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ELGART, Lawrence (Larry) Joseph

Born	March 20, 1922 New London, Connecticut, U.S.
Died	August 29, 2017 (aged 95) Longboat Key, Florida, U.S.
Genres	Jazz
Occupation(s)	Musician, bandleader
Instruments	Alto saxophone
Associated acts	Les Elgart

Lawrence Joseph Elgart (March 20, 1922 – August 29, 2017) was an American jazz bandleader. With his brother Les, he recorded "Bandstand Boogie", the theme to the long-running dance show *American Bandstand*.

Biography

Elgart was born in 1922 in New London, Connecticut, four years younger than his brother, Les, and grew up in Pompton Lakes, New Jersey. Their mother was a concert pianist; their father also played piano, though not professionally. Larry and Les both attended Pompton Lakes High School. Both brothers began playing in jazz ensembles in their teens, and while young Larry played with jazz musicians such as Charlie Spivak, Woody Herman, Red Norvo, Freddie Slack and Tommy Dorsey.

In the mid-1940s, Les and Larry started up their own ensemble, hiring Nelson Riddle, Bill Finegan and Ralph Flanagan to arrange tunes for them. Their ensemble was not successful, and after a few years, they scuttled the band and sold the arrangements they had commissioned to Tommy Dorsey. Both returned to sideman positions in various orchestras.

In 1953, Larry met Charles Albertine and recorded two of his experimental compositions, "Impressions of Outer Space" and "Music for Barefoot Ballerinas". Released on 10" vinyl, these recordings became collectors' items for fans of avantgarde jazz, but they were not commercially successful. Larry and Albertine put together a more traditional ensemble and began recording them using precise microphone placements, producing what came to be known as the "Elgart Sound". This proved to be very commercially successful, and throughout the 1950s, Larry and Les enjoyed a run of successful albums and singles on the Columbia label. Their initial LP,

"Sophisticated Swing," released in late 1953, was credited to The Les Elgart Orchestra, because, according to Larry, Les was more interested than his brother in fronting the band.

In 1954, the Elgarts left their permanent mark on music history in recording Albertine's "Bandstand Boogie," for the legendary television show originally hosted by Bob Horn, and two years later, by Dick Clark. In 1956, Clark took the show from its local broadcast in Philadelphia, to ABC-TV for national distribution as "American Bandstand." He remained host for another 32 years. Variations of the original song surfaced as the show's theme in later years.

In 1955, the band became The Les and Larry Elgart Orchestra, but the brothers split in 1959, each subsequently releasing his own series of LPs. Larry signed with RCA Victor. His 1959 album, "New Sounds At the Roosevelt," was nominated that year for a Grammy Award. From 1960 to 1962, he released music on MGM Records. Larry and Les reunited in 1963 and recorded several more albums, ending with 1967's "Wonderful World of Today's Hits," after which they went their separate ways. Les moved to Texas and performed with The Les Elgart Orchestra until his death in 1995.

Elgart's biggest exposure came in 1982, with the smash success of a recording titled "Hooked on Swing". The instrumental was a medley of swing jazz hits - "In the Mood", "Cherokee", "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree", "American Patrol", "Sing, Sing, Sing", "Don't Be That Way", "Little Brown Jug", "Opus #1", "Take the A Train", "Zing Went the Strings of My Heart" and "A String of Pearls" - that became so popular it even cracked the US Billboard Pop Singles chart (at No. 31) and Adult Contemporary chart (No. 20). This was the final hit for any artist in the year-long "medley craze," that lasted from 1981 to 1982. Billed as "Larry Elgart and His Manhattan Swing Orchestra," the LP from which the tune was taken hit No. 24 on the US charts. The follow-up, *Hooked on Swing 2*, debuted at No. 89 on the album charts, and soon after Larry was back to the jazz touring circuit. He continued to tour internationally and record into the 2000s.

A resident of Longboat Key, Florida, Elgart died in 2017 at a hospice center in Sarasota, Florida, at the age of 95.