

# BIRELI LAGRENE

## Biography

Since the 1980s, Bireli Lagrene has been the undisputed king of jazz guitar.

Beginning in the early 80's, Bireli was a child prodigy who has brilliantly passed the cape of maturity, asserting himself day after day as a musician who is more and more inescapable in the world of guitar and jazz, where he is now a staple.

His story begins in 1966 in Saverne, France in the Alsace region - the heart of the gypsy community. Bireli was born into a family of musicians where he was introduced to the guitar at an early age by his father, then by his brother. Bireli was first spotted by Matelot Ferré, Django Reinhardt's companion.

During those early years, Django was Bireli's "big thing." He was inspired by the master's choruses, listening to his records over and over again, trying at first to remake what he heard before finding his own style that we hear throughout Bireli's first albums: "Routes to Django", released in 1980, "Biréli Swing '81" (1981) and then "Fifteen" (1982). A sort of trilogy in the form of a "free manifesto," according to the etymology of the word "manouche" ("free man"). So jazz, for Bireli, is mixed with this primordial freedom, "a freedom that has no limits...". "Django helped me to go and see what is happening elsewhere," he says.

After Bireli started out as a child prodigy of Django and mix in the indelible print of Wes Montgomery and George Benson, Bireli soon turns towards fusion jazz in the likes of Jaco Pastorius and Weather Report.

From 1986 onwards, Bireli who had already rubbed shoulders with Stéphane Grappelli and Larry Coryell, embarked on the adventure of fusion, multiplying his experience and encounters. Bireli even hesitated for a while about which instrument to adopt (under the influence of Pastorius, Bireli had become a formidable bassist). He finally settles on the guitar for a period of research where he forges a dazzling style, showing exceptional faculties of adaptation supported by a talent of improvisation, placing him among the greatest. Multiple collaborations ensue. Bireli finds himself alongside John McLaughlin, Paco de Lucia, Al Di Meola, Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker (for a temporary reformation of Cream), Stanley Clarke, Miroslav Vitous, Lenny White and Mike Stern... Not even counting the two live albums that Bireli recorded with Jaco Pastorius.

In 1990, the album "Acoustic Moments" is a beautiful synthesis of this journey and like a break before the consecration, Biréli the musician-funambulist, will obtain critical acclaim by playing the "classic" card with "Standards" (1992).

As Bireli's "Viaggio" (1993) hits the streets, it coincides with his ever-increasing recognition on the national and international scenes. Bireli wins the coveted "Django d'Or" (The Golden Django) in 1993, and in 2001 "Victoires de la Musique" (the equivalent of a Grammy in the US and awarded by the French Ministry of Culture to recognize outstanding achievement in the music industry) for "Front Page" (2000). A "power trio" formed with Dominique Di Piazza and Dennis Chambers who recorded for Universal, crowning the success and popularity of the "Gipsy Project" (2001).

At 35 years old, after having played on almost every front of the modern guitar, after having interacted with some of the finest jazz musicians worldwide, Biréli Lagrène, wild and subtle, quick as a flash, decided to take up with the music of his origins by risking an incredible bet between virtuosity and depth. "Gipsy Project & Friends" (2002), happily celebrates with disarming naturalness while anchoring in a tradition that Biréli, at the top of his art, has at his fingertips.

Still in the tradition of gypsy jazz, Biréli released the album "Move" in 2004, which has the particularity of replacing the violin with a saxophone. Striking repertoire. Dazzling swing. The album is masterful. As success grew, Biréli toured the biggest festivals with his Gipsy Project until his triumph at the Olympia in 2005.

In April 2004, Biréli's new studio album is finally released. "Move" with guitar, double bass, saxophone) and drummer André Ceccarelli. This recording also featured special guest guitar of Sylvain Luc.

In October 2006, to celebrate the 40th birthday of this outstanding musician, Dreyfus Jazz publishes an exceptional double CD: "Djangology" (with the Köln WDR Big Band and "To Bi or Not To Bi" (solo recording).

These last 17 years - crowned by a 2012 "Medal of Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres" (recognition of significant contributions to the arts) - will see Bireli release thirteen albums including "The Alternative," alongside Jimmy Rosenberg and Angelo Debarre, with Stanley Clarke and Jean-Luc Ponty for an inspired "D-Stringz," with Rony Lakatos on the magnificent "Tribute to Stéphane & Django," with André Charlier and Benoît Sourisse on "Remembering Jaco" and solo on the superb "Solo Suites" released in 2022.

In 2023, Biréli Lagrène released in trio with Hono Winterstein (rhythm guitar) and Diego Imbert (double bass) the side project "Biréli Lagrène plays Loulou Gasté", a superb songbook dedicated to the repertoire of one of the most important authors of the golden age of French song, Louis Gasté.

# BIRÉLI LAGRÈNE

## Discography & Awards

### DISCOGRAPHY

2023 **Biréli Lagrène Play Loulou Gasté** (Dreyfus Jazz)  
2022 **Solo Suites** (Peewee!)  
2020 **Remembering Jaco** with André Charlier, Benoît Sourisse & Multiquarium Big Band (Naïve)  
2018 **Storyteller**  
2017 **Tribute to Stéphane & Django** with Roby Lakatos (Avant Jazz)  
2015 **D-Stringz** with Stanley Clarke & Jean-Luc Ponty (Impulse!)  
2013 **The Alternative** with Jimmy Rosenberg & Angelo Debarre (Hot Club Records)  
2012 **Mouvements** (Universal Jazz - Europe)  
2010 **Djangologists** with The Rosenberg Trio (Enja Records)  
2009 **Gipsy Trio** (Dreyfus Jazz)  
2009 **Summertime** with Sylvain Luc (Dreyfus Jazz)  
2008 **Electric side** (Dreyfus Jazz)  
2007 **Just the Way You Are** (Dreyfus Jazz)  
2006 **Djangology** with Köln WDR (Dreyfus Jazz)  
2006 **To Bi or Not to Bi** (Dreyfus Jazz)  
2006 **The One and Only** with Jimmy Rosenberg & Angelo Debarre (Hot Club Records)  
2005 **Avenues des Diables Blues** with André Ceccarelli Trio (Dreyfus Jazz)  
2004 **Move** (Dreyfus Jazz)  
2002 **Gipsy Project & Friends** (Dreyfus Jazz)  
2001 **Gipsy Project** (Dreyfus Jazz)  
2000 **Front Page** with Dennis Chambers & Dominique Di Piazza (Universal Jazz)  
1999 **A Tribute to Django Reinhardt** (Jazzpoint Records)  
1999 **Gipsy Feeling** with Jermaine Landsberger Trio (Georg Löffler Musikverlag)  
1999 **Duet** with Sylvain Luc (Dreyfus Jazz)  
1998 **Blue Eyes** (Dreyfus Jazz)  
1995 **My favorite Django** (Dreyfus Jazz)  
1994 **Live in Marciac** with André Ceccarelli & Chris Minh Doky (Dreyfus Jazz)  
1993 **Viaggio** with Richard Galliano, Pierre Michelot & Charles Bellonzi (Dreyfus Jazz)  
1992 **Standards** (Blue Note Records)  
1990 **Acoustic Moments** (Blue Note Records)  
1987 **Inferno** (Blue Note Records)  
1988 **Foreign Affairs** (Blue Note Records)  
1986 **Stuttgart Aria** with Jaco Pastorius (Jazzpoint Records)  
1986 **Special Guests** with Larry Coryell, Miroslav Vitous (Jazzpoint Records)  
1985 **Django's Music** with Mike Peters & Bob Wilber (Stash Records)  
1983 **Down in Town** (Island Records)  
1982 **Fifteen** (Island Records)  
1981 **Swing '81** (Le Chant du Monde)  
1980 **Routes to Django** (Island Records)

### AWARDS

1993 **Django d'Or** (Best French Musician)  
2001 **French Music Awards** (Best Jazz Album for "Front Page")  
2002 **Django d'Or** (Best French Musician)  
2007 **Django d'Or** (Best Guitarist)  
2012 **Medal of "Chevalier des Arts & des Lettres"** of France for significant contributions to the Arts and Literature