<https://pad.philharmoniedeparis.fr/conference/0998251/django-reinhardt-hier-et-aujourd-hui>

**Django Reinhardt, hier et aujourd'hui**

Alex Dutilh (AD), Vincent Bessières(VB), Joël Dugot(JD), Anne Legrand(AL), Jean-Marie Pallen(JMP)

Enregistré à la Cité de la musique, samedi 06 octobre 2012

Introduction AD introduces the speakers. JMP, a guitarist who played with Lousson, the first son of Django and his partner (who was with Django when his caravan burned). JMP can speak also about Gerard Leveque (GL) who transcribed the music that Django dictated. Django was a composer as well as an improvisor. AL, who works at the National Library of France and who worked with the archive of Charles Delauney and the QHCF. VB, the commissioner of the exhibition at the Museum of Music. Also a journalist and jazz critic. Jean Louis Chautemps developed with VB in the film of Christian Cascio (CC) (*He’s the director of the 2010 film Django, three fingered lightning)*, the heritage of jazz and the monumental (?) culture of Django. JD works at the Museum of Music and takes care of the instruments. He doesn’t play them but he caresses them, x-rays them, etc. He will talk about one of the instruments, an acoustic guitar (Selmer) and will discuss their numbering. AD mentions the upcoming concert of “Selmer 607”, named because of the serial number of the guitar they play. The guitar was built by Mario Maccaferri, and JD has some things to say about him.

1. Rediscovering the documents of a nomad. We’ll start with AL. We are talking about someone whose caravan burned, who lived the life of a gypsy. Fundamentally, there is a methodology problem in rediscovering the life of a nomad. AL: Yes, luckily we have around Django people who were conscious of his value and his genius. They decided to keep track of this man. I was lucky to be able to work with the archive of Charles Delauney (CD), one of Django’s musical agents during the 30s. I was defending my thesis. Christian was able to witness this (*maybe this is portrayed in his film)*. AL felt like she was discovering something unique. I think she says CD recognized what he had in Django at the time. He wrote a biography, Django, mon frère during which he developed a methodology for conserving these things. He looked at film, photos, etc. He searched a long time “Clair de lune” (*maybe an old film?)*. He never found that film (which will be shown tomorrow) which was ultimately found in a Swiss media library and is now once again in the archive of CNC. He collected a number of things such as concert posters, photos, documents that can be seen in the exhibit. AL found a trail through his work with Pierre Nouri and that is another source. Pierre Nouri died several years ago. He had 9 kids who continue to find new things (*hard to understand but I interpret this as finding things in their dad’s effects*). And then, there were the musicians who played with him (Django) Certain such as Hubert Rostaing were also methodical in keeping photos. For example Roger Paraboschi who played with him and was one of the great (*name of an instrument I don’t understand*) had many recordings but very few photos or documents, which he regrets now. Hubert was the opposite. He kept many photos. Anyway, thanks to the work with Christian Cascio, I will keep up my search and I hope I continue to find new things. There continue to be children & grandchildren musicians who realize the importance of Django R. (that might not have realized his importance but the more films, etc that are done about Django help bring awareness to his importance.)

2.Django’s guitar, Selmer and Maccaferri. There is something very symbolic which remains, which is the guitar of Django, which is in the museum. JD is the conservator of that instrument. JD: Speaks about the richness of the collection at the museum. There is a small paradox regarding Django’s guitar, a Selmer, and he talks about how the guitar came about during the period. How did this guitar come about during the time we are speaking about because it isn’t something banal. We could say, without over exaggerating reality, that the invention of this guitar resulted from a fortuitous meeting between classical music and jazz. Why? Because, when jazz arrived in France during the 30s, there weren’t yet guitars with enough power to be heard in jazz orchestras. During the 30s, the most typical guitar found in the homes of musicians, the one most produced, etc was the classical guitar which was developed by a Spaniard, Antonio de Torres during the 1850s and 1860s. And, there wasn’t a lot of new development since then. And, naturally, there wasn’t any amplification. It is one of the reasons that they found it more advantageous to use the banjo rather than the guitar in an orchestra. The banjo is more powerful than the guitar. And thus, there was a young luthier, a classical guitarist, an Italian, and it is this why it is a meeting between classical and jazz. This young luthier, Mario Maccaferri, (MM) had an idea to make the guitar louder with a very innovative device, which was to make a double resonance box (*resonator*). We see here during the end of (*a time period that I can’t understand…something like “les annees reins”, might be an idiom for the 1920s?)*, with a guitar that was developed that hadn’t yet met jazz music, it apparently will do that during the 30s in the person of Henri Selmer (HS) , who manages as you know, a big factory for fabricating in copper (*the French use the word “Copper” instead of “Brass” as in English to describe that family of instruments*) (saxophone, trumpet) and equally in wood (*woodwinds)* (clarinet and other instruments). Henri Selmer was really blown away by the ideas of Mario Maccaferri and this experimental guitar that he brought with the double body. Thus, MM naturally during these same years registered a patent for his invention of the double body. Henri Selmer proposed to him to create a range of guitars which would be of interest for all styles of music, including metal stringed guitars for jazz (which MM hadn’t thought of yet because he was a classical guitarist), but also a Hawaiian guitar, a classical guitar naturally, and several other models. And thus, MM would bring forth from a family of guitars with his innovative ideas. One would see him in the Selmer workshop in 1932 and bring forth the absolutely revolutionary models for their time. We can now look at the details on what was revolutionary. Maccaferri had an idea to cut a part of the body of the guitar which we now call a “cutaway” to allow the musician’s left hand to climb up the strings like is done in a violin. It allowed the player to play quickly with virtuosity.

Equally, other innovations were the resonator (the double body) which was in the interior of the guitar, which gives or brings about the curious design of the large soundhole in the shape of a reversed D. It is one main characteristic of these instruments. It must be said, given how often the Italians are noted for being gifted in design, MM was involved in even all the minor details of the drawings and design of the guitar to which would create an extraordinary object that would bring envy to everyone. That happened by creating a form that was very characteristic. It must be said that the Selmer factory was a specialist in metalwork, but they found all the expertise around them to develop and realize with a lot of quality these little details. Everything was developed with care naturally with the signature of Selmer and also Maccaferri. The guitars were an extraordinary success. And then, for reasons which aren’t completely known today, MM got upset with HS and abruptly resigns. He had worked ~2 years since the launch of his instruments before slamming the door shut. The Selmer company was really helped by the success of the guitar so they now needed another model. Because MM had brought the double body feature, suddenly there was a legal question over whether they could produce that in their guitars. So, in 1936, Selmer developed a new model with a longer neck, lighter bracing, and, because they didn’t need the internal resonator, a smaller oval soundhole. This would become the most popular and most produced guitar model for the Selmer company.

AD: Does this signify that the guitars made by Maccaferri when he was working at Selmer are collector’s items today?

JD: Yes, all of them really, considering that the Selmer company only made about 900 guitars from their opening in ’32 to their closure in ’52. That is not a lot. Thus, today there only remain about half. And everyone now cries because of it.

AD: Were they numbered?

JD: They were numbered.

AD: Django played 503.

JD: 503. I would also like to say something. Django didn’t know Maccaferri. He discovered the guitars after the departure of Maccaferri. So, he had to participate in the development of the new model. So, he played on the two models. We see documentation of him playing the grande bouche and then the petite bouche, which was the model he adopted and played for the rest of his life.

AD: Thank you for this recitation about Selmer guitars, of which we will see more in the upcoming concert (that night @ 1730).

VB: We could perhaps talk about, Alex, the history of luthiery in France and that these are highly desired guitars, have become very rare, and its an episode of the history of Selmer which has really become linked to Django because he was the most popular artist who played and used these guitars. An annex to the exposition has a reconstruction of a part of the workshop from which these instruments came out of. These luthier tools etc that still exist are thanks to the collection of the Museum of popular music (*MuPOP*). There are necks, forms, sides, etc and it is like Joel said, we are representing the launching of the product range created by MM by showing these various models in a window that is meant to evoke their workshop.

Source: https://www.wikiwand.com/en/ Selmer\_guitar

AD : Thank you for the precision (or detail).

3. Lousson Baumgartner “Reinhardt”. For JMP, I have a first question because beyond this round table it is perhaps less interesting. We saw in the film of Christian and we know Babik Reinhardt. We know his grandson, David, who was playing the final theme of the film. We heard about Lousson, otherwise, without having his family’s surname. We have no other trace registered of him. You played with him. You knew him. Can you tell us…because I think it will be of interest to many of those who are into Django Reinhardt. How come we don’t have any trace of his music. And how was he as a musician since we don’t have anything recorded and a generation without direct witness.

JMP: There isn’t a recorded trace because he was some who today would be qualified as an introvert. He never said anything. He didn’t speak a lot. He was a very closed person. But with a lot of passion. But, when he came to my house, I had the impression of seeing Django from the years ‘47-48. That face. And when he spoke, it was like I was hearing the voice of Django. His personality made an impression. How do I say it, I couldn’t compare him to anyone. On the outside, he had the sound of his father. I watched the film with a lot of emotion and a lot of interest and I was very happy to hear his grandson play the guitar. It was the spirit of Django that I heard. I accompanied Lousson and when Lousson played, I refound that essence with David. It something really amazing. So, how would Lousson come, for example, he came to see me. “I have a concert tomorrow but I don’t have a guitar, can I borrow one.” So, I leant him my guitar. He took the guitar. Then he said, I don’t have an amplifier, can I borrow an amp? I gave him the amp. Then, he turned to go and said, “Okay, see you tomorrow.” Before he left, I told him I couldn’t play because Lousson had borrowed his guitar and amp, he looked at me and said quite naturally, “Just do what I do. Go borrow one!” (Laughter) He was really a truly fabulous character. And when he played, I never heard a single time from the fingers of Lousson, and I accompanied him for 15 years, I never heard a single phrase of Django’s. Never. But, like I told you, I heard the spirit (the essence, the sound). It is the same feeling I got when hearing David. It was from the first moment I heard the sound of his guitar, before seeing it, and I thought…it isn’t possible. How is this? Then I saw that it was David and it gave me immense pleasure to see that David had this sound that I thought he will have a voice in this story. I also accompanied Babik once and he also had this.

There is one other thing I’d like to talk about Lousson. The last time that I accompanied him was during the festival for the 25th anniversary of his father’s death. He was asked to open the festival as the star of the show. He played 5 fantastic numbers with his arrangements. And, one week later, during the rebroadcast on TV of the highlights of this homage to Django, unfortunately, there was a young, black American harmonica player who was very popular at the time. The rebroadcast of the Samois festival was focused only on this man. When the credits started to roll, my phone began to ring. I picked it up and I heard Lousson. He spoke to me and he was very upset. He told me (Lousson had a light stutter but it was really bad when he was upset*)* “J-j-j-jean Marie…those m-m-motherf-f-fuckers….th-th-they don’t have the right to do that to my father! Th-th-they will never see me again! And I will never see them.”

AD: Oh.

JMP: Yes

AD: And do you have an idea why, of course you have folks like the Ferré dynasty who recorded during this period, why he doesn’t have any recorded work. Why he wasn’t asked to record a record or why there wasn’t a recorded radio broadcast, etc.?

JMP: That I don’t know. I do know, as I told you before, that Lousson was a very introverted person. He didn’t like to be put out front (*as the star*). For me, in preparation for the 25th anniversary Samois concert, I recorded two rehearsals. The first was so he could (choose the melody?) and a second with my bassist (who was named Jean-Pierre Montriond(?)) and the drummer, who has unfortunately died. I have these recordings and I have given them to a few people. I think they might now be on the internet, but I have those recordings. They have some noise and they are just pieces that are almost complete. They were just a small microphone and cassette. Yet, the freedom with which Lousson had in his playing was phenomenal for his music and that of his father.

AD: And what about the family name of Lousson?

JMP: (sighs) The story is, when Django met Lousson’s mother, they were married in the manner of the gypsies in that they departed together. When they returned, Lousson’s mother was pregnant. Then someone got upset. Then, to hurt Django, the woman met another man and went to get married with him, but this time legally. And this man would recognize Lousson as his own child. And that’s why Lousson doesn’t carry the name of Django.

AD: That must have been a handicap for his career, perhaps.

JMP: I think so. I think it was a terrible handicap for him because he suffered from not being known or recognized. Another anecdote. We were doing a concert in a small village in the north of Paris. So, we were playing during intermission at a cinema and while leaving after having played during the intermission, Lousson and I were leaving with our guitars and amps. We came to the back of the cinema where there were generally 5, 6, 10 gypsies who were waiting there. Who encircled us, while smoking, who were looking at us very stupefied. One said, “That was good.” And the other said “That was very good.” It is like a story I was telling earlier, there are certain young people who speak to me and I look at them and I believe I have met their father at that moment (or their grandfather perhaps!)

AL: What is really stunning is that compared with Babik, it was Lousson who played more with his father because he was older, he accompanied him, and its true that it is astonishing, that we have this archive and these filmed concerts at Samois and interviews that exist.

JMP: (interrupts) something about being delighted if something was found

VB: He never made a commercial record but he bizarrely made a television broadcast. Yes, the concert was filmed notably, but also (something) was numbered and they are being discovered. In the ‘60s, where he played the melody of his father…that is still a bit confidential, but it does exist.

AD: I think France Musique is negotiating for the rights! (laughter)

VB: That would be awesome!...and Lousson was really named Henri. And like Django or Babik, Lousson was the nickname that his family gave to him. For the state, he was named Henri Baumgartner.

JMP: Excuse me…With Lousson, I played (well, Lousson played and I accompanied him) the songs of his father, but, for example I never accompanied Lousson playing “Nuages.” Never.

AD: What did he play for music? Did he take the lessons consisting of his own repertoire like his father did? Or did he replay pre-existing melodies?

JMP: He played the themes of his father but I want to repeat this again, I NEVER heard him play a single phrase or chorus that was copied from his father. One day on stage, we were in a cabaret in Pigalle and he finished a song. He said to me, I want to play “Tonight”, the theme from West Side Story. But, it sounds like he started to play with a different note and it was difficult to follow. JMP started to sweat but somehow followed, but then later said “Lousson, next time it starts on this chord like this…” and Lousson said OK, OK, but then never played it again. (*laughter*)

4. The Transcription of the work, Gerard Leveque and Django. They talk about the importance of Gerard Leveque, the clarinetist, who helped Django transcribe. They turn to Jean-Marie and he tells the story. JMP: One beautiful day, Django said to GL that he had ideas in his head. Django will play on the guitar, and GL will write them down. D started playing 4 chords. He played 1, GL wrote. He played another, GL wrote. He played a 3rd. He played the 4th. etc. Then they quickly realized that they'd never be able to write a symphony in that manner. The work would go on for a fortnight and it would take forever. So, the project was never fully achieved. JMP equates it to finding an artist's sketchbook (specifically of shells) and looking at all the sketches and then being able to create the painting that the artist originally wanted. It isn't possible and one can't imagine how it would be. It is troubling to think that Django wanted to create this symphony and he wanted to create a Mass. JMP references hearing something yesterday that Boulou (Ferre) played on a church organ in a classical manner. He is a great musician. Boulou asked for the documents that JMP had (*presuming what you shared with me*) and of course he gave them to him. There were 11 measures. He wanted to play them, but it was just a small fraction (*and I think just the end of the Mass*). Here is where a scene from the film was mentioned. JMP states, in order to play the existing fragment, the problem is it would be necessary to write his own (Boulou) separate Mass that says written by Boulou and titled Mass for ....whatever....separately as according to a fragment that was written by GL as transcribed via guitar by Django.

5. Django in the history of jazz and of the guitar. AD: We’ll finish our first round around the table with Vincent Bessieres, paradoxically, about what he didn’t show during the exposition, that being the heritage that Django triggered in many jazzmen….community of the manouches. How do you explain this and where do you place Django’s heritage?

VB: I believe there are 2 levels. There is one which is very apparent today and very lively. This is what we call today “jazz manouche.” This is talked about in the media a lot and I’m anticipating the “corrections” I’m going to receive. They often say that Django invented “gypsy jazz.” No, Django did not invent gypsy jazz. There is a jazz today which follows a direct line that was based on the style of Django, and especially the one that comes from the middle of the 30s with the start of the QHCF. This style bizarrely became a genre or sub-genre in jazz, which one calls manouche in reference to Django, of course, but also in reference to the fact that it became the music of the gypsy community. The tziganes are a nomadic, itinerant people which nurtured their own culture. Many people want to place their origins to India, this is even a question amongst ethnologists, but the fact that Django is called “Reinhardt” traces his (ancestor’s) passage in any case through German territory. The fact that jazz manouche became the music of the gypsy community shows that Django became their hero and the music became theirs. You can hear the music if you go to the Festival Django Reinhardt in Samois, and if you walk around the area, you’ll hear many young guitarists playing, some of whom we’ll hear a little later (*refering to the upcoming concert*). The music is very present in the gypsy community but also outside it. There are many big names of gadjé, that is non-manouche, who became great admirers and adopted this manner of playing to, in a certain manner, “speak the language.” But I think Django’s heritage is much, much larger in truth. From his position in the history of the guitar and the history of jazz, the shadow of Django hangs over most of the current music from the 20th century. By current, I mean popular music. The music of the present. It could be said that Django was the first guitar hero of the 20th century. Before him, the guitar was an instrument for accompaniment. It was relegated to a position behind the singer as Joel explained earlier, for physical reasons, acoustic [reasons], organologic [reasons.] And Django put this instrument to the front of the stage, and imagining with Stephane G. as the film explains, this quintet composed entirely of string instruments. He opened a door for all guitarists to do like he did and make it an instrument for soloists. And I was struck by really how all the great guitarists knew him. Carlos Santana; Malcolm…the guitarist for AC/DC, I forget the name now [*Young*]; Mark Knopfler, the guitarist for Dire Straits. BB King …there is a story how he asked a GI friend to bring him a Django record after the Liberation (*after WWII)*. Or, in the L’Express which came out on Wednesday, Line Renaud told the story about how Elvis Presley knew of Django and was fascinated with the fact that her husband, Loulou Gasté had played with Django (*you can see images* [*here*](https://www.djangobooks.com/blog/djangos-pictorial-legacy-the-twa-photos/)*).* And even now we interview musicians like Pat Metheny, Jim Hall, or John Scofield whose style is frankly demarcated by the style of Django. They know of Django and have his records. Wes Montgomery has some elements that come from Django. So, the heritage of Django is deeper than just gypsy jazz.

AD: Ok. I share that point of view. But it is maybe also he is a musician who gave a lesson in liberty to jazz improvisors in a way that appropriates the language (*of jazz*) with different roots than the roots of the black Americans who invented the language. I think many of the French musicians on the scene today, even (*he uses “meme si” which means even if, but it has more of the feeling of “especially” as I hear the sentence, though that word would be “surtout.”*) those who play guitar…Michel Portal owes a lot to this lesson in liberty from Django Reinhardt. We could multiply these examples throughout many countries in Europe.

Exchanges with the Public

Charlie Christian and American Jazz. AD: Ok, I promised you to honor the exchange, if you have questions, remarks, information to give…Sir….there will be a microphone coming so that everyone can hear…just 10s of patience…there it is…

Questioner1: Yes, this one I think is for VB re: the influence of Django on guitarists. I would like to know if Django knew of Charlie Christian, who was one of the first American jazz guitarists and maybe a bit before or contemporary with Django. Do we know if Charlie Christian influenced Django? Thank you.

VB: It would be totally the opposite. Chronologically, Charlie Christian came after Django. (*Various Panel members: Yes, Yes, ’38, yes*) It was’38-’39 (*but he knew him*) Yes, he knew him. Is the opposite true? Without doubt. But I don’t know if we can say (*chatter*) Christian played with Benny Goodman & Lionel Hampton…It must be said that there are very few interviews with Django Reinhardt. Django Reinhardt spoke with his guitar. Those (interviews) he did he was extremely laconic.

AD: We heard that during the film. It was a nightmare of an interview.

JMP: Yes. No. Yes. No. No. Yes…(laughter)

VB: And of all those who wrote articles about him, we see that his responses are short and to the point. There are hardly any quotations. And Django was a bit evasive. So, we have to realize that music was circulated via records and via the radio. I think that Django probably heard these records because as we see in the film in 1950 he met Benny Goodman. It was Benny Goodman who discovered or who really launched Charlie Christian. And bizarrely, he (Django) stood up Benny Goodman. He (Benny) had to play a concert at Chaillot and Django never came to the concert. (*talk about the Carnegie Hall concert*).

AL: I was persuaded that he kept current with all that was going on because he frequented the Hot Club of France and when the first bebop records came to France, he was there. And during the ‘30s, Hugues Panassié was in New York he brought back records. In ’36, Panassié sent records of the QHCF to American journalists, of which Helen Oakley would go on to hear it with (Duke) Ellington’s musicians. So, in ’36, Ellington’s musicians had heard Django. In the ‘30s, they were sending 78s and there was always the risk that the records would arrive broken. And when the records arrived, there was the radio…In 1938 there was an exchange and a big broadcast on CBS where there was a concert that was recorded in France and played in on the air in the US. So, there was definitely an exchange and it is important to know that the [Rue Chaptal](http://www.peter-pho2.com/2015/08/rue-chaptal.html) (*home of HCF*) regularly sent records and it was this place here that kept everyone up to date on what was going on in the US.

VB: And anyway there was an article in Metronome written in 1938 about the QHCF and the title was “Is this the best swing group in the world?” So, in any case, the US knew very well the QHCF.

Django and Boris Vian. Questioner2: I’d like to talk about the St-Germain-des-Prés period for Django. What was the connection between Django and Boris Vian? Did they ever play together?

VB: Uh, I don’t know if they ever played together[[1]](#endnote-1), but they did write a song together. The manuscript for this song is in the exhibition. Boris put words to Django’s composition called “Vamp.” For some reason, they never recorded the vocal version of this song but in any case, it is sure that they knew each other. By the way, Boris cried at the loss of Django. In the text we hear in the film (*JMP: Very moving*) we hear a text that was published in L’Express a year later ,which I find very beautiful, in 1954, where he measured the genius of Django but it was also clear that they had a very strong bond of friendship.[[2]](#endnote-2)

European Jazz. Questioner3: We talk a lot about jazz manouche, but I suppose I should ask the question, didn’t Django create “European jazz?” Because its been 60 years since Django died, and tell me, what is new in the state of European jazz? Nothing. (laughter) Nothing.

JMP: You are a little excessive, sir (laughter and chatter)

Questioner3: He created a completely new style that that was the only one that existed in Europe.

JMP: There was also Martial Solal.

Q3: Yes, of course.

AD: He opened a way. (JMP repeats). But, today we hear very original things in Finland, in Norway (*in France!)* in France obviously, in Portugal, in Italy, which are other things beside the American standards. And, that it was bebop which changed the rules of the game in the way the standards were played. As part of this emancipation, Django was one of the emancipators who liberated jazz with his cultural side that was very different from the Americans. Now there are a lot of passionate, young musicians and I think there are a lot of other things.

Django and rhythm. Questioner4: In this style of music, we could talk about the melody, the theme, but what is there to say about the rhythm aspect? Because I think there is a very specific rhythm (the guitars do la pompe), [speaks something about double bass], he played very rarely with drummers. So, of melody, theme and rhythm, what is there to say about rhythm?

JMP: I’m going to speak to you now about Lousson. He lived in a small apartment in the Rue (d’Oran—can’t make out the name/not familiar) and I’m also going to talk to you about a man named Boris Sarbek (whose true name was Boris Sarbeckovich), who was Charlie Chaplin’s “ghostwriter” (*He actually uses the word “negro” which carries the sense of our N-word, but contextually, this translation is what is meant. For an interesting sidebar on this word idiom, see* [*this NPR story*](https://www.npr.org/transcripts/718729150)), and it was he who wrote a whole bunch of things for Chaplin. For example (hums the melody to a song briefly), there is a verse which goes (hums some more…might be “Smile”), the verse is Boris Sarbek’s. One day, when Lousson left my house, Boris came and knocked on my door. He told me “Wow, that was a good musician who was here, was that Django’s son?” and I said, “Yes.” “Come, come. Come here,” he said and he wanted to show JMP what he was working on, the music for “A Countess from Hong Kong.” And I said, “You knew Django?” and he said “Yeeesss. I knew Django very well. I was working one day, I had a huge gala with dancers, [a gyp?], and at the last moment, the drummer never showed. He withdrew. So I no longer had a drummer. When I had met Django, I asked him to come. [*this part was difficult for me to understand but the sense is correct, but not a word for word accurate translation*] And, he played the whole revue. From the first hit, it was fantastic!” So, sir, I think there is the answer to your question. With Django and his guitar, you have a drummer and a bassist at the same time. It’s an orchestra!

Lousson and Babik. Questioner5: Did Lousson and Babik frequently play with each other?

JMP: I think. Lousson talked with me often about his brother, and he spoke with a lot of affection and respect. When I accompanied his brother, Lousson was dead. He came to see me and he said (Babik came and said) “I would like you to accompany me like you accompanied my brother.” I told him I couldn’t. You aren’t your brother. I will try to accompany you with as much heart and sincerity as I did when I accompanied your brother. –I spoke only a little with him. He was hardly very talkative—he was truly a Reinhardt. I spoke with him a little bit. I knew, also by other intermediaries—Gerard Leveque told me a few words about him—that Babik had huge respect for his older brother. He respected him both as his older brother and as a guitarist. Because it was he (Lousson) who worked with his father, and that’s more than you imagine. The Brussels concert in ’49, it was Lousson who accompanied his father. And that’s not…that’s really something fantastic.

Django’s playing Questioner6: [*This really rambling question is really just a guy reciting everything he knows about Django. He rambles and the panel starts to interrupt him. I’ll indicate the general things he says, but there isn’t really much value added in what he is saying.*] He says he has a series of remarks. First, he wants to talk about the play of Django and how it is too bad that this was missed or not discussed yet. AD says it isn’t really the subject of this panel. The questioner says no, and tries to explain. Django knew he was a good player compared to others around him and he gave one of his guitars to Henri Crolla. He then talks about how Henri Crolla was a good jazzman, accompanied Yves Montand, and an essential player on the Parisian scene. He had this Sel-Mac guitar (which the questioner has seen), how everyone then and now wants to play on a true Selmer Maccaferri, it requires a different technique than an electric guitar, I saw this guitar which still exists, Django near the end played an amplified guitar, and how the real factor in his playing was him, himself, and not the guitar. That’s the first remark. The second remark is the question on the rhythm, and why we listen to Django today is because he was a phenomenal power, and his own orchestra. It’s not about the instrument but about Django and his architectural vision for his chorus [*mumblings begin, a bit of discomfort as he’s wandering pointlessly*] Why was the QHCF a big orchestra…because it didn’t have a drummer in the instrumental sense of the term. And when we hear Pierre Foix today or Roger Paraboschi, that they didn’t contribute [*another interruption and disagreement by the panel as I think JMP indicates the questioner didn’t understand fully JMP’s earlier remarks.*] Ok, I’ll explain. Yes, Django was an orchestra by himself. There were 2 drummers in the QHCF. The first were the 2 guitars who played rhythm. Roger Chaput, Joseph, etc. La pompe…an incredibly flexible rhythm. [*again more laughter in the background, almost mocking*] That’s the first drummer. The second drummer was… Stephane Grappelli whom I had the chance to meet when I was 9 years old confirmed... [*the audience starts to clap him off the stage…JMP says “that’s enough, sir”and AL laughs*] There was a second drummer and it was Django himself. [*Yes, we know this, sir. We know it*] He was never equaled. [*more audience clapping trying to end this*] He played on any old instrument and it was really his power that was never equaled. Thank you [*they all mockingly thank him and then ask for the next question. While the person is coming to the mic, it appears a women asks why the man wasn’t allowed to continue to speak. JMP says so that others could speak, ma’am and AD says so that the discussion can continue to circulate*]

Travelling People Questioner7: I don’t have a question, I just have a small remark. When you speak of these travelling people during this roundtable, you speak of musicians. He talks about why does Lousson have 2 different names, because he says gypsies take either the name of their mother or father. He then gives an example of Sonny Reinhardt who played with Tchavolo but whose sons are Dino & Francko Mehrstein and says there are many others. That after the death of Django in May’53, there was a big hole in popularity for this music from the 60s to the 90s when Bireli’s Gipsy Project brought back gypsy swing, how this Parisian swing music was popular but wasn’t widespread…only in a small area, Patrick Saussois is one of the players in Paris who is good, but how in the Belgo-Netherlands community, the family de Piotto, de Cauter and others, Limberger [*he must not realize that de Piotto’s as a band name is the name of the Limberger family group*], Winterstein, etc. have been working nearly without interruption (minus the gap from ~’55-’90) to spread the music around the world.

AD: Ok, we’re going to have to end the round table to allow Selmer 607 to set up to play. Maybe one more question.

Django’s playing (continued). Questioner8: Let’s stay with the topic of the style of the guitarists and makes an allusion to the title of the film as he mentions the playing with only 3 fingers. And for him, the enigma that he’d like to know is how could he play as well as he did with the unique rhythm and chords, etc and he would be interested if they could explain a bit.

JMP: That’s the enigma of Picasso…and the enigma of Van Gogh

AD: Yes, that is an enigma and we can revisit the remark of….

(*Questioner6 from above starts to shout out an answer (hard to hear) about the video that exists and how there was a system for how to place his fingers…etc. Its really easy to reproduce. The problem is not with the system itself but rather the inventiveness that Django had to play within that system*)

AD: I was fascinated in the film by the power that he invoked, I think that there was a bit of the phenomenal power of Armstrong when he played trumpet in the ‘20s with his Hot 5. There was an affirmation in the playing of Django that in the rhythm or harmonic choices, that each note rang out and projected with intent and that was something very strong. If you look at the solos of Django, note-for-note, like all the great soloists in jazz, Bill Evans, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, etc. He belongs to that galaxy. He is a jazz musician and not simply an enormous part of the heritage of the manouches. It goes far beyond that.

1. There is a mention from Juliette Gréco in a [L’Express article](https://www.lexpress.fr/culture/musique/juliette-greco-django-reinhardt-je-revais-d-etre-sa-guitare_1168992.html) from around the time of this exhibition (Oct 4 2012) that says she saw Django & Boris play in concert. The article is about memories of Django from various artists but it is behind a paywall.) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Found this tidbit on the *Jazz* Hot website ([here](https://www.jazzhot.net/PBCPPlayer.asp?ID=1764371)) that relates to this subject, but I didn’t find with ease the 1954 L’Express article referred to by Anne Legrand. Another question is the relationship between Boris Vian and Django Reinhardt. If no direct witness to this relationship exists, Jean-Louis Chautemps remembered the historic seat of *Jazz Hot* (14 rue Chaptal) was a place where musicians met and passed through, notably due to its proximity to the offices of Sacem. It is otherwise probable that during the inauguration of the review's head office, in 1939, Duke Ellington and Django Reinhardt met one another for the first time, and the Vian family were on the photos taken on the staircase of the club. Also, the stylistic frontiers between musicians were narrower and it is probable that Vian considered Django to be fully belonging to the world of jazz (even if Chautemps remembered that during the war Django was a true star of variety). Anne Legrand, Boris Vian's biographer who also made the inventory of Charles Delaunay's estate before giving it to the French National Library, was present in the audience. She indicated that between 1943-1945 Django went to rue Chaptal, equally frequented by Boris Vian, and all those within this little world got along well. What's more, Django and Boris were with Delaunay at the arrival of the first recordings of be-bop. Finally to be convinced of their actual freinship we can simply re-read *Jazz Hot* (n° 78) what Boris said about Django the day after his departure, in a prelude to his press review *«I cannot begin this press review without deploring, like all jazz fans, and like all those who knew him better, the death of this good Django. (…) Django was the chic type, unpretentious, such a good friend and such an excellent musician moreover (…) Django, old brother, adieu, we are not about to forget you.»* [↑](#endnote-ref-2)