

Philip Catherine, Selected Works 1974-1982 5CD Box Set

Written by Andrew Read

Celebrating his 75th Birthday, Warner Music France has released a limited edition 5CD box set of music by guitarist Philip Catherine. Titled "Philip Catherine Selected Works 1974-1982".

Together with Toot's Thielemans, Philip Catherine can be seen as one of Belgium's greatest jazz exports. Catherine rose to prominence in 1971. In that same year Jean-Luc Ponty asked him to join his quintet. Since then he has been on the forefront of the European jazz scene, having toured and recorded with jazz greats including Chet Baker, NHOP, Stéphane Grappelli, Charles Mingus, Dexter Gordon, Larry Coryell and Tom Harrell.

As one of the most influential artists on the European jazz scene, Philip Catherine started playing professionally when he was only 17, and is renowned across the globe for his acoustic guitar sound and improvisational style, uniquely influenced by some of the greatest horn players in jazz history.

Featuring 4 classic albums, this set includes "September Man" (1974), "Guitars" (1975), "Babel" (1980) and "End of August" (1982). The box set also includes the unreleased album "Solo Bremen 1979 & 1982". The albums are packaged in vinyl replica sleeves with their original artwork, except Solo Bremen, which is illustrated with a painting by Gilles Fiszman.

The first disc in the set is "September Man" released in 1974. This is the album that put Catherine on the map, not only as an innovative guitarist but also as a composer and leader in his own right. This album is perhaps the most adventurous album in the set and reflects the times in which the album was originally released. Featuring a Stella line-up including John Lee on bass, drummer Gerry Brown together with Charlie Mariano, Jasper Van't Hof and Palle Mikkelborg, the music on this album was truly cutting edge in its day and still highly relevant today.

Originally Released in 1975 the "Guitars" album features the same line-up as "September Man" with the addition of string arrangements by Rob Franken. This album continues where the previous album left off and features a number of noteworthy tracks such as the opening track "We'll find a way" and "Charlotte", an ethereal duet between Catherine and Charlie Mariano. Also of note is the second track "Five Thousand Policeman". After listening to this track a number of times I'm convinced it's inclusion must have been a joke, or at least I hope this was the case.

Babel, originally released in 1980, is an album rooted firmly in the late 1970's fusion style. The compositions are strong and the arrangements are adventurous. The album features strong performances from ace sidemen André Ceccarelli (drums) and Jannick Top on bass.

The other album from this period "End of August" was released two years later in 1982 and shows a departure in style from Babel. End of August is far more acoustic and open in feel than Babel and at times somewhat reminiscent of John McLaughlin's recordings of the time. This album features Charlie Mariano on sax who proves to be a perfect melodic partner for Catherine. Add to this the rhythm section of Nicolas Fiszman (Bass) and Trilok Gurtu and the circle is complete. This is without doubt my favourite album in the set.



The previously unreleased Solo Bremen 1979 & 1982 album features 11 tracks recorded for the German radio station Radio Bremen during two sessions in 1979 and 82. Catherine plays all the instruments (acoustic, fretless and electric guitars, electric bass). The album includes early versions of some tracks, previously unreleased material, and tributes to Chet Baker ('My Funny Valentine'), Charles Mariano ('Crystal Bells') and bonus track 'Etude pour Peter S', dedicated to Peter Schulze, who was the sessions' producer.

This box set provides a feast for any Philip Catherine fan, celebrating his extensive career with classics as well as unheard works from the jazz guitarist. These album's have been beautifully re-mastered and the audio quality throughout is exceptional. Highly recommended.

Release Date: 1 December

Format: Box set (5 CD's)

Label: Parlophone France (Warner Music France)

The set is available at [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) and other sellers of good music.

Featured Image by Jacky Lepage

[Charles Mingus](#) [Chet Baker](#) [Dexter Gordon](#) [Larry Coryell](#) [NHOP](#) [Philip Catherine](#) [Stéphane Grappelli](#) [Tom Harrell](#)