

Paris Jazz 10 – 13 June

Paris was the first European city to engage with the idea of jazz from the earliest days. It became a home for black from the days of Josephine Baker and Sidney Bechet. A fascination with African visual art went hand-in-hand with an interest in African-American music: Stravinsky, Satie, Debussy and Les Six all engaged with jazz rhythms and ragtime.

So the idea of this week is to present a series of snap shots from the city's rich history of jazz: I've focused on key artists from each period and prefaced each concert with a contextual session. We begin in the late 1920s and 1930s with Django Reinhardt: he represents perhaps the first authentic European response to Black American jazz. As an outsider himself, he brought his own *Manouche* tradition to jazz in a uniquely creative way. And that tradition, and the spirit of Django, is alive and well, as Bireli Lagrène, its foremost exponent and a phenomenal guitarist will prove.

Out of the maelstrom of post-War Paris emerged a new philosophy, Existentialism, and a new questioning of art and society. Amidst the social upheaval, there was the ground-breaking concert by Dizzy Gillespie in the Salle Pleyel in 1947, which introduced the explosive and complex style of Bebop to Europe. This legendary event was followed by the arrival of Miles Davis a year later, and his encounter with actress and chanteuse Juliette Gréco. Bonnie Greer will explore their extraordinary liason on Thursday, before we welcome octagenarian pianist Martial Solal, a living connection with the earliest days of Bebop, having played with Kenny Clarke and Don Byas, and who remains a highly creative and original pianist to this day. One of Solal's major achievements was writing the movie soundtrack to *Breathless* and on Saturday we'll examine the way 'nouvelle vague' cinema engaged with contemporary jazz with showings of *Breathless* and *Lift to the Scaffold*, with its score by Miles Davis.

During the Sixties and Seventies Paris became home to many American jazz musicians: artists like Steve Lacy, Bud Powell, Dexter Gordon, Don Cherry and the Art Ensemble of Chicago were resident. The legendary bassist, composer and band-leader Henri Texier provides our link to this period: he played hard bop with Bud Powell and free jazz with Don Cherry, and now occupies a unique place on the French scene, a fearsomely individual musician, who is absolutely contemporary but carries this extraordinary experience of jazz history with him. The saxophonist Steve Lacy came to Paris in 1970 and lived around the corner from the Pompidou Centre for years. He brought the very essence of American jazz to Europe – he had worked with Thelonious Monk – but he also began to work with European jazz musicians, and became an inspiring figure: in a tribute

concert to him, former collaborator Evan Parker, is joined by pianist Hans Koller, to evoke and recreate the work of a quietly brilliant innovator.

Whatever the tensions in the city today, Paris continues to act as a magnet for musicians from all over the world, and I've chosen the Serbian musician Bojan Z to represent the contemporary scene. He's an exciting artist, known for playing acoustic and electric keyboards simultaneously, who has absorbed jazz, rock, funk and his Balkan roots in a highly dynamic way

John Cummings - Serious