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# Night Town

Hot Club of Detroit

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### Artist

[Hot Club of Detroit](#)

### Album

Night Town

### Rating

★★★★☆

### Release Date

Jul 15, 2008

### Label

Mack Avenue

### Genre

Jazz

### Styles

Gypsy  
Standards  
Continental Jazz

### Moods

Intimate  
Laid-Back/  
Mellow  
Romantic  
Sophisticated  
Sensual  
Elegant  
Amiable/ Good-Natured  
Warm  
Gentle  
Carefree  
Earnest  
Lush  
Light  
Refined/  
Mannered  
Passionate

### Themes

Background Music  
Summertime  
Dinner  
Ambiance

## Review

by Thom Jurek

On *Night Town*, the Hot Club of Detroit's sophomore effort for Mack Avenue Records, there is a sound that offers pure delight for jazz lovers and, by the same token, one of dread for the Gypsy jazz purist. That sound begins at the two-second mark of the opening cut on this excellent set. The tune is the old standard "I Want to Be Happy," and this version of it was inspired not by Django Reinhardt, but by a recording of Stan Getz playing with the Oscar Peterson Trio. It is the sound of a tenor saxophone (played by Carl Cafagna) evoking a momentary post-bop line and moving in a very straight path from here to there, accompanied by Julien Labro's button accordion, Shannon Wade's upright bass, and the guitars of Evan Perri and Paul Brady. The tune moves in short order from fleeting post-bop into the center of the action where it becomes a breezy, tough, but celebratory hybrid of Gypsy swing, French chanson, and bop. It is a startling, even breathless, even heady way to open an album, but through 15 tracks, despite the mood changes, tempo shifts, dynamic ranges, and advanced harmonic palette, the Hot Club of Detroit never let up. Of course, this Hot Club is not now, nor has it ever been, a purist group. The band's interest in Reinhardt and his burning, exuberant Gypsy brand of swinging jazz has always been serious, but mere revivalism is not the aim. These cats are jazz musicians first and foremost and the music they make, whether directly written or previously recorded by him or not, is filtered through their collective ability as jazzmen — in arrangement, tempo, harmony, and yes, swing. After all, the word Detroit is in their name.

In addition to "I Want to Be Happy," there is a highly original reading of Miles Davis' classic "Seven Steps to Heaven," with the front line led by Labro's accordion and Cafagna's tenor. Wade's bassline pace is breezy and taut, the way Perri and Brady interact with the front-line soloists is startling, and the way Cafagna's hard bopping knotty solo touches on Sonny Rollins via Coleman Hawkins is brilliant. The underscoring of Miles' manner of using an Eastern mode in the theme is a nice touch to boot. For those who like their Gypsy swing a little closer to home, that's here in spades in Reinhardt's "Valse a Rosenthal," "Speevy," and the single "Django's Monkey," but everything here is worthwhile — whoever heard of a swing reading of Gene "Jug" Ammons and Sonny Stitt's "Blues Up and Down" or a backwards evocation of New Orleans via the European swing era and hard bop as exists in this version of Jelly Roll Morton's "Sweet Substitute"? Right, nowhere but here. The originals are also worth noting (and one wishes they weren't placed so near the back end of the album) because of their lyrical sophistication. The gorgeous "Two Weeks," by Perri and Labro, is especially notable for its seamless union of samba and late-era swing. Another is Perri's title track, which begins as a contemplative, breezy, nearly West Coast simmering jazz number — again thanks to Cafagna's saxophone, which crisscrosses into and out of flamenco and Latin jazz terrain even as it invokes Reinhardt's spirit of adventure and craftsmanship. This is an excellent second chapter for the Hot Club of Detroit, and one that advances their unique voice further than their debut.

## Tracks

Title	Composer	Time
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