

The
GUITAR
of
ENRICO CROLLA
“HENRI”

Solographers: Christian Dangleterre & Jan Evensmo
Last update: June 20, 2020

Born: Napoli (Naples), Italy, Feb. 26, 1920
Died: Paris, Oct. 17, 1960

Introduction:

What Oslo Jazz Circle knew about French jazz when I grew up there can be summed up with one name: Django Reinhardt. It took my good friend and guitarist Jon Larsen, the motor and godfather behind the string swing rejuvenation in the 1980s, to point out that France had so much more to offer with regard to jazz guitar. Henri Crolla is a perfect example!

History:

Born to a family of itinerant Neapolitan musicians, he moved with his family to Porte de Choisy in France 1922 following the rise of fascism in Italy. One of his neighbours was a young Django Reinhardt, with whose family he became close. He died in Paris from lung cancer (ref. Wikipedia).

HENRI CROLLA SOLOGRAPHY

JOSEPH REINHARDT ET SON ENSEMBLE **Paris, April 1944**
 Claude Laurence alias Andre Hodeir (vln), Joseph Reinhardt solo (g), G.Milpat
 alias Henri Crolla (g), Marcel Fabre (b), Pierre Fouad (dm), Odette Pacou (vo).
 Two titles were recorded for French Decca, but no guitar soli by HC.

LEO CHAULIAC TRIO **Paris, July 2-4, 1946**
 Leo Chauliac (p), Henri Crolla (g), Emmanuel Soudieux (b). Gerard Levecque (cl),
 Pierre Fouad (dm) added on some titles.
 Fourteen titles were recorded for French Pacific 5000-5006, four have been
 available (5003-5004):

1544-2	Three Little Beans	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
1545-2	Bouncing Boogie Woogie	Solo 24 bars. (M)
1547-2	Margie	Solo 32 bars. (M)
1549-3	Lady Be Good	Solo 32 bars. (FM)

A very soft trio, not very strong on jazz, but it offers HC an opportunity to play a full chorus on each of these items. He is not well recorded, and details are hazy, but the guitar sounds much like the local tradition. No jazz history is written, but particularly "Margie" has some nice single string.

Possibly, but not likely according to aural evidence, HC may be present on the Leo Chauliac session Sept. 1946 (March 12, 1947 has been given in Jazz Records), six titles on Pacific 5031-5033, not available for listening.

JAM SESSION NO. 4 **Paris, Nov. 19, 1946**
 Alex Renard (tp), Lucien Philip (as-13,14), Hubert Rostaing (cl, as-15,16), Hany Perret (ts), Henri Crolla (g), Roger "Toto" Grasset (b-13,14), Emmanuel Soudieux (b-15,16), Arthur Motta (dm).
 Four titles were recorded for Swing, no guitar solo on 14-1 "Direct" (F) but:

13-1	Minor Blues	Soli 24 and 24 bars. (M)
15-1	Autumn Harmony	Solo 8 bars. (S)
16-1	Blues	Solo 12 bars. (SM)

This session shows the qualities of French swing jazz, four very pleasant items with good soli by all participants. Henri Crolla shows that national jazz guitar was not only Django Reinhardt. Playing in a quite soft style, he interprets the blues very convincingly, starting and closing "Minor ...", and one impressive chorus on "Blues". Adding that "... Harmony" has a brief and moving solo, we can conclude that this is a guitar artist of more than casual interest.

Possibly HC may be present on the Leo Chauliac sessions June 20 & 25, 1947, nine titles on Pacific 6035-6039, not available for listening.

YVES MONTAND **Paris, Jan. 1948**
 Henri Crolla (g), Yves Montand (vo).
 One title was recorded for French Odeon:

Matilda	3:10. (S)
---------	-----------

Yves Montand is one of the greatest of French popular artists, and this waltz is a famous and very nice performance. Although "Matilda" cannot be called jazz, the fine cooperation between the two so definitely merits its inclusion in the HC solography.

YVES MONTAND / BOB CASTELLA
ET SON ENSEMBLE RYTHMIQUE **Paris, May 7, 1948**
 Hubert Rostaing (cl), Bob Castella (p), Henri Crolla (g), Lucien Simoens (b), unknown (dm), Yves Montand (vo).
 Two titles were recorded for French Pathe:

6838-1	Clopin Clopant	Intro. Obligato 6 bars. Coda. (S)
6839-1	Jolie Comme Une Rose	Solo 8 bars. Coda. (S)

Postscript of May 5, 2019: A beautiful piece of music! Postscript of June 20, 2020: The details of this session have been revised, and a nice guitar solo has appeared on "... Rose".

YVES MONTAND **Paris, Spring 1950**

Henri Crolla (g), Yves Montand (vo).
 Movie "Souvenirs Perdus", shot between April 7 and July 7, screened for the first time Nov. 11.

Tournesol 2:20. (M)

This is really something! Not only excellent music but the two are seen on the screen, playing together in an old Paris backyard with children and adults, particularly a beautiful lady, listening attentively. HC seems to be a very sympathetic guy, judging by his looks.

GEO DALY / HENRI CROLLA ca. Nov. 1953

Geo Daly (vib), Henri Crolla (g), Emmanuel Soudieux (b).
 Broadcast, three titles (or more):

1:38 I Want To Be Happy With ens and announcer 32 and
 16 bars to coda. (M)

2:47 Just A Gigolo Soli 16 and 8 bars to coda. (S)

3:12 Mon Homme Soli 20, 18 and 2 bars to coda. (S)

The two slow items have some really beautiful guitar playing with vibraphone making a soft background.

JACQUES PREVERT Paris, 1954

Henri Crolla (g), Jacques Prevert (reading).

A very large number of poems were made, most of them belonging to the collection "Paroles", belonging to the archives of Bibliotheque Nationale de France, some issued on EP/LP. Although soft and nice guitar playing, this has nothing to do with jazz. Also the sheer volume of recordings and lack of exact information make me leave this out of the solography, at least for now.

STEPHANE GRAPPELLI QUARTET Paris, Dec. 30, 1954

Stephane Grappelli (vln, p-"Marmo"), Henri Crolla (g), Emmanuel Soudieux (b),
 Andre Baptiste "Mac Kac" Reilles (dm).
 Eight titles were recorded for Ducretet Thomson:

2:36 This Can't Be Love Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vln).
 Solo 32 bars. (FM)

3:48 Manoir De Mes Reves Acc. (vln). Solo 8 bars. (S)

2:57 Swing 39 Acc. (vln). Soli 32 and 16 bars. (F)

2:40 Alembert's Acc. (vln). Solo 32 bars. (FM)

2:56 Belleville Acc. (vln). Solo 32 bars. (FM)

4:11 Have You Met Miss Jones? Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vln).
 Solo 8 bars. (S)

2:44 Djangology Intro 4 bars. Acc. (vln).
 Solo 32 bars. (F)

3:30 Marmo Duet with (p) 32 and 32 bars. (SM)

Eight years have passed since HC's first session. Maybe the reason is that we are now close to Django's passing, opening up for other talents. This is Grappelli's session, and HC comps him admirably but also gets solo opportunities. He seems to prefer chorded soloing here, good examples are "Belleville", "Djangology" and "Alembert's". To hear his single string technique in upper tempo, "Swing 39" is the best example. The solo on "... Love", the intro and brief solo on "...Love", and the odd item "Marmo" with piano replacing guitar are selected highlights. This session confirms the good feeling we got with his first session. From now on and during half-a-decade, HC leads several sessions, and it is surprising his name is not better known.

HENRI CROLLA Paris, June 1955

Maurice Meunier (cl, ts), Michel Hausser (vib), Georges Arvanitas (p), Henri Crolla (g), Emmanuel Soudieux (b), Jacques David (dm).
 Eight titles were recorded for Vega, issued as "Jazz In Paris - Begin The Beguine":

3:38 The Continental Solo 32 bars. (M)

3:27 If I Had You Solo 64 bars. (FM)

2:36 Alembert's Solo 24 bars. (FM)

3:02 All The Things You Are Soli 36 and 36 bars. (FM)

4:04 These Foolish Things Soli 48 and 8 bars to long coda. (S)

3:50	There's A Small Hotel	Soli 64 and 16 bars. (M)
3:42	Lullaby Of Birdland	Soli 64 and 16 bars. (FM)
5:39	Body And Soul	Soli 32 and 16 bars to long coda. (S)

It is not possible to avoid the speculative thought; that Django's passing in 1953 opened up recording possibilities for other guitarists in the same tradition, with Henri Crolla as one good example. During the year 1955 he performed in five jazz oriented sessions. It is not clear what is the proper recording sequence, and if this one was the first. Anyway we encounter a very competent guitar artist with a soft laidback style. He certainly has excellent technique as demonstrates in the faster titles, but quite often he prefers not to use it, going for a simpler phrasing. "If I Had ..." is a good example of his playing; with a rather straight first chorus and a second improvised one, relaxed and selfconfident. Possibly he makes strongest impact on the listener in slow tempi, and spend some time with "... Soul" and certainly "... Things", beautiful music!

HENRI CROLLA**Paris, June 1955**

Maurice Meunier (cl, ts), Maurice Vander (p), Henri Crolla (g), Emmanuel Soudieux (b), Jacques David (dm).
Seven titles were recorded for Vega, issued as "Jazz In Paris – Quand Refleuriront Les Lilas Blancs?":

5:41	Tenderly	Soli 32 and 16 bars to long coda. (S)
3:43	Yardbird Suite	Soli 32 and 32 bars. (F)
3:57	Love For Sale	Solo/straight 128 bars. (FM)
4:25	September Song	Soli 64 and 16 bars. (S)
2:50	Out Of Nowhere	Solo 64 bars. (M)
3:50	Sweet Georgia Brown	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
5:09	Solitude	Soli 64 and 16 bars. (SM)

This session is at least as pleasant and interesting as the preceding one; a quintet give more space for HC compared to a sextet. In a variety of tempi he shows his qualities. On "... Brown" he commands easily the upper tempo, and on "Out ..." he swings effortlessly this inspiring vehicle. That bebop is part of his tool kit is quite evident on "... Suite". Finally one again is drawn towards the emotional contents of the slower items, both "September ...", "Tenderly" (fine piano here) and "Solitude" belong to his most important works.

HENRI CROLLA**Paris, 1955**

Martial Solal (p), Henri Crolla (g), Emmanuel Soudieux (b), Jacques David (dm).
Five titles were recorded for Vega, issued as "Jazz In Paris – Begin The Beguine":

3:04	Mon Homme / C'est Mon Gigolo	Soli to long coda. (SM)
3:15	Star Dust	Solo 64 bars to coda.. (S)
2:47	Sonny Boy	Soli 64 and 32 bars. (FM)
3:26	The Man I Love	Solo 64 bars to long coda. (S)

This is perhaps the best of his recording sessions. It might because the format now is down to quartet, giving him a better chance to develop his ideas uninterrupted. He swings with great conviction in upper medium tempo on "... Boy" and lower medium on "Mon ...", but will probably hit you strongest in slow tempo. His versions of "Star Dust" and "... Love" are memorable jazz guitar and some of the main reasons for making his solography!

HENRI CROLLA**Paris, Nov. 1955**

Martial Solal (p), Henri Crolla (g), Emmanuel Soudieux (b), Jacques David (dm).
Four titles were recorded for Vega, issued as "Jazz In Paris – Begin The Beguine":

2:37	If I Loved You	Solo 64 bars. (SM)
3:09	Begin The Beguine	Solo 96 bars. (M)
2:28	Little White Lies	Solo 64 bars. (SM)
2:36	I'm In The Mood For Love	Solo 64 bars. (SM)

Same companions as above. Although I (JE) personally am a bit sceptical to piano accompaniment to guitar soloing, feeling it often interferes instead of assists, preferring a rhythm guitar, this is a fine quartet. HC seems to have a very nice time, and I am weak for the "... Beguine", on the surface simple but upon closer listening

having so many creative details. Long and sensitive soli on the other titles in a pleasant tempo suiting him very well.

HENRI CROLLA

Paris, Dec. 1955

Martial Solal (p), Henri Crolla (g), Emmanuel Soudieux (b), Jacques David (dm). Six titles were recorded for Vega, issued as "Jazz In Paris - Quand Refleuriront Les Lilas Blancs?":

2:12	Have You Met Miss Jones?	Straight. (FM)
1:49	Quand Refleuriront Les Lilas Blancs?	Straight. Solo 32 bars. (M)
1:52	Je Cherche Apres Titine	Straight. Solo 36 bars. (M)
1:48	La Romance De Maitre Pathelin	Straight. (M)
2:01	Ay, Ay, Ay	Straight.(S)
2:14	I Only Have Eyes For You	Straight. (M)

The final 1955 session is less interesting than the former. HC seems to play more on the surface than going deep, and the items are generally much briefer. When this is said, remember that on all sessions there is more guitar to be heard than from the solo listings made, 'straight' means 'close to melody' and not 'no improvisation', and there is a lot of coplaying not explicitly noted. For some nice moments of audible happiness without expecting 'true' jazz, try "... Les Lilas ..." and "... Titine"

HENRI CROLLA & HUBERT ROSTAING

Paris, ca. 1955

Hubert Rostaing (cl), Henri Crolla (g) and orchestra.

Four titles were rerecorded from the Michel Boisrond's movie "Cette Sacree Gamine", no (g) on "Dans Ma Tete" but:

	Boidi Boidi Boidi Boi	2:22. (M)
	Des Filles Sensass'	2:31. (M)
	Jardin Dans La Nuit	2:40. (S)

Some rather straight and sweet music of no great importance, but guitar is quite prominent on three items, most interesting is the beautiful "... La Nuit".

HENRI CROLLA

Paris, Oct. 1956

Roger Guerin (tp), Hubert Rostaing (cl), Martial Solal (p, arr), Henri Crolla (g), Emmanuel Soudieux (b), Christian Garros (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Vega, issued as "Jazz In Paris - "Notre Ami Django":

2:27	Jeepers Creepers	Straight. Solo 32 bars. (M)
3:24	What's New?	Straight. Solo 8 bars. (S)
2:27	Hallelujah	Straight. Solo 32 bars. (F)
2:38	Night And Day	Straight. Solo 16 bars. (M)

Too much people here, and while HC takes good but rather brief improvised soli on all items, he mostly plays rather straight. Note particularly "Hallelujah" with obvious bebop influence in the ensemble, but where he takes a well conceived solo in fast tempo, should have had more of this.

HENRI CROLLA

Paris, 1957

Henri Crolla (g) with large orchestra, including strings.

Eight titles were recorded for Vega, issued as "Le Long Des Rues":

	A Paris Dans Chaque Faubourg	3:04. (SM)
	Sous Les Ponts De Paris	2:24. (M)
	Sur Les Quais Du Vieux Paris	3:20. (M)
	J'Ai Deux Amours	2:08. (SM)
	Sous Les Toits De Paris	3:25. (S)
	Paris, Je T'Aime D'amour	2:34. (SM)
	En Avril A Paris	2:26. (SM)
	Revoir Paris	2:31. (SM)

This is definitely not a jazz session but as you can see from the titles a tribute to the unique city of Paris. Nevertheless there are many jazz elements to be heard, and even more important, HC plays beautiful guitar and has the stage for himself. With

due respect to his jazz sessions: If you get hold of the six HC-CDs, you may prefer to play this session more often. Play first the lovely "... "... T'Aime ..." and you will understand our point.

HENRI CROLLA

Paris, 1957

Henri Crolla (g) with large orchestra, including strings.

Twelve titles were recorded for Vega, issued as "Bonsoir Cherie":

Tout Est Permis Quand On S'Aime	2:23. (SM)
Le Chaland Qui Passe	2:53. (SM)
Si Jolie	2:56. (FM)
Ramona	2:48. (SM)
My Melancholy Baby	2:19. (M)
Little White Lies	2:38. (SM)
Vous Qui Passez Sans Me Voir	3:07. (S)
Premier Rendez-Vous	2:08. (M)
Amour, Mon Cher Amour	2:40. (M)
Rose-Marie	2:58. (M)
Poinciana	3:27. (SM)
Bonsoir Cherie	2:42. (M)

Neither is this a jazz session, and with a full orchestra background, everything is of course preplanned, and who knows how much improvised is the guitar playing. However, there are several jazz tunes here, and the general impression is very good; also this is music which may attract even jazz-hardliners more than pure jazz. Try "... Melancholy ..." and "... Lies" first and test yourself!

HENRI CROLLA

Paris, 1957

Henri Crolla solo (g).

Thirteen titles were recorded for Vega, issued as "C'est Pour Toi Que Je Joue":

O Guitares	1:31. (M)
Porte De Choisy	2:13. (SM)
Serenade A Une Parisienne	1:29. (SM)
Gas-Oil	1:26. (S)
Les Deux Plumes	1:32. (SM)
Improvisation I	2:42. (S)
Mon Chien	2:07. (S)
Leon La Lune	1:35. (S)
Paradis	2:28. (SM)
La Chapelle	1:41. (S)
Saint Paul De Vence	3:08. (S)
Blues II	3:06. (SM)
Improvisation II	2:26. (S)

A solo session of great beauty, but this one has nothing whatever to do with jazz, with the "Blues" as a single exception (another guitar here, possibly trick recording). Just therefore you should listen to it and learn more about HC's qualities as an artist.

HENRI CROLLA & HUBERT ROSTAING

Paris, 1957

Collective personnel: Roger Guerin (tp), Charles Verstraete (tb), Pierre Gossez or Hubert Rostaing (as), Christian Chevalier (vib), Martial Solal (p), Henri Crolla (g), Emmanuel Soudieux (b), Jose Bartel, Christiane Legrand (vo).

Four titles from the original soundtrack of Michel Boisrond's movie "Une Parisienne", no (g) on "Paris B. B.", "Valse De Roi" and "Duo Du Balcon" but:

La Parisienne	1:18. (S)
---------------	-----------

Brief but pleasant solo feature for guitar here.

NICOLE LOUVIER

Paris, late 1957

Nicole Louvier (g, vo), Henri Crolla (g).

Four titles were recorded for Decca, released Feb. 1958:

Helene	2:37. (S)
L'Important	2:54. (SM)
Quelque Part Ailleurs	2:49. (S)
Rien N'Arrive Par Hasard	3:22.(S)

Paris, mid 1958

Same. Four titles, released Nov. 1958:

Paris Jardin	3:41. (S)
J'Imagine Que Sur Ta Naissance	2:45. (S)
Soyons Amis	3:20. (S)
Present Compagnon	2:20. (SM)

This has absolutely nothing to do with jazz, but lovely music with HC weaving beautiful guitar lines behind Louvier's vocal; she is also comping himself. The more music available by HC, the stronger his great talents are shining.

HENRI CROLLA ALL STARS

Paris 1958

Hubert Rostaing (cl), Andre Ekyan (as), Stephane Grappelli (vln), Geo Daly (vib), Rene Urtreger or Maurice Vander (p), Henri Crolla (g), Emmanuel Soudieux (b), Pierre Lamarchand or Al Levitt (dm).

Ten titles were recorded for Vega, issued as "Jazz In Paris – Notre Ami Django":

3:40	Minor Swing	Solo 32 bars. (M)
2:28	Swing 39	No solo. (F)
4:05	Manoir Des Me Reves	Soli 32 and 16 bars to coda. (S)
2:26	Swing From Paris	Solo 24 bars. (M)
3:24	Artillerie Lourde	No solo. (M)
3:19	Nuages	Soli 16 and 4 bars. (S)
2:35	Djangologie	Soli 56, 4, 4 and 12 bars. (M)
3:42	Anouman	No solo. (S)
3:01	Swing 42	No solo. (F)
3:32	Place De Brouckere	Straight 48 bars. (F)

As one can see, this session is fully concerned with interpreting Django's vehicles, and although HC is the formal leader, he takes a minor position, not even caring to solo on several items. Fine blues on "... Paris" and an easy swinging "Djangologie", although the highlights are "Nuages" and particularly the very soft and laidback "Manoir...". Since this is HC's last jazz session, one may be allowed to be slightly disappointed.

HENRI CROLLA

Paris 1958/59

Henri Crolla (g), unknown (male-vo).

Unused material from movie "Chansons Pour Montand And Mouloudji", two titles:

3:51	Monsieur Petit Louis	Obbligato parts (vo-male). (S)
2:33	Paris A Le Cœur Tendre	Obbligato parts (vo-male). (S)

Pretty background without jazz contents.

HENRI CROLLA

Paris, 1959

Henri Crolla (g), (rhythm).

Unused material from movie "Histoire D'un Poisson Rouge":

Loterie	3:44. (F/M/S)
Usine	2:46. (S/SM)

Nice entertainment.

HENRI CROLLA**Paris, 1959**

Henri Crolla (g), (rhythm), unknown (male-vo).

Unused material from movie "Voulez-vous Danser Avec Moi?":

3:08 Voulez-vous Danser Avec Moi? Acc. (vo-male). (FM)

Comping only.

HENRI CROLLA & ANDRE HODEIR**Paris, 1960**

Collective personnel: Roger Guerin, Christian Bellest (tp), Nat Peck (tb), Raymond Guiot (fl), Hubert Rostaing, Michel de Villers (as, bar), George Grenu (ts), Armand Migiani (bar), Jean-Pierre Drouet (vib), Georges Arvanitas, Maurice Vander (p), possibly Henri Crolla (g), Pierre Michelot (b), Christian Garros (dm), Marie Laforet (vo), Andre Hodeir (dir), Henri Crolla and others (comp).

Fourteen titles from the original soundtrack of Marcel Moussy's movie "Saint Tropez Blues", no guitar soli but:

2:21 Saint-Tropez Blues Obligato parts (vo-ML). (M)

Same. Unused material from movie:

3:19 Saint-Tropez Blues Obligato parts (vo-male). (M)

2:21 Tumbleweed Obligato parts (vo-male). (FM)

Active and prominent background guitar playing behind the two singers.

HENRI CROLLA**Paris, 1960**

Henri Crolla solo (g).

Unused material from movie "Le Bonheur Est Pour Demain", four titles:

Generique 3:47. (S)

Alain & Annie 1:09. (SM)

Fugue 1:22. (S)

Souvenir d'Henri 1:56. (S)

This seems to be HC's latest performances. No jazz but great music!

HC passed away some months after his 40th birthday. He certainly would have had a more prominent position in jazz history if he had stayed on with us.

No further recording sessions.

Postscript of Jan. 2019:

The movie "Piccolo Solea" ("Little Sun") by Nino Bizzarri from 1960 is a very beautiful tribute to Henri Crolla, his life and music, lasting appr. sixteen minutes. He is seen and heard playing and including interview with his wife Colette Crolla.

...000...