

Liner notes for Rêve Bohème's album Six & Six | Swing to Bop

1) H.C.Q. Strut

A delightful and catchy theme by Django Reinhardt. One of the last tracks recorded by the original Quintette du Hot Club de France in August 25, 1939. It starts with a characteristic riff on the violin backed by the guitar before it goes into classic QHCF-string swing in the A-parts and a bluesy melody in the B-part.

In Rêve Bohème's version we maintain the original form with a long A-part in the end of each chorus for solos. In the last chorus we have inserted Benny Goodman's and Charlie Christian's blues riff "A Smooth One" before returning to the theme.

2) All the Things You Are

This classic and famous jazz standard was recorded only one time by Django. This was in Jan/Feb 1949 when Django and Grappelli recorded 100 tracks with an Italian rhythm group in Rome, also known as "The Rome Sessions". On this recording Grappelli plays the melody and afterwards Django takes over with a superb and melodic solo dancing through the complex harmonic structure of this old standard.

In Rêve Bohème's version we start by playing the original "vers" before transposing the song and going into soft gypsy-bossa in fingerpicking-style.

3) Swingtime in Springtime

A melodic and joyful composition by Django. You can almost hear the birds sing as you walk along the road in springtime. Django recorded this blues theme twice with his Nouveau Quintette featuring Hubert Rostaing on alto saxophone. The first version in May 15, 1946, featured Django on acoustic

guitar and the other version in September, 1947, featured him on electric guitar.

In Rêve Bohème's version we try to keep the fresh “springtime feeling” from the first acoustic version but in faster tempo like the electric guitar version. Then we also add a “call & respons” phrase from Wes Montgomery’s No Blues at the end of the solos.

4) Cherokee

A favorite jazz standard for many musicians and especially for bebop musicians. Charlie Parker recorded his first version in 1938 and we assume that Django must have played this song at several jam-sessions even though he never recorded it. The song is in a classic AABA form but the bridge is very long and has surprising chord-changes.

In Rêve Bohème's version we play it as an up-tempo bebop-tune with the guitar and harmonica playing the melody together with stop-breaks before going into the solos.

5) Folie à Amphion

In 1943 during the war Django attempted to escape to Switzerland. The escape failed and he stayed for two months at the banks of Lake Lemman. During the stay he was joined by clarinet player Gérard Lèvéque and they had a fun night in the small village Amphion. Django composed a tune which was recorded later in Paris, November 13, 1947, with his Nouveau Quintette. Gérard Lèvéque plays the melody while Django plays a counterpoint melody and then takes a solo with flashing arpeggios, octaves and chords.

In our version we play the melody like the clarinet does on the original recording and then we have inserted a few stop-breaks. Like H.C.Q. Strut this Django composition sounds so simple - but they both include small harmonic surprises.

6) Vamp

A beautiful and very slow ballad by Django recorded only once in May 11, 1951. The melody makes use of many of the harmonic extensions in the different chords and shows how advanced Django's compositions could be. Inspired by the impressionistic sounds of Debussy and Ravel, Django was an expert in writing slow and burning ballads like Nuages and Manoir de mes Rêves. Vamp exists only in one recorded version and it could be that Django just improvised the theme on the spot.

In Rêve Bohème's version we use the clarinet's melody from the last part as the main theme. The guitar plays the B-part and then goes back to playing Django harp-rolling chords under the melody.

7) Donna Lee

The complex theme for Donna Lee is credited to Charlie Parker but rumour has it that it was really composed by Miles Davis. Based on the chords of the Tin Pin Alley song "Indiana" the composition was recorded for the first time by Charlie Parker in 1947. Just like Cherokee it is a classic favorite jazz standard for many bebop jazz musicians. We reckon that Django also played this song at jam-sessions in the late 1940's even though he never recorded it.

Rêve Bohème's version starts with a bluesy latin intro which we also use as an outro. After the solos we have inserted a chorus with a tutti "chord-riff" which resembles Django and the QHDF's early recordings.

8) Just Friends

Another bebop classic we guess Django must have heard several times. Especially the version from the album "Charlie Parker with Strings" from 1949 that was a regular hit in those days. Django made his own recording with

strings in 1951 when he played his composition Troublant Bolero with the Orchestra Symphonique National at the Theatre des Champs Elysées.

He never recorded this jazz standard but it would have suited his repertoire well since the song's chord sequence is very close to his composition Folie à Amphion. Our version includes a kind of "off-beat Big Band intro" and then the guitar takes the melody and we go into the classic gypsy jazz swing rhythm.

9) Crépuscule

Crépuscule, meaning twilight or dawn in English, is a Django original recorded first time September 11, 1941, on acoustic guitar with QHDF and then again September 1947 with Django on the electric guitar together with the Nouveau Quintette. Both versions had Hubert Rostaing on clarinet in the intro and outro while Django played the simple but beautiful and "bluesy" twilight melody.

In Rêve Bohème's version we kept the dramatic opening introducing the major/minor theme with the harmonica. Then the guitar takes over with the melody inspired by the 1941-version. For the solos we use the characteristic stop-break in the first A-part that introduces the soloist.

10) How High The Moon

An old standard recorded five times by Django and each time with a new approach to the solo. The first recording from January 25, 1945, is a straight swing version with "Jazz Mystery Hot Band" where Django only had a short solo-fill. The next three recordings Django made with Stephane and the classic QHDF setup. The version recorded March 26, 1947, shows Django's growing bebop inspiration with long melodic phrases and in the two slow versions from November 1947 he even quoted Charlie Parker's Orinology. In the last version from Rome Jan/Feb 1949 the tempo is fast and the bebop approach in Django's solo is obvious though the Italian rhythm group with piano and drums still play in the "swing-style".

Rêve Bohème's version is inspired by the cool recordings from 1947 and we also play Parker's Orinology as the last theme in the song.

11) Danse Nuptiale (Moppin' the Bride)

Danse Nuptiale, meaning a kind of "mating dance" in English, is another Django composition recorded first time in October 4, 1947, and then again in November, 1947, in a live version by the French Radio RTF. The composition is based on the chord scheme for Gershwin's "I got Rhythm", a tune which Django favoured when his interest in bebop became stronger. He also wrote themes like Festival 48 and Babik over the same chord sequence.

In our version we give the A-parts a funky groove and spice up the chord sequence with some dominant half-steps to give it a more modern sound. For the intro/outro we have borrowed a line from Django's blues called Place de Brouckère.

12) What is this thing called love

This minor mood was recorded twice by Django. First as a slow version with Stephane Grappelli and the reunited QDHF in November 14, 1947. The second version, also with Grappelli, from Jan/Feb, 1949, was played faster and with an Italian rhythm group including bass and drums. Again the later version shows the inspiration from Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker as Django and Stephane end the last chorus with quoting Hot House – the bebop anthem.

In our version we make a bluesy riff intro before going into the melody. Just like Django we end the song with Tadd Dameron's theme Hot House that uses the same chords.

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