



### **Jazz Promo Services**

**Django Festival Allstars  
Live At Birdland 2012  
(Three's A Crowd Records TCR 5001)  
Street Date June 4, 2013)**

**Dorado Schmitt-lead guitar & violin, Samson Schmitt-lead & rhythm guitar, Ludovic Beier-accordion & accordina, Pierre Blanchard-violin, Franko Mehrstein-rhythm guitar, Amati Schmitt-lead guitar, Bronson Schmitt-lead guitar, Doudou Cuillerier-rhythm guitar, Xavier Nikq-bass, Jisoo Ok-cello, Anat Cohen-soprano sax**

The most meaningful tribute that can be paid to great Jazz artists is not to simply pay homage, but to be inspired by that legacy to create new and vibrant music in that same spirit. From that perspective, *The Django Festival Allstars* CD on Three's A Crowd Records is an unbridled success. With the immortal Django Reinhardt as its life spring, the 14-year old Django Reinhardt New York Festival as its central nervous system, and the Schmitt Gypsy family dynasty as its heartbeat, the Django Festival Allstars bring the legendary Gypsy guitarist's legacy fully into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

While the essence of Django, and his Quintet of the Hot Club de France partner Stephane Grappelli, is fully represented by the remarkable music on this CD, a full palette of Jazz expression is on loving display throughout the 15 delightful tracks.

Django has always been revered as Jazz royalty, but his popularity in New York City has received a tremendous boost through the efforts of the Django Reinhardt Festival's co-founders and producers, Pat Philips and Ettore Stratta through the annual celebration at Birdland that has occurred every year since 2000. But not only has the Festival created a slew of new fans for this timeless music, it has also provided the impetus for a union of amazing musicians who have connected through these events and now are permanently represented by this spectacular recording.

Schmitt family patriarch Dorado, a legendary Gypsy guitarist himself, and his son Samson have been longtime members of the family here. They have since been joined by the younger family members Bronson (21) and Amati (17) to create a veritable guitar dynasty, and all are featured prominently on this CD. The Birdland stage was also the place where the Schmitts were introduced to the two other primary contributors here, accordionist/accordina player Ludovic Beier and violinist Pierre Blanchard. These six are buoyed by the stalwart support of rhythm guitarists Doudou Cuillerier and Francko Mehrstein and the highly sympathetic and rhythmic Xavier Nikq on bass. So it's an all-France lineup on hand for this historic recording. Extra spicing to the heady brew is added by the soprano sax of Anat Cohen and the cello of Jisoo Ok, who join in the festivities on one track apiece.

Recorded live at Birdland in 2012, the repertoire features two notable Django classics, a pair of standards, two originals each by Beier and Blanchard, one by Bronson and five by Dorado.

Quite appropriately the album opens with a traditional piece heavily associated with Django – *Swing Gitan*. With its vividly driving rhythm, virtuosic guitarist Dorado and Ludovic's rocking accordion, the CD is off to a rip-roaring start. The two Reinhardt originals are both lovely ballads. Django's gorgeous *Nuages* is a feature for Anat Cohen on soprano sax and Dorado on guitar. While Anat stays away from copying the peerless Sidney Bechet's style, she offers her own heart-wrenching interpretation, clearly evoking the mood of a smoky late-night Parisian café where Bechet, Django, Grappelli and their cohorts may have languidly expressed their unique artistry some 80 years ago. *Manoir de Mes Reves* is a feature for Beier's accordina (a mouth accordion) – a deeply romantic and virtuosic gently strolling piece built upon a pillow of gossamer guitar rhythms and deeply wooded bass.

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The two standards offer a sharp contrast in moods. The Jimmy Green/Eddie Heywood classic *Out Of Nowhere* is a gently swinging item featuring Blanchard's gliding violin on the theme and brilliant solos by Dorado and Blanchard over a traditional strummed rhythm. Pinkard, Tracey & Tauber's *Them There Eyes* – made famous by Billie Holiday – is a blistering romp, with an explosive solo by Samson on lead guitar and equally scorching turns by Blanchard and Beier.

Angular modernism is the flavor for Beier's *Camping Car*, an Eastern-tinged, angular excursion. A smoking piece with a vibrant groove, it evokes the tension-filled intensity of Juan Tizol's *Caravan*, with powerfully driving bass lines and scalding accordion and violin solos. Beier's other original, *Pat's Waltz*, is a medium up-tempo swinger, tantalizingly syncopated with intricate melodic lines and an unfettered sense of swing.

Blanchard offers a more traditional waltz style with his *Valse en Exil*, vividly reminiscent of Paris, with a gently rolling theme bobbing easily on a vertical rhythmic structure. Samson's lilting guitar solo and Pierre's swirling violin are highlights. Dance form is also at play for the violinist's second original, *Balkanic Dance*. But gentility is not the goal here. The somewhat North Indian solo violin intro quickly kicks into a striking, biting piece whose Eastern modality exudes a devilish-like intensity – restrained but unflinching as it builds to its climax.

A very different vibe is at hand with Bronson Schmitt's *Bronson's Song*. A funky groover in a descended melodic pattern and deliciously suspended rhythm, the piece shows the influence of the '60's Soul Jazz genre and Bronson's exciting solo explores territorial boundaries set by the great Grant Green.

The elder Schmitt's five compositions demonstrate a broad range of styles and colors. *For Pierre*, a ballad of filigreed beauty is a feature for Dorado's deeply emotive violin styling. *Song For Ettore* is a similarly emotional foray into the traditional Gypsy style, again featuring Dorado on violin, with Ludovic on bandoneon and Amati on lead guitar each contributing mightily. *Melissa* is a jaunty, nicely syncopated swinger, with exciting solos Samson, Blanchard and Beier.

Infectious Brazilian rhythms are the key to the final two pieces. *El Dorado's* funky intro melds into a bouncy Samba-ish groove with a delicious violin/accordion unison line. *Bossa Dorado*, a well-known composition by Dorado – with Jisoo Ok adding her cello to the mix – closes out this wonderful album on an irresistible Bossa Nova groove, with a strong dose of Samba woven in, and dancing, twisting and cavorting solos to bring it all home.

Needless to say, the guitar virtuosity is simply marvelous – as it should be. But it never is showy or ostentatious; always in perfect unity with the musical vision.

Festival directors Philips and Stratta also produced the recording and have programmed the material in ideal fashion, balancing the tempos and moods for maximum effectiveness and listening enjoyment.

A splendid album and a most fitting tribute to one of Jazz's most singular figures.

**For more information about this album and the Festival, visit [www.djangobirdland.com](http://www.djangobirdland.com)**

**Festival Dates at Birdland: June 25-30, 2013 & Nov. 5-10, 2013  
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