added to the matrix number (the zero was the Lindström code for dubbing)

The sources:

In Sweden the Odeon recording ledgers from November 1926 onwards and all other archive material is in Statens ljud- och bildarkiv (SLBA). From 1953 the ledgers show the names of ALL musicians and how much they were paid. Other ledgers show how many copies were sold and how much the singers and orchestra leaders received in royalties. SLBA has published my discographies of Swedish Parlophon 1927-1933 and Swedish Odeon 1926-1934 (unfortunately, they will not allow me to continue with a 1935-1957 volume). These books also list all unissued recordings. All ISSUED (electrical) recordings are also shown in the SLBA

78 rpm data base (also on the Internet). The acoustic Lindström issues are listed in Karleric Liliedahl's discography of the 1903-1928 Swedish acoustic recordings (excepting those by the Gramophone Co.) published by SLBA. The Finnish Odeon, Parlophon, Imperial and Kristall issues are listed by The Finnish Institute of Recorded Sound in the 1901-1982 discography and on their Internet site. Norwegian Odeon and Scala are covered in discographies by Vidar Vanberg (1913-1939) and Tom Valle and Arild Bratteland (1938-1968). Danish Beka, Odeon, Mignon, Parlophon Junior, Parlophone and Scala issues are listed in the Statsbiblioteket, Århus, data base, but ONLY those discs which are in the archive, thus there are many gaps.

The EMI Music Archives in Hayes have copies of the Scandinavian Odeon and Parlophon(e) ledgers from 1929 onwards except for the 1940-1945 period (but seem to have a complete listing of Danish Odeon for those years). The National Sound Archive (housed in the British Library) has microfilm copies of these ledgers. NSA also has a microfilm of a ledger which shows ALL 78's pressed for the European market by British Columbia from at least 1920 on labels such as Columbia, Homocord, Odeon, Parlophon(e) and even minor labels such as the Swedish Sundquist label of 1920. This lists only catalogue numbers and matrix numbers (and control numbers, if any), but no artist names or titles. Still, it is most valuable, since it lists ALL catalogue numbers including many which were withdrawn before issue. (Among the most curious are several issues on Hungarian Homocord from American Okeh with the original Okeh catalogue numbers, but with a HU prefix. These include several by Louis Armstrong, all are under pseudonyms!)

I guess the researchers at this conference know better than I what's in the EMI archive in Köln, but I would point out that Karleric Liliedahl visited them and made 16 mm film copies of ALL ledgers containing Scandinavian titles going back as far as 1910 on labels such as Beka, Columbia, Ekophon, Harmonium, Mignon., Odeon, Odeonette, Parlophon. These films are available for study at the SLBA archive.

Overview of the Lindström matrix series in Scandinavia. Left column Beka/Parlophon group, right column Odeon group.

Denmark:

55000- 55719	Berlin, Copenhagen	(X)Kp	1- 66	Copenhagen
152000-152420	Copenhagen, Berlin	XXKp	1- 16	"
		XXKp	100- 115	Berlin
		Kpo	1-1383	Copenhagen
		Kpo	1384-2278	Berlin
		Kpo	3000-5415	Cop., Sthlm

Finland:

64002-64248*	Berlin	Hf	1-1467	Berlin, Helsinki, Sthlm
2-64900-64901	"	Hf	2000-2321	Helsinki

*Started with 64002 because of 2-64900-64901!

Norway:

78000-78129	Kristiania	Nw	1- 600	Kristiania, Sthlm
78200-78263	Berlin	Nw	601- 799	Berlin

78500-78735	Stockholm, Oslo	Nw 800-1149 Oslo
2-78800-78803	Berlin	Nw 1800-1826 Berlin
		Nw 1900-3077 Sthlm, Brln, Oslo
		CLN 1- 626 Oslo

Sweden:

13000- 13021	Berlin	Dac 1- 100	Stockholm
49000- 49999	Sthlm, Gbg, Cop., Brln	Dac 101- 119	“
51200- 51898	“, Kristiania	Dac 501- 544	“
51925- 51999	Berlin	Gto 1- 102	Gothenburg
E 434- 637	Sundbyberg	Lr 1- 15	Stockholm
67000- 67899	Stockholm, Berlin	LSt 1- 266	“
67900- 67978	Berlin	Pr 1- 30	“
143000- 143077	Stockholm	Prv (some numbers fr. the Brln block)	
		Sca 1- 499	Stockholm
		Sca 500- 516	“
		Sca 600- 951	“
		Sil 1- 736	“
		SR 1- 4	“
		Stk 1- 13	“
		Stm 1- 44	“
		Sto 1- 2999	“, Sbg, Brln
		Sto 3000- 3557	“, Brln, Oslo
		Sto 3600- 4016 (!)	“, Berlin
		Sto 4000- 8759	“, Gothenb., Malmö, Oslo, Copenhagen Paris
		Tur 1- 148	Stockholm
		Tur 5000- 5095	“, Berlin
		ZL 1- 4	“

(The various catalogue series are so complex that I will list them at a later date.)

(Inge Bergqvist, Strängnäs, supplied most of the biographical material on Lindström and is preparing a biography to be published later in 2008.)