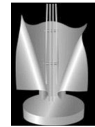




piano

rené urtreger

**Victoire
d'Honneur
du Jazz 2005**



Pianist and french composer René Urtreger, born in 1934, studied classical piano before immersing himself in jazz at Blue Note with D. Byas and B. Clayton. He then played live with J.J. Johnson, S. Getz, Z. Sims, S. Grappelli, B. Jaspar, T. Thomas, L. Hampton, C. Baker, L. Young (on Le Dernier Message de Lester Young, his last record). He played with Miles Davis on the Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud soundtrack, and in 1956 and 1957 he gave concert performances throughout Europe. In 1960 he won the Django Reinhardt award for HUM . He also composed soundtracks for C. Berri and R. Ferret films. During the eighties he regularly performed in concerts and festivals with D. Gillespie, S. Getz, L. Konitz, and with various ensembles of his own. Since completing the third installment of his journey with the HUM trio (Humair, Urtreger, Michelot), he has performed solo or with his own trio : Yves Torchinsky on bass and Eric Dervieu on drums.

In the little world of jazz he is sometimes called King René, perhaps as a distant echo of the fourteenth-century count of Provence who preferred arts and letters and the company of intellectuals to the fervour of war and courtly visits. René Urtreger is a bit this way. Modest in his speech, easy in his manners, discreet about his accomplishments. And yet he has frequented the beau monde, and when one knows his story, one knows that it is the stuff of a novel about a life in jazz. Getting his start at eighteen on the Paris Blue Note stage, where he accompanied the saxophone player Don Byas. Miles Davis' regular pianist when Miles was haunting the Rive Gauche (It's him you hear on the Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud score). Lester Young's last accompanist in studio; companion of Bobby Jaspar and Barney Wiler; recording with Lionel Hampton and Chet Baker... René Urtreger is one of those European musicians who, without knowing it, invented the sound of an era and were the best servants of jazz on the continent. Soundtracks, and pop music as well (Claude François!), but above all concert tours with the greatest, from Dizzy Gillespie to Lee Konitz, by way of Johnny Griffin, Sonny Rollins and Stan Getz. Need we say more ? Rooted in a genuine tradition, endowed with an erudition which is the fruit of a love affair with the music that Thelonius Monk and Bud Powell invented, branded for ever by bebop, the pianist loves above all to focus on the essentials, not to lie to oneself, not to fall into the traps of easy exuberance and ludicrous fusions. He sometimes paid the price for wanting to be, first and foremost, a jazzman and to claim only this title. With drummer Daniel Humair and bassist Pierre Michelot he formed in 1960 the HUM trio, which recorded an album every... twenty years! It is the honor of the Sketch label to have gathered these albums together.

The handsome allure of a playboy, a playful pout adorned by two pretty wrinkles born from an eternal desire to laugh; mischievous, sometimes solemn jade eyes: rather a hardy character, René! They say he's principled. Better. He's inflexible. In his life as in his music.

Very sensitive, this tough guy with a tender heart can suddenly close himself off. Melancholic, even taciturn. But he can seduce you with his beautiful voice. Very gifted, in his youth he was able to play by ear music he had heard only once. After completing his long classical studies and swinging already with Chopin and Bach, he became a jazzman. Racing to the top. He wanders with the greatest fluency when the beat's the fastest. With the greatest tenderness on the slowest ballads. Great soloist, sweeping use of chords, generous accompanist, careful, rich at heart. But be careful! Don't provoke him in chess; his checkmates hurt. Able to compete with the best. And let him talk about soccer! Inexhaustible. Passionate. He knows how to relate a game as if every player was a pawn of a big chessboard. Ah, soccer's diagonals!
Worried René, laughing René,... born swingman, rare jazzman.

"Under the line's purity and his expressive restraint aims the eternal wonder of the jazzman facing the moment to come."

Endowed with a strong classical foundation, with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and with a superb ear, René Urtreger rapidly established himself as one of the leaders of the new generation of French jazz. Very soon at the highest level, he recorded in 1953 with Miles Davis and Stan Getz and participated in recording the soundtrack for Louis Malle's *Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud*. He accompanied Dexter Gordon, Sonny Rollins, Lester Young and Chet Baker...

Between René Urtreger's first recording and his last production, already forty five years have passed... "You may as well say an eternity for our rushed era. Just enough time, in fact, for a young, resolutely modern man, snatched up at the turn of the fifties by the restless lyricism of the bebop revolution, to transform, over the course of records and collaborations, without ever deviating from his core aesthetic, into a timeless musician, a miraculous reserve of a secret and intangible musical alchemy which is forever unteachable in jazz academies. In short, just enough time to devote his life to jazz, to finally embody a quintessential romanticism which is naive and imperceptibly...melancholy."

He plays in trio with Yves Torchinsky on bass and Eric Dervieu on drums, or in quintet, adding to the pair Nicolas Folmer on trumpet and Hervé Meschinet on saxophone.

René Urtreger is an invaluable pianist because he is uncommon. He deserved his Victoire de la Musique prize, as a kind of consecration.

Timeline

- 1934 : Birth in Paris
- 1956 : Touring with Miles Davis.
- 1959 : Plays on Lester Young's last record.
- 1960 : First HUM trio album.
- 1965 : Records with Stéphane Grappelli and Stuff Smith.
- 2000 : His first solo album.
- 2014 : Académie Charles-Cros prize

Selected Discography

- René Urtreger : "*Plays Bud Powell*", 1955, Jazz in Paris.
- Bobby Jaspar : "*Modern Jazz au Club Saint-Germain*", 1955, Jazz in Paris.
- Miles Davis : "*Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud*", 1957, Fontana.
- Daniel Humair, René Urtreger, Pierre Michelot : "*HUM*", 1960, 1979 et 1999, Sketch.
- René Urtreger : "*Onirica*", 2000, Sketch.