

Biography

Born in 1960 in Paris, now an American citizen, self-taught pianist and composer Jean-Michel Pilc has performed with numerous jazz giants: **Roy Haynes, Michael Brecker, Dave Liebman, Jean Toussaint, Rick Margitza, Martial Solal, Michel Portal, Daniel Humair, Marcus Miller, Kenny Garrett, Lenny White, Chris Potter, John Abercrombie, Mingus Dynasty & Big Band, Lew Soloff, Richard Bona** etc. He has also worked with **Harry Belafonte**, as his musical director and pianist, and has performed a duet with the legendary opera singer **Jessye Norman**.

Jean-Michel moved to New York City in 1995. There, he formed a trio with **François Moutin** (bass) and **Ari Hoenig** (drums). They recorded a one-week engagement at the legendary jazz club **Sweet Basil** and, in 2000, released two CDs: ***Together - Live at Sweet Basil, NYC - Vol. 1 & 2*** (A-Records). Pilc then signed a record deal with Dreyfus Jazz. His first album for Dreyfus, ***Welcome Home*** (featuring the same trio), was released in 2002. Jean-Michel's next recording, ***Cardinal Points***, was released the following year. It featured his extended work ***Trio Sonata***, created with generous support from **Chamber Music America New Works: Creation and Presentation Program, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**.

In 2004, Jean-Michel released his first solo album, ***Follow Me*** (Dreyfus). Then he returned to trio format to record ***Live at Iridium, NYC***, in 2004, ***New Dreams*** in 2006, and ***True Story*** in 2009 (featuring **Billy Hart**). This was also a period of intensive touring all over the world.

In 2009, Jean-Michel received his second **New Works Grant from Chamber Music America**, for the writing and performance of ***Modern Lights***, a composition reflecting Charlie Chaplin's work, and the inspiration Jean-Michel has gained from his movies. The project was premiered at the Caramoor Jazz Festival in August 2009.

Jean-Michel's next two albums were both released in 2011 on the Motema label to great critical acclaim: ***Essential***, a live solo piano recording, and ***Threedom***, featuring his legendary trio with François Moutin & Ari Hoenig, which had reformed in 2010 under the collective name **Pilc Moutin Hoenig**. There is also a documentary out by John McCormick titled ***Jean-Michel Pilc – A Portrait*** (2009, Living Jazz Archive).

In 2013, Jean-Michel was granted a **Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation**, in the **Music Composition** category. The project was an octet, ***Big One***, featuring all new original music.

In 2015, Jean-Michel released ***What Is This Thing Called?*** his third solo album and first release for Sunnyside. Jean-Michel is also a virtuoso whistler, as documented on a solo piano & whistle track in the CD ***Christmas from the Blue Note*** (2010, Half Note).

Always a busy performer, Jean-Michel has been very active in 2013-2016 as a leader, performing mainly solo and trio, and touring many places including Japan, Taiwan, Europe, USA and Canada. He has also been in high demand as a co-leader and sideman, participating in numerous projects over the world and recording more than 10 CDs. Among these projects and recordings: duos with **Kenny Werner**, **Sam Newsome**, **Sylvain Luc** and the legendary **Martial Solal**, trio with **Thomas Bramerie & André Ceccarelli** ***Twenty***, guitarist **Teriver Cheung** ***Hong Kong Episodes***, Greek bass player **Petros Klampanis** ***Contextual***, NYC drummer **Tony Moreno** ***Short Stories***, **Moutin Reunion Quintet** ***Deep***, Brazilian guitarist **Fabio Gouvea**, Dutch bassist **Jasper Somsen**, Danish bassist **Mads Vinding**, and many others.

Jean-Michel has also built a strong international reputation as a very unique educator. Between 2006 and 2015, he was a **NYU Steinhardt** faculty member, giving private lessons (piano and other instruments), ensemble classes and improvisation workshops. He was **Co-Director of NYU Summer Jazz Improv Workshop** in 2010. Jean-Michel also taught for the **New School** in NYC, as well as privately.

At the same time, he released a book, ***It's About Music - The Art and Heart of Improvisation*** (Glen Lyon) and an educational video for all instruments, ***True Jazz Improvisation*** (JazzHeaven), followed by another video for JazzHeaven, ***Transcending the Instrument***, about piano playing and practicing. All have been praised by his colleagues, and highly influential in the field of jazz education.

Since September 2015, Jean-Michel is an **Associate Professor** at **The Schulich School of Music of McGill University** in Montreal. There, he is teaching jazz, piano, and improvisation (all instruments). He will be the new **Jazz Area Chair** starting January 2017, and will also be teaching a **Seminar on improvisation in all styles** to 40 McGill jazz and classical students. Jean-Michel also keeps releasing pedagogical material, including 2 video masterclasses on ***Improvisational Fluency*** for MyMusicMasterclass.com, as well as a masterclass in French, ***Anatomie d'un standard***, for iMusic School.

In addition to already existing projects, Jean-Michel is now working on new Montreal-based ones, such as the **Montreal Trio** with **Rémi-Jean Leblanc** and **Jim Doxas**, and the **Improvisation Workshop Project** with **Rémi Bolduc**, **Kevin Dean** and **Jean-Nicolas Trottier**, funded by the **Fonds de Recherche du Québec - Société et Culture (FRQSC)**. He has also been a special guest of the **Orchestre National de Jazz de Montreal** and a sideman of various Montreal musicians. He continues to play **solo** (a new album will be released in 2018 on Challenge Records) as well as with NYC-based groups such as: **Pilc-Moutin-Hoenig**, **Total Madness Quintet**, duo with **Sam Newsome**, and **NYC Trio** with **Sam Minaie** and **Jerad Lippi**.

Quotes

"His densely harmonic reinventions of standards you thought you knew clearly shows a musical genius at work."

Eric Brace, **The Washington Post**

"There may be no more diverse, unpredictable jazz piano player, song to song, than Jean-Michel Pilc."

Thomas Conrad, **JazzTimes**

"A dazzlingly inventive pianist."

Nate Chinen, **The New York Times**

"Jean-Michel Pilc belongs right in the front row."

John Fordham, **Guardian Unlimited** (UK, **** review)

"One of the astounding jazz piano trios of the past decade." Don Williamson, **Jazz Review**

"Mr Pilc seems to have dropped from the sky fully formed, with technique and his ideas in place. He is a physical and densely harmonic player, a splashy stunner who also has a Rubik's-cube mind for chord substitutions."

Ben Ratliff, **New York Times**

"...visual art references come to mind: Cubist renderings of melody in which the original is reshaped into a completely different visual perspective; the shimmering opaqueness of Impressionism in some of Pilc's lush harmonies..."

Don Heckman, **Los Angeles Times**

"Follow Me" stands a major summation of Pilc's keyboard art, which has no counterparts. Pilc ranks among today's titans of the instrument... there's more to his art than the speed, precision and power of his 10 phenomenal fingers."

Howard Reich, **Chicago Tribune (2004 10 best jazz CDs)**

"I am absolutely stunned by the work of pianist Jean-Michel Pilc... The rhythm section sizzles under (his) leadership."

Bob Dorough, vocalist.

"...make no mistake about it, to his credit, Mr. Pilc is very unique... I would say that this trio starts at Mars, and then goes from there. Don't expect anything resembling conventional interpretations. This is fascinating and rewarding music..."

Rick Helzer, **Jazz Improv**

"The big discovery in the acoustic field was Jean-Michel Pilc. His sound is majestic, his statements urging. Supported by an equally strong rhythm section it didn't take him much effort to get Carel-Willinck Hall steaming..."

NRC Handelsblad, reporting on a North Sea Jazz Festival appearance.

"While never dry or abstract, Pilc is a model for playing a little to say a lot."

Mark Keresman, **Jazziz**

"should be studied in every music school in the galaxy..."

Harvey Siders, **Jazz Times +Top 50 Picks for Critics Picks 2003**

"...ridiculously well-balanced, and trading in the kind of grace that still has the power to shake a room. Keith Jarrett found something similar... Pilc's nudging it a bit further down the line."

Down Beat, four Star Hot Box review

Selective Discography

As a leader or co-leader:

Sam Newsome / Jean-Michel Pilc: Magic Circle (2017)
Jean-Michel Pilc: What Is This Thing Called? (2014, Sunnyside Records)
Ceccarelli Pilc Bramerie: Twenty (2014, Bonsai Music)
Vinding Pilc Mazur: Composing (2014, Gateway Music)
Pilc Moutin Hoenig: Threedom (2011, Motéma)
Jean-Michel Pilc: Essential (2011, Motéma)
Jean-Michel Pilc: True Story (2009, Dreyfus Jazz)
Jean-Michel Pilc: New Dreams (2007, Dreyfus Jazz)
Jean-Michel Pilc: Live at Iridium (2005, Dreyfus Jazz)
Jean-Michel Pilc: Follow Me (2004, Dreyfus Jazz)
Jean-Michel Pilc: Cardinal Points (2003, Dreyfus Jazz)
Jean-Michel Pilc Trio: Welcome Home (2002, Dreyfus Jazz)
Jean-Michel Pilc / Hein Van De Geyn Duo: The Long Journey (2001, A-Records)
Jean-Michel Pilc Trio: Together Live at Sweet Basil, Volume 1 & 2 (2000, A-Records)
Jean-Michel Pilc: Big One for 13 Piece Band (1993, EMP/Harmonia Mundi)
Jean-Michel Pilc Trio: Funambule (1989, Blue Line)
Jean-Michel Pilc: Electrochoc (1987)

As a sideman:

Jasper Somsen Trio: A New Episode in Life / Lunar Suite (2 CDs to be released in 2017, Challenge)
Tony Moreno Quintet: Short Stories (2016, Mayimba Music)
Moutin Factory Quintet: Deep (2016, Jazz Family)
Lars Graugaard: Venus (2015)
Petros Klampanis: Minor Dispute (2014)
Maria Toro: A Contraluz (2014)
Rhys Tivey: No Voice No More (2014, CD Baby)
Rafael Rosa: Portrait (2014, CD Baby)
Mokhtar Samba: African Project (2014)
Lars Graugaard: Fact Machine (2013, Clang)
Benjamin Koppel: Illuminations (2013, Tiger Music)
Fabio Gouvea: So Close So Far (2013)
Richard Bona: Ten Shades of Blues (2010, Decca)
Mads Vinding: Open Minds (2010, Storyville)
Ari Hoenig: Inversations (2006, Dreyfus Jazz)
Rosario Giuliani: More than ever (2004, Dreyfus Jazz)
Elisabeth Kontomanou: Midnight Sun (2004, Nocturne Records)
Rick Margitza: Rue des Voleurs (2004, Nocturne Records)
Ari Hoenig: The Painter (2004, Smalls Records)
Sam Newsome and Global Unity (2001, Palmetto)
Elisabeth Kontomanou: Hands and Incantation (Duo, 2000, Steeplechase)
Richard Bona: Scenes from My Life (1999, Sony / Columbia)
Elisabeth Kontomanou: Embrace (1999, Steeplechase)
J.D. Walter: Sirens in the C-House (1997, Dreambox)
Jean Toussaint: Life I Want (1995, World Circuit)
Aldo Romano: Prosodie (1995, Polygram)
Andre Ceccarelli: From The Heart (1995, Polygram)
Elisabeth Kontomanou (1993, EMP/Harmonia Mundi)
Martial Solal/Eric Le Lann: Edith Piaf and Charles Trenet (with strings, 1989, Musidisc)