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# Guitarists lock into groove through sets

## Tight band shows its swing during tribute

By: **Chris Smith**

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The Hot Club of Detroit is a tight, tight band that swings like crazy through its brand of Gypsy jazz paying tribute to the great guitarist Django Reinhardt.

The five-piece band -- rhythm and lead guitars, bass, accordion and tenor sax -- was augmented by the great Brooklyn-based French singer Cyrille Aimée in its shows as part of the Izzy Asper Jazz Performances series.

From the get-go, lead guitarist Evan Perri and rhythm guitarist Paul Brady were locked into a groove that drove the band through two great sets Saturday afternoon, the first of two concerts that day.

That familiar driving force that marked Reinhardt's style was both a vehicle unto itself and the basis for an afternoon and great ensemble and solo work along with bassist Shawn Conley, accordion player Julien Laabro and saxophonist Jon Irabagon.

Aimée is not a band member, but she fits in so well singing everything from an Edith Piaf song, La Foule, to Ornette Coleman's Lonely Woman to the jazz standard, Lover Man. She took two unaccompanied spots using a loop pedal to lay down her own background vocals before singing a song. Her first, Fortunate Son, was a gem. And how often are you going to hear a Creedence Clearwater Revival song sung in such a way as to please a jazz audience. Watching and listening to Aimée lay down her background loops was a bit of a novelty, and she hit into the song just before the looping became tiresome.

Labro plays the chromatic accordion with the style and verve of a rock musician, maintaining the European cabaret feel of the Gypsy jazz, but adding a more modern, innovative touch. Who would have expected the accordion to sound so hip?

Irabagon, new to the band, has proven himself as a great saxophonist in other bands and as a leader and he has slipped into Hot Club as if born to the sound. Much of his other playing has been outside the lines, but he swings like mad here.

The saxophonist, playing tenor on Saturday, was great throughout the concert, but the nature of the music seemed to constrain him to those who were familiar with his more adventurous playing.

That was remedied, first on a tune For Stefane, where he finally got to let loose a bit, and then on the Coleman tune, Lonely Woman, where his soloing gave the audience a real taste of his talent.

Aimée did a wonderful job on this tune, as she did on Lover Man, where her faint hint of French accent made the plaintive song even better.

Bassist Conley, also new to the band, fits perfectly into the rhythm section, delivering that swinging, driving sound with Perri and Brady and taking some tasty solos himself.

The Hot Club of Detroit treats the memory and vision of Reinhardt with respect; mostly by keeping the music current and the musicianship high.

chris.smith@freepress.mb.ca

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