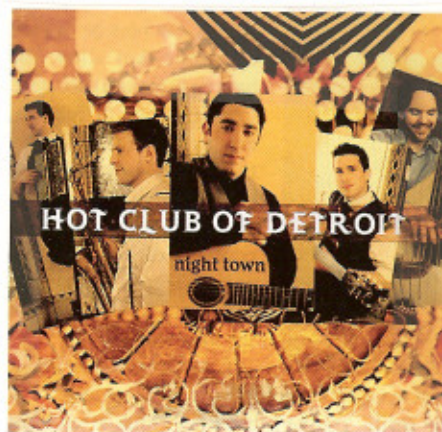


DOWNBEAT

October 2008



Hot Club Of Detroit

Night Town
MACK AVENUE 1041
★★★½

Django lives. Hot Club Of Detroit's (HCO) eponymous debut in 2006 spread news beyond its home city about how well the band connected with 1930s Parisian café jazz, no matter if it went with a fairly uncommon pairing of clarinet and accordion at the expense of an obligatory violin. Now, on *Night Town*, the HCO has dropped clarinet and added a mainstream jazz saxophone to present a commendable program covering old and new Gypsy swing numbers, American jazz standards and French song miscellanea.

Though his chromatic notes, arpeggios and glissandos won't drop your jaw in amazement like those of a Stochelo Rosenberg or Biréli Lagrène, guitarist Evan Perri makes it clear that he knows where to find honest revelation in his well-crafted solos on one song after another. At 29, the Detroit native is becoming a consummate craftsman. France-born Julian Labro, too, makes a favorable impression. He has a smooth, pleasing quality to the sound of the accordion he fingers and squeezes with such nonchalant expertise.

Carl Cafagna's no slouch on tenor, making a footloose run through Miles Davis' "Seven Steps To Heaven" and jousting with Labro on the Gene Ammons-and-Sonny Stitt romp "Blues Up And Down." His soprano sometimes points to Sidney Bechet's New Orleans. HCO even goes beyond smile-inducing civility lending an Eastern European exaltation to Ravel's "Tzigane" and giving a touch of exotic James Bond-soundtrack mystery to the title track, a Perri composition. —Frank-John Hadley

Night Town: I Want To Be Happy; J'Attendrai; Valse A Rosenthal; Seven Steps To Heaven; Speezy; Coquette; Sweet Substitute; Blues Up And Down; Pour Parler; Melodie Au Crepuscule; Two Weeks; Tzigane; Django's Monkey; Night Town; Swing 05. (83:58)

Personnel: Evan Perri, Paul Brady, guitar; Julien Labro, accordion, accordina; Shannon Wade, bass; Carl Cafagna, tenor, soprano saxophone.

» Ordering info: mackavenue.com