



It's About That Time
Hot Club of Detroit
(Mack Avenue)



Wrap Your Troubles in...
Hot Club of Philadelphia
(Jazz Manouch)

by Ken Dryden

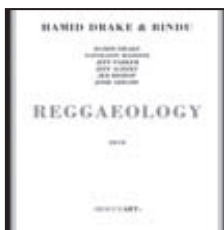
Some "Hot Club" bands stick fairly close to the repertoire and instrumentation of the quintet that inspired them but others substitute different instruments and expand the songbook.

The Hot Club of Detroit consists of guitarist Evan Perri, accordion player Julien Labro, Carl Cafagna (clarinet, tenor and soprano saxes), rhythm guitarist Paul Brady and bassist Andrew Kratzat. Earlier recordings focused on songs by Reinhardt and Grappelli but here they delve into Frédéric Chopin's "Tristesse E Major Etude". Their spirited arrangement of Charles Mingus' "Nostalgia in Times Square" successfully blends gypsy swing with the late bassist's soulful jazz. One of their more adventurous efforts is the combination of Reinhardt's "Heavy Artillerie" and Miles Davis' "It's About That Time" into an unusual medley that defies stylistic labeling. The originals are equally enjoyable. Perri's "Sacre Bleu" is an enticing gypsy trio waltz for guitar, bass and accordion while Labro's gently swaying "Papillion" showcases Cafagna on soprano sax and the composer's accordion.

The Hot Club of Philadelphia also draws from a larger repertoire, but varies the musicians from one track to another while utilizing a few guests as well. The core quartet includes lead acoustic guitarist Barry Wahrhaftig, rhythm guitarist Joe Ellis, clarinetist Bob Butryn and bassist Jim Stager. The standard "Exactly Like You" adds violinist Joe Arnold, who swings in a more country-influenced style. "Someone to Watch Over Me" features the virtuoso Howard Alden on seven-string acoustic guitar and a heartfelt vocal by Denise King. Reinhardt's timeless "Nuages" is heard in a vocal setting as well, "It's the Bluest Kind of Blues", with Phyllis Chapell singing its lyric in both French and English. Wahrhaftig overdubs lead and rhythm guitar in the chugging setting of "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To". His solo interpretation of Alec Wilder's "While We're Young" isn't played in a gypsy style, but as a straight-ahead ballad. The modern gypsy guitarist Dorado Schmitt's "Tchavolo Swing" also fits the bill perfectly while the addition of flamenco guitarist Carlos Rubio (along with King on

vocals) recasts the late '40s pop favorite "Nature Boy".

For more information, visit mackavenue.com and hotclubphilly.com. The Hot Club of Detroit is at Joe's Pub Jan. 21st-22nd. See Calendar.



Reggaeology
Hamid Drake & Bindu
(Rogue Art)

by Kurt Gottschalk



Eponymous
**Frank Gratkowski/
Hamid Drake** (Valid)

Part of what makes the surprise of *Reggaeology* so wonderful is that it really shouldn't be a surprise at all. Drummer Hamid Drake showed himself to be a savvy bandleader on his previous Rogue Art releases and he's long been carving room for backbeats within the free jazz maelstrom. So claiming ground in the relaxed feel of West African-cum-Caribbean grooves would seem only natural for Drake.

But reggae, like the blues, is a form so associated with a particular mood and style that it has become codified beyond artistic expression. What Drake and his stellar sextet are after here isn't the post-Bob Marley tunes of frat party freedom but the real horn-centric deal of the spectrum of calypso-based musics, from joyous midtempo mento rhythms to the wavering trombone wails of first-generation ska, with some free jazz freedom and beatbox vocals folded in as well.

The album boldly starts off with its longest track, the 20-minute "Kali's Children No Cry", which could easily fit in a Skatalites set (trombonists Jeff Albert and Jeb Bishop know their Don Drummond). That's followed by a double groove meeting of Nigerian electric guitar (easily played by Jeff Parker) and Gnaawa guimbri (bassist Josh Abrams) united by Drake's in-the-pocket drumming and another shining trombone line. After that comes the other pleasant shocker of the record, in the guise of Napoleon Maddox (from Cincinnati hip-hop crew ISWHAT?!). His vocal percussion melds with Drake's drums throughout, but he steps up as preacher and griot, reciting and singing his texts and verses from Drake and poet Lex Hixon. He leaves a big footprint on the record, pulling it away from what those who concern themselves with such things call "jazz", though it's not like they called the record "Jazzology".

The surprises in store on the drummer's duo recording with German saxophonist Frank Gratkowski are smaller, more tucked away, but such small revelations are never far when Drake's at play. The four long improvisations culled from this 2009 New Orleans concert are typically exploratory and highly musical - Gratkowski seems always to have melody on his mind. But with the exception of the late, great tenorman Fred Anderson, Drake isn't often heard in tandem with horns and Gratkowski is a very different player who favors more delicate reeds (he's heard here on alto sax and B-flat and bass clarinets). It's not a subdued session, but not quite full-on either and there's plenty of space to hear each of their decision-making and how it turns on the other, at one point building to an unexpectedly resilient 2/2 from the drums. It's always a pleasure to bask in the warmth of Drake's playing and in both of these instances it's easy to stand the heat.

For more information, visit web.roguart.com and validrecords.com. Drake is at Le Poisson Rouge Jan. 21st with William Parker. See Calendar.

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