

My Life Sept 30 2013

by Jean Humenry

Back right after the war when, to celebrate the return of peace, we used to sing, or whistle, at festivals for the fields or the vineyards, and above all in school, where I was a soloist in the chorus when I was six. The first family radio set on the mantle amazed me with the songs of **Jean Nohain** and **Mireille Hartuch**.

Later I listened to **George Brassens** in middle school, followed by the shock of **Jacques Brel** in high school.

Rock arrived: my first chords on a guitar encouraged me to start my first band, "**Les Narvals**".

Very soon thereafter, influenced by folk music and by **Woody Guthrie**, **Bob Dylan**, **The Kingston Trio** and **Peter, Paul and Mary**, at 17 I founded the folk group, "**Les Etrangers**", with my friends **Yves de Gaillande** and **Nils Lardé**. Our young trio was quickly supported by the listeners of **Sud Radio** and we opened for **Jacques Brel** and many other stars of the 60's. Several television appearances, three 45 RPM records on the **DMF** label, followed by a 33 RPM on the "**Reflets Studio SM**" label, consolidated our group.

After studies in Modern Literature at the University of Pau and my military service in Castelsarrasin, "**Les Etrangers**" and I went on tour with the gospel and spiritual singer, **John Littleton**. There I met those with whom we later formed the group "**Crèche**": **Bernard Haillant**, **Mannick**, **Gaëtan de Courrèges** and **Jo Akepsimas**.

In 1970 I recorded my first album, "*Chansons comme ci, chansons comme ça*", with texts by **Jean Debruyne**, a worker-priest, surrealist poet and friend of **Jacques Prévert**. This album won the Rose d'Or de Douai-la-Fontaine. A second album in the same vein, "*Le Ciel d'en haut, le ciel d'en bas*", came out the following year and twice brought invitations to **Jacques Chancel**'s TV show as well as to participate in the Tréteaux de **Bobino** along with **Jean-Michel Caradec** and **Ganaël**.

After leaving the group "Crèche", at the height of its success, I formed a new group, "**L'Equipage**", and brought out a new album, "*De face et de profil*". I also produced by first show in Paris at the **Théâtre de Trévisé**. In 1975 I built the first "home studio" where I recorded and produced several albums.

In 1978 Unidisc brought out the album, "*Le Monde n'est pas à ma taille*", under the direction of **Jack Ada** and **Michel Haumont**.

Meeting the lyricist Frank Thomas and the arranger **Jean Musy** shook up my artistic life and allowed me to sign a contract with the **Claude Carrère** label. Two albums, "*Fatima*" and "*Je cours dans la tête*" came out in 1981 and 1982. The song "Je cours dans ma tête" received a lot of airplay on France Inter. I toured widely in France and abroad. **Christian Le Guillochet** opened the doors of **Le Lucernaire** for me.

I produced many songs and records for a young audience including the famous "*Chansons et comptines de France*" for the **Audivis** label, awarded two gold records. For over twenty years I also spent a lot of time on writing workshops with children, writing and composing more than 450 songs.

In 1998 **Naïve** label brought out my self-produced album based on the poems of **Robert Louis Stevenson**, "*Jardin de chansons pour un enfant*", and in 2000 the album "*En voiture*", to critical acclaim.

In 2000 I produced two albums, "*J'attends*" and "*Voyageur*".

In 2004 I was the victim of a cerebrovascular accident which left me hemiplegic for a time. A long and patient struggle to make my way back was accompanied by work on reeditions and new publications. Thus, in 2005 the **Comme ci, comme ça** label brought out four CD-books entitled "*L'Univers de l'écocitoyen*", and, in 2006, as the result of a long collaboration with **Jean Debruyne** on the life of Robert Louis Stevenson, the CD-book "*Sur les pas de Robert-Louis Stevenson*" produced and directed by **Bernard Paganotti**. The **ADF-Bayard** label brought out a 4-CD boxed set anthology, "*Aussi loin qu'ici*".

My efforts at reconstruction oriented me towards writing.

In 2010 the publisher DDB brought out a collection of poetic texts, "*Mes horizons à 180°*", followed by an autobiographical account, "*Je n'ai jamais voulu faire pleurer les anges*".

2011 saw my return with the production of a children's album, "*Chansons pour passer une bonne journée*", and my first album in eight years, produced and directed by my son **Charles Humenry**, "*Sans doute*".

Since, I have been working on writing projects and preparing a new album...

Translation by **Brian Thompson**.