



## Hot Club of Detroit

MACK AVENUE 1030

★★★

A repertory band with relevance is a rare and precious thing. The Gypsy swing tribute group Hot Club of Detroit has impressively mastered a difficult and distinctive repertoire. With the release of its self-titled debut, one deftly balancing reverence and reinvention, the Hot Club of Detroit has also taken a giant step forward on the road to relevance. The sextet's reason for being is Django Reinhardt and his effervescent music, represented by a half dozen compositions. This sensibility anchors the proceedings. Group founder Evan Perri's sparkling lead guitar work is infused with modern sensibilities, giving it a brash, but disciplined sound representative of the original Reinhardt approach. He benefits greatly from the dual, though never dueling, rhythm guitars and Shannon Wade's full-bodied standup bass. Perri can play rapidly with great precision, but he's also adept at giving the music room to breathe in ballads.

In addition to the original Hot Club classics, the band performs other Reinhardt compositions, including the sublime "Nuages" from later in his career. The most extended selection comes from Italian cinema maestro Nino Rota via more than 11-and-a-half minutes of the "Godfather Theme." The group creatively uses the inherent drama and dynamics of the film while updating and energizing it with an infectious enthusiasm instead of condescending irony.

It is at times like this, when the group reaches beyond its repertory role, that it's most interesting. Hearing Antonio Carlos Jobim's "How Insensitive" swing on Julien Labro's aggressive button accordion or the band's relatively relaxed, but conspicuously reconfigured, take on Wes Montgomery's "Leila" is enjoyable evidence that the Hot Club of Detroit is capable of much more than just keeping the Reinhardt flame burning.

—Michael Point

**Hot Club Of Detroit:** Belleville; Passion; Honeysuckle Rose; Leila; Stompin' At Deco; Nuages; Swing One; Aurora; How Insensitive; Tears; Godfather Theme; Troublant Bolero; Ancuman. (73.42)

**Personnel:** Evan Perri, lead guitar; Colton Weatherspoon, Paul Brady, rhythm guitar; Shannon Wade, bass; Dave Bennett, clarinet; Julien Labro, button accordion.

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