

American MASTERS

thirteen
WNET NEW YORK

450 West 33rd Street
New York, NY 10001-2605
thirteen.org

press information



PBS

AMERICAN MASTERS
is produced for PBS
by Thirteen/WNET
New York

Biography

AMERICAN MASTERS Atlantic Records: The House That Ahmet Built

AHMET ERTEGUN

Founding Chairman, Atlantic Records

One of the most important figures in the history of modern music, Ahmet Ertegun was born in Istanbul, Turkey on July 31, 1923. The son of the Turkish Ambassador to the United States, Ertegun was raised and educated in Switzerland, Paris, London, and Washington, D.C. A passionate music fan and collector, Ertegun borrowed \$10,000 from his dentist and co-founded Atlantic Records in New York City in the fall of 1947. He signed artists, produced records, wrote songs, and supervised the fledgling label. As he said, “We started Atlantic simply because we wanted to sign a few artists whose music we liked, and make the kind of records that we would want to buy.”

Under Ertegun’s direction, Atlantic evolved from a groundbreaking, independent R&B and jazz label into one of the world’s preeminent music companies. The artists Ertegun discovered and the music he pioneered led a revolution in R&B, soul and rock music that reshaped the modern cultural landscape – forming a legacy that includes such seminal artists as Ray Charles, Big Joe Turner, Ruth Brown, LaVern Baker, The Clovers, The Drifters, John Coltrane, Ben E. King, Bobby Darin, Sonny & Cher, Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding, Solomon Burke, Wilson Pickett, Led Zeppelin, Eric Clapton, Crosby Stills Nash & Young, The Rolling Stones, Bette Midler, Roberta Flack, Phil Collins, and many others.

Ertegun was founder and chairman of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. In recognition of his pioneering contributions to contemporary music and culture, he was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1987, and the museum’s main exhibition hall in Cleveland bears his name. In 1991, Ertegun received an honorary doctorate in music from the Berklee College of Music in Boston, and in 1993 he was presented with a Trustees Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences. In 2000, he was honored as a “Living Legend” by the United States Library of Congress, on the occasion of the library’s bicentennial. In June 2006, he was honored with the opening night concert at the 40th Montreux Jazz Festival. He never retired and remained active at Atlantic, serving as founding chairman of the company he started six decades ago, until his death in December 2006, weeks after suffering a head injury backstage at a private Rolling Stones concert in New York City.

.....

- more -

Press Contacts:

Donna Williams

Thirteen/WNET New York

212.560.8030

williamsd@thirteen.org

Debra Falk

Thirteen/WNET New York

212.560.3013

falk@thirteen.org