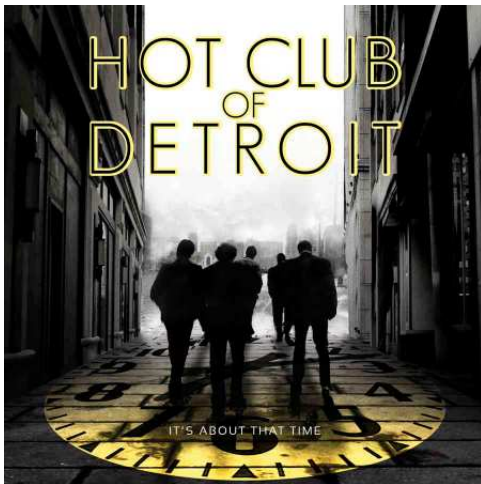




It's About That Time Hot Club of Detroit

Mack Avenue Records
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Review by Larry Taylor



This is the year of "gypsy jazz." Around the world, the 100th birthday of Django Reinhardt, legendary Gypsy guitarist, is being celebrated with festivals and concerts.

At this centennial time, the Hot Club of Detroit's *It's About That Time* is firmly in the tradition of Reinhardt's Hot Club of France, his legendary quintet from the 1930s. This follows the Detroit group's 2008 self-titled release, but goes further beyond gypsy genre-related tunes with arrangements that incorporate the influences of greats from Duke Ellington and Pat Martino to Chopin. A partial look at the play list reveals its eclecticism: "Duke and Dukie," Joe Zawinul's "It's About That Time" and Charles Mingus' "Nostalgia in Times Square."

From its inception, this type music has been traditionally performed with a lead guitarist, joined by a violinist, two rhythm guitars and bass. Here, guitarist Evan Perri spearheads an ensemble made up of accordion, clarinet, saxophone and, most importantly, two guitars. The rhythm guitar is the hallmark of the gypsy swing sound, played with a distinct percussive technique that replaces drums; it sets the pace—fast or slow—anchoring the sound.

In jazz settings, the accordion is often shunted to the background. Here, however, Julien Labro stands out in his beautiful introduction to Chopin's "Tristesse," which features Perri's delicate guitar and Dave Bennett's elegant clarinet. Labro also excels in the bluesy "Patio Swing," and his exchanges with saxophonist Carl Cafagna are, as Reinhardt in his day might say, "a gas."

The CD, itself, hits its stride immediately with "On the Steps," influenced, by a Martino song, with stomping solos by Perri and Cafagna. In "Noto Swing," Cafagna's whirling dervish of a solo levitates this animated tune by Lulu Reinhardt, he of the contemporary German gypsy jazz scene.

It's About That Time provides that good-time gypsy feeling for sure, but it also offers newer things to grasp.

Track listing: On the Steps; Nostalgia in Times Square; Noto Swing; "Tristesse" E Major Etude; Equilibrium; Restless Twilights; For Stephane; Papillon; Duke and Dukie; Heavy Artillerie/It's About That Time; Patio Swing; Sacre Bleu; Sweet Chorus.