

## Biography

Born in 1960 in Paris, France, now also an American and Canadian 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, 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**.

Since he became a professional musician in the late 80's, Jean-Michel has constantly been very active internationally, touring over 60 countries including all of Europe as well as Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Abu Dhabi, South America, Mexico, USA and Canada. In addition to his own projects, he has been in high demand as a co-leader and sideman, participating in numerous projects over the world and recording a lot of albums. 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 *A New Episode In Life***, Danish bassist **Mads Vinding *Open Minds***, and many others.

Jean-Michel moved to New York City in 1995 and formed a new 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**). He also 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. 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 critical acclaim: ***Essential***, a live solo piano recording, and ***Threedom***, featuring his legendary trio with François Moutin & Ari Hoenig, which had re-formed in 2010 under the collective name **Pilc Moutin Hoenig**. A documentary by John McCormick titled ***Jean-Michel Pilc – A Portrait*** (Living Jazz Archive) is released on the same year.

In 2013, Jean-Michel was granted the prestigious **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 his third solo album, ***What Is This Thing Called?*** (Sunnyside), followed, in 2018, by his fourth, ***Parallel*** (Challenge Records).

Jean-Michel has built a strong international reputation as a unique educator. Between 2006 and 2015, he was a **NYU Steinhardt** faculty member, giving private lessons (all 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*** (Carl Fischer) 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. Jean-Michel keeps releasing pedagogical material on a regular basis, including 2 video masterclasses on ***Improvisational Fluency*** (MyMusicMasterclass), 2 online lessons in French and English, ***Anatomy of a Standard*** and ***The Art of Ballad*** (iMusic School), a series of improvisation tutorials on ***Patreon***, the online lesson ***Total Improvisational Control*** (The Crescent), among others.

In September 2015, Jean-Michel joined the Jazz Faculty at **The Schulich School of Music of McGill University** in Montreal. Now a tenured Full Professor, he teaches jazz, piano, and improvisation (all instruments), as well as a ***Seminar on improvisation in all styles*** to a large group of McGill jazz and classical students. He has acted as **Jazz Area Chair** between 2016 and 2018.

Living in Montreal, Jean-Michel has become a very active constituent of the local jazz scene, participating in many Montreal-based projects as a leader, co-leader and sideman. In 2016, he created the **"Improvisation Workshop Project,"** funded by the Fonds de Recherche du Québec -Société et Culture (FRQSC). He has also been a special guest of the Montreal-based **"Orchestre National de Jazz"** and a sideman of many Montreal musicians, as illustrated by his recent discography and concert schedule. He is also present on the Toronto and Ottawa jazz scene, playing with **Kirk MacDonald** and **Roddy Ellias**, and continues to perform with NYC-based groups such as **Pilc-Moutin-Hoenig** and his **US Trio with Sam Minaie and Jerad Lippi**.

Jean-Michel is now a **Justin Time** Recording Artist. He has released three albums on the label: ***Alive - Live at Dièse Onze, Montréal*** with **Rémi-Jean-Leblanc & Jim Doxas**, the solo CD ***Symphony***, and the **Pilc Moutin Hoenig** album ***You Are The Song***. A number of solo singles and EPs have also been released on the same label.

Jean-Michel is also a virtuoso whistler, as documented on several recordings including a solo piano & whistle track in the CD ***Christmas from the Blue Note*** (2010, Half Note).

# Quotes

*Beyond all that can be said about his masterful technique and his beauty of touch, it is the unpredictability that is central to his remarkable talent. As one listens to each selection, be they vintage or newborn, one is taken into his world of improvisation where the unexpected is constant. What makes the journey even more stimulating is the indelible contribution made by the astounding bassist, Francois Moutin, and a phenomenal drummer, Ari Hoenig. The swift current of improvisation that passes through each frame of music is beautifully evoked by the three artists so well suited for each other. I have heard them play many times and at the end of each visit, I find myself with awakened expectations for my next encounter with the unpredictable."* ~**Harry Belafonte**

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

*"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)**

*"...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:

**Pilc Moutin Hoenig: You Are The Song** (2023, Justin Time)  
**Symphony** (2023, Justin Time)  
**Standards, Songs and Blues** (EP, 2022, Justin Time)  
**Gratitude Suite** (EP, 2022, Justin Time)  
**Alive** (2022, Justin Time)  
**Visions** (EP, 2020, Justin Time)  
**Parallel** (2018, Challenge Records)  
**What Is This Thing Called?** (2014, Sunnyside Records)  
**Pilc Moutin Hoenig: Threedom** (2011, Motéma)  
**Essential** (2011, Motéma)  
**True Story** (2009, Dreyfus Jazz)  
**New Dreams** (2007, Dreyfus Jazz)  
**Live at Iridium, New York** (2005, Dreyfus Jazz)  
**Follow Me** (2004, Dreyfus Jazz)  
**Cardinal Points** (2003, Dreyfus Jazz)  
**Welcome Home** (2002, Dreyfus Jazz)  
**Together - Live at Sweet Basil, Volume 1 & 2** (2000, A-Records)  
**Big One for 13 Piece Band** (1993, EMP/Harmonia Mundi)  
**Funambule** (1989, Blue Line)  
**Electrochoc** (1987)

## As a sideman:

**Sam Newsome / Jean-Michel Pilc Duo** (2023)  
**Jonathan Orland: Sait-on Jamais** (2023, Klarthe)  
**Kevin Dean Duo with Jean Michel Pilc** (2023, vinyl)  
**Jacques Kuba Séguin: Parfum** (2023, Odd Sound)  
**Jacques Kuba Séguin: Migrations** (2019, Odd Sound)  
**Kevin Dean: Sunset Trail** (2019, vinyl)  
**NPO Trio (Newsome Pilc / Okura): Live @ The Stone** (2018, Chant Records)  
**Sam Newsome / Jean-Michel Pilc Duo: Magic Circle** (2017)  
**Jasper Somsen Trio: A New Episode in Life / Lunar Suite** (2017, Challenge Records)  
**Tony Moreno Quintet: Short Stories** (2016, Mayimba Music)  
**Moutin Factory Quintet: Deep** (2016, Jazz Family)  
**Lars Graugaard: Venus** (2015)  
**Ceccarelli Pilc Bramerie: Twenty** (2014, Bonsaï Music)  
**Vinding Pilc Mazur: Composing** (2014, Gateway Music)  
**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)  
**Jean-Michel Pilc / Hein Van De Geyn Duo: The Long Journey** (2001, A-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)