



## AVAILABLE TODAY--*IT'S ABOUT THAT TIME*, HOT CLUB OF DETROIT'S NEW CD ON MACK AVENUE RECORDS

The family tree that traces its roots to the Quintette du Hot Club de France has sprouted countless branches across the globe in the seventy years since Django Reinhardt first jammed with Stephane Grappelli. It seems like a new city lays claim to its own Hot Club on a virtually daily basis, but the **Hot Club of Detroit** is undoubtedly the apple that has fallen farthest from that tree.

The blistering fretwork on the opening track of the group's third CD, *It's About That Time*, pays explicit homage to one of their six-string heroes - just not the one you might think. "On the Steps" is based on the chord changes of Pat Martino's "On the Stairs" (with a brief borrowing from John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" to complete the pun), and states at the outset what fans of these gypsy jazz revisionists have long known - that Django Reinhardt is far from the beginning and end of the Hot Club of Detroit's vocabulary of influences.

"Django Reinhardt is the showerhead from which we all come down," says guitarist and bandleader Evan Perri. "But if he had lived, I don't think he would've been playing the same things he had in prior years. He was constantly evolving as a jazz musician."

The Hot Club of Detroit has undergone a similar evolution since Perri formed the group in 2003 with fellow students at Wayne State University in Detroit. The ensemble rapidly accumulated accolades and audiences over the next several years, including a first-place win in the 2004 Detroit International Jazz Festival competition and multiple Detroit Music Awards. Their 2006 self-titled debut, while slightly more traditional than later releases, established their broad-minded approach to the Django resurgence.

Since that time, it's become increasingly evident that their inspiration comes as much from the spirit of Reinhardt's playing as by its much-copied sound. While they've maintained some recognizable elements - the absence of drums, the percussive "la pompe" rhythm guitar technique - the Motor City quintet apply those elements to a decidedly modern sound, refusing to be constrained by allegiance to some time-honored, purist ideal.

"To me," says rhythm guitarist Paul Brady, "Django Reinhardt was a jazz

improviser like Coleman Hawkins or Lester Young or any of the other great improvisers of his time. We don't approach our music as a gypsy jazz band, but 100% as a jazz group."

That approach is nowhere more evident than on the disc's title track, the Joe Zawinul-penned "It's About That Time," famously fused with "In A Silent Way" on Miles Davis' 1969 album. Brady hit upon the idea of fusing the tune instead with Reinhardt's oft-revisited "Heavy Artillerie," creating an atmospheric hybrid with a loping groove and an airy spaciousness.

The ensemble also takes on Charles Mingus' "Nostalgia in Times Square," in 5/4, with bassist Andrew Kratzat providing an appropriately brawny, wood-smacking intro and Carl Cafagna getting the Eric Dolphy tent-revival treatment with a clapalong accompaniment for his tenor solo.

Of course, Reinhardt's catalog is also plumbed for material, but other than the aforementioned "Heavy Artillerie," repertoire was found in its more shadowy, neglected corners. "We try to find Django tunes that haven't been performed to death," Brady says. "He wrote a ton of stuff so we can always find something that we can have fun and stretch out on."

"Duke and Dukie," the first Django credit to appear on this record, perfectly fits that bill, a cheery three-chord romp that serves as a vehicle for lengthy improvisations during the band's live sets. "Sweet Chorus" provides a relaxed finish to the album, easy and intimate as a front porch jam session. The fiery "Noto Swing" is provided by another Reinhardt - Lulu, a mainstay of the German gypsy jazz scene.

On each of its releases the Detroit combo has also flexed its classical muscles, beginning with Nino Rota's theme from "The Godfather" on their debut, followed by Maurice Ravel's "Tzigane" on 2008's *Night Town*. This time it's Frédéric Chopin's "Tristesse" E Major Etude, arranged by accordionist Julien Labro, which shines a spotlight onto Cafagna's melancholy clarinet and Labro's lush bandoneón.

"All of us come from different backgrounds and have very different musical training and influences," says Labro who plays both accordion, accordina, as well as bandoneón on this release. "Individually, we collaborate with musicians from many genres and styles, from classical, jazz, to world music."

When asked about the accordion's current place in jazz, Labro is succinct: "It is not important what instruments we play. I am a musician, and the accordion just happens to be the vehicle I utilize to express my musical thoughts and ideas."

The remainder of the album consists of originals by the band members themselves: Labro's serpentine, Chick Corea-influenced "Equilibrium"; Cafagna's engaging "Restless Twilights"; "Papillon", a wistful ballad by Labro and Kratzat; Perri's aptly-named "Patio Swing"; Labro's

knife-edged waltz "Sacre Bleu"; and Perri's "For Stéphane" - an homage to guitarist Stéphane Wrembel, not the original Hot Club of France violinist.

As wide-ranging as the album is, the one constant is the group's sense of individuality, which Perri says he encourages from each of his bandmates.

"There's no point in going out and playing music if you can't be yourself," Perri says. "Sometimes you'll hear a Wes Montgomery riff in my playing, or you might hear an Eddie Van Halen riff or a Led Zeppelin influence, because that's who I am and for me to deny that wouldn't be true to my musicianship."

### **Hot Club of Detroit Tour Dates**

- **Wednesday, April 28:** [Scullers](#)- Boston, MA
- **Friday, May 14:** [Cliff Bells](#)- CD Release Celebration- Detroit, MI
- **Friday, June 11:** [Night Town](#)- CD Release Show- Cleveland, OH
- **Saturday, June 12:** [Central Pennsylvania Friends of Jazz](#)- Harrisburg, PA
- **Sunday, June 13:** [All Balboa Weekend](#)- Cleveland, OH
- **Saturday, June 26:** [Indiana Fiddlers Festival](#)- Lafayette, IN
- **Sunday, July 18:** [Schoolcraft College - Michigan Jazz Festival](#)- Livonia, MI
- **Friday, July 23:** [Fontana Chamber of Arts](#)- Kalamazoo, MI
- **Thursday, August 19:** [Jazz at the Zoo](#)- Indianapolis, IN
- **Saturday, August 21:** [Fur Peace Ranch](#)- Pomeroy, OH
- **Saturday, September 25:** [Whidbey Island Center for the Arts](#)- Langley, WA
- **Friday, October 29:** [University Musical Society](#)- w/ Hot Club of SF-Ann Arbor, MI

### **Hot Club of Detroit - *It's About That Time* (MAC 1051)**

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