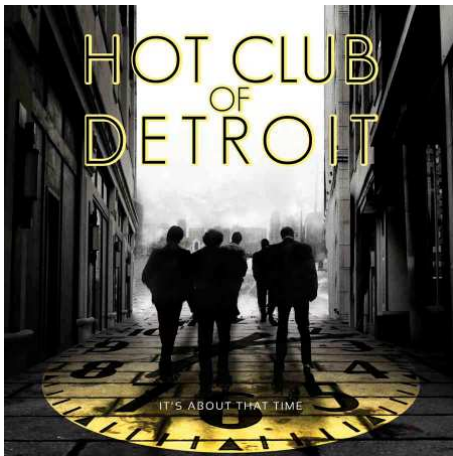


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It's About That Time Hot Club of Detroit

Mack Avenue Records
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Review by Mike Joyce



San Francisco, Philadelphia, Boulder, New Orleans, Cowtown (a.k.a. Austin): There are enough Hot Club ensembles operating around the country to make even the growth of television's flourishing CSI franchise seem undernourished by comparison. "It's About That Time", the latest release by the Hot Club of Detroit, however, isn't for Django-philes only – or, for that matter, fans of vintage, homebred swing. Instead, the quintet continues to project an inquisitive spirit and a venturesome thrust, something that holds true whether it's revisiting old tunes or unveiling original pieces.

Certainly the influence of guitarist Reinhardt and violinist Stephane Grappelli plays a prominent role on the album, but so too does the ingenuity of Joe Zawinul, Charles Mingus, Pat Martino, Chick Corea and Frederic Chopin. The combination of these elements, along with the occasional odd-meter excursion, makes for some compelling contrast while also preventing retro-inspired lulls. A case in point is the album's title track, which finds the band slyly wedding Reinhardt's "Heavy Artillerie" to Miles Davis' seminal fusion-era entry "It's About That Time." Not coincidentally, the same track is one of several distinguished by the close rapport and interplay developed by lead guitarist Evan Perri, Accordionist-bandoneón player Julien Labro and reedman Carl Cafagna.

Of the original compositions, Labro's "Sacre Bleu," a brightly flowing waltz arranged for trio, swiftly stands out, due in large part to the composer's rhapsodic touch. As for rhythm guitarist Paul Brady and bassist Andrew Kratzat, in addition to providing idiomatic support they contribute and engagingly evocative arrangement of Mingus' "Nostalgia in Times Square."