

# DID YOU KNOW?

1 Look at this photograph of Django Reinhardt.

Read the article to find out about him.



## Django Rheinhardt

Who do you think is the greatest guitarist in the world? A famous rock guitarist such as Jimi Hendrix, or Eddie van Halen? A classical guitarist such as Andrés de Segovia? Or perhaps a flamenco guitarist such as Paco de Lucia? But have you ever heard the name Django Reinhardt?

Django Reinhardt was one of the most famous guitarists in the world. His life was short: he was only 43 when he died. But he had a huge influence on jazz music and his recordings are often played today. Many modern musicians consider that Django Reinhardt is still a 'guitar hero'.

Django Reinhardt was born on January 24th 1910, in Belgium. His parents were gypsies and travelled around Belgium and France in a caravan. Django taught himself to play the banjo and the guitar. By the age of nine he was impressing adults with his incredible technique. By the mid 1920s, he was making recordings of his music, although he could not read or write. Some of these early recordings show his name as 'Jiango Renard' because Django did not know how to spell his name.

Then, on November 2nd 1928, when Django was 18 years old, he was very badly burned in a terrible fire in his caravan. He spent 18 months in hospital with dreadful injuries to his left hand and his right leg. The doctors were able to save his leg, but his left hand was damaged forever. After this he could only move two fingers on this hand. But Django did not stop playing the guitar. He practised every day in hospital although he was in terrible pain. His guitar playing became even better than before. In 1934, he formed a musical duo with the great violinist Stephane Grappelli. They wrote and performed many wonderful jazz compositions for the next fifteen years. Django played with other great jazz musicians, too, including Larry Adler, Bill Coleman and Duke Ellington.

In 1951, Django Reinhardt retired to the small village of Samois-sur-Seine, but he died two years later. Although he died young, his music is still exciting and inspirational today.



2 Read the article again and answer these questions.

- 1 Why do some early record covers spell Django's name incorrectly?
- 2 How long did Django spend in hospital?
- 3 Who became his musical partner in 1934?
- 4 When did he retire?

3 Who are your heroes? They can be sportsmen or women, musicians, or just ordinary people. Why do we admire some people?