

## International Reviews - albums & concerts

– The New Django is a Whitehaired Dane, Jersey Jazz Magazine may-june 2020 by Fradley Garner

### *Review of Rêve Bohème concert and album*

One-hundred and ten years ago, Jean Reinhardt was born in Belgium. He died only 43 years later in France. Django Reinhardt was the first major jazz talent to emerge from Europe and, according to Wikipedia, he remains the most significant. With violinist Stéphane Grappelli, Reinhardt formed the Paris-based Quintette du Hot Club de France in 1934. The group was among the first to play jazz featuring the guitar as a lead instrument.

Reinhardt's most popular compositions have become standards in gypsy jazz. In 2017, a French movie, Django, was made about his life. Lynn Rene Bayley has written a fine long article about this in Jazz in Europe, December 22, 2017.

When Reinhardt was 18, he was badly burned in a fire in his gypsy caravan. He would spend the next 18 months in a hospital, recovering from his injuries. His left hand was rather clumsily repaired so the little finger and ring finger were permanently bent into his hand. His brother brought an acoustic guitar into the hospital so that Django could practice with his free three fingers. That way of playing became his specialty, his sound.

In 1946, writes Bayley, "Django finally came to America, accepting an invitation from Duke Ellington to play with his band. In his mind, Django envisioned that he would become a Hollywood star like his idol Armstrong, not realizing that this was the product of clever management by Louis' representative, Joe Glaser. He never realized that Armstrong was a movie star because of his effervescent personality, and that the trumpet playing was merely an adjunct to that."

"Since his own proclivity offstage was to disappear and play cards, shoot pool and drink with his gypsy buddies, he wasn't exactly the clean-cut image Hollywood wanted to project. And that's exactly what he did when the Ellington band hit the stage in Chicago and Django was nowhere in sight. He hadn't even bothered to bring his treasured instrument with him because he believed that American guitar manufacturers would be falling all over themselves offering him first-class instruments for free. It didn't happen; Ellington had to send someone out to scour the bars in Chicago to find Reinhardt shooting pool with some gypsies, drag him to the stage and hand him an electric guitar to play, which he had never touched in his life. Although the American trip ended up a semi-disaster, Reinhardt fell in love with the electric guitar and went back to France determined to play it from then on. Django was

largely self-taught and could neither read nor write music, but his ear was so acute that he could absorb music like a sponge.”

In August, 2019, milady Hanne and I first heard a live concert with Rêve Bohème, a Danish gypsy jazz quartet. Inspired by Django Reinhardt, the quartet was formed in 1998 in Paris by guitarist and singer Jens Fuglsang and guitarist Robert Pilgaard. They are still the backbone of the quartet, but the other two original members have been replaced by Finn Poulsen on harmonica and vocals and Jesper Riis on bass.

The sound was terrific. It got that swing! Later, we took home Rêve Bohème’s latest CD, Six & Six. That is super enjoyable. Finn Poulsen’s harmonica is a wonderful asset.

Six & Six is Rêve Bohème’s sixth album. They have chosen six less known compositions by Django Reinhardt and mixed them with six bebop standards that Django loved to play. The result is super alert gypsy jazz and the CD can be played over and over.

In 2016, the group composed and recorded several scenes in the Danish movie, Fuglene over Sundet, which deals with the Danish Jews’ escape to Sweden in October 1943.

Jens Fuglsang is especially remarkable. He started to play guitar at age 13. He studied jazz guitar at Berklee College in Boston, USA and later received a master degree in music in 1999 at the University of Copenhagen. His thesis was on Django Reinhardt’s life and music and he went to Paris many times to do research on Django’s music and the special gypsy jazz guitar technique. He is a “Django expert,” but as he himself says, “These days you don’t have to travel that much. You can buy Django guitars and study gypsy jazz guitar on the net. Many YouTube teachers teach this special kind of guitar playing. But still it takes many years of practice and playing to get the right “Django-sound” on your guitar. The group’s homepage is [www.reve.dk](http://www.reve.dk).

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## – Django Goes North review

From the french homepage [www.DjangoStation.com](http://www.DjangoStation.com) 2012 by Francis Couvreur

This is a new disc from the Danish quartet, which has a very French name but is little known in our country, although it has been in existence for 10 years and has put out four or five records.

There have been changes in the lineup for “Django Goes North”: Jesper Riis now holds down the bass and Finn Poulsen plays harmonica, combining virtuosity and elegance (he plays in several groups in Denmark, including Swing d’Or where he also plays guitar). This changes the overall sound of the group significantly, bringing a definite originality to a genre where the instrument is rarely used (although remember the recent cd of Hubert Mayo with the same instrumental configuration).

Right from the opening track, I can't believe that you are in love with me, one is drawn in: there is swing, good arrangement, a balanced sound, and lively solos. "Django Goes North" is a continuation of the previous album: a mostly vocal gypsy jazz group with crooners in mind. There are only two or three instrumentals, with a new arrangement of the beautiful 'Bohemian Dream' (original by Jo Privat), from which the group undoubtedly takes its name.

The group is led by Jens Fuglsang, a singer with convincing timbre but one who never forces his sound. He is a talented songwriter (see It's just a minor blues, the very pop rock So real or the swinging Django goes West) and a fine guitarist (precise attack, tone and phrasing. He can also be poetic – hear the intro chorus of "Time on my hands" He knows the art of limitation, the pieces not exceeding four minutes.

Varied and sung, their repertoire deserve to attract a wider audience to this group. The twelve tracks alternate between original arrangements and jazz standards (cf. Caravan, with the two soloists providing an edgy chorus). See also the amazing replay of the Clash's Jimmy Jazz with its spectacular accelerated tempo or the surprising Velvet Underground Sunday morning (although this is perhaps a little anachronistic here). There are also five original compositions, including two from the harmonica player (see Ania's, a melodious instrumental with Latin accents).

This is a very good album from a group which we would love to see in Samois: what about it, Stocche?

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## Review of Django Goes North from Stichting Hot Club de France Magazine/ Holland by Menno van der Reijden

<http://st-hotclubdefrance.com/index.html>

After taking out the CD you can see the right-hand inside of the box, which shows Jens' much used Fontaine axe from the tailpiece on up, with nice new Argentines (red), you also will notice the slight adjustment he made to the bridge position as it has a little gap to the moustache on one side. It sure tells you: "this guitar has been and seen places". On the rear of the CD box no more boxes, but a simple division by two. The top half shows the members and instruments of choice on the left and on the right portrays them in a group photograph where solo guitarist Jens is sitting down, guitar upright on his knee, while the other three remain standing, but all at ease. Rhythm guitarist Robert here has an oval hole standing on the floor before him resting both hands on the headstock. Mouth-Harpist Finn holds his harp in both hands to shield it from the . . .whatever . . .cold. On the right of them stands Jesper Riis, the bass player in a classic playing position. The lower half is reserved for the song titles. There are 12 of them. Three tunes are by Jens Fuglsang, two by Finn Poulsen and the others by various composers. One stands out and that is Jo Privat and more precisely the name of his tune: Rêve Bohémien . A tune and name well chosen by this band.

Some of the tunes:

– I can't believe that you're in love with me (Gaskill/McHugh).

Starts slow in arpeggio's as Jens gets his voice together for the next part. Singing and playing with clear diction. Then a picking up speed the band kicks in. The harp is clearly present, putting accents in the necessary places. This is one of the American Songbook's finest and not heard of so often. After the third verse instrumentals carry on, first Jens on guitar, then Finn on harp, then together while humming the tune. Of course the third time around the voices have to carry the tune to an end.

– Time on my hands (Gordon/Adamson/Youmans).

Easy slow Swing, instrumental with a nice guitar solo over harp arpeggio's, giving over control to Jens's voice interlarded by harp touches. After two verses a harp solo kicks in, showing Finn knows his trade and bringing back memories of some Samoreau jams. Jens takes control again singing the next and ending verses. After a three piece turnaround the end is a fact, Finn tries to have the last word, but Jens overbids him and does have that last word.

– So real (J. Fuglsang).

Bit of a Paso Doble kind of rhythm, not the easiest to do, leading into an up-tempo Swing. Then Jens starts singing on both rhythms. So Paso is the song and Swing the verse. Well done guys. "So hold me in the cold September rain" is one of the lines leading into Finn's harp solo that of course is taken over by guitar arpeggio's. Then Jens sings again and makes you forget everything. Both rhythms blend perfectly till the end.

– Hit by happiness (F.Poulsen).

Swing tune in a bit of an up tempo, not only opened on harp by Finn, but also sung by him. You can hear his humor and see his sparkling eyes shining through the words. Some lines are sung by both him and Jens. Singing parts are apart from the mouth harp pieces, but also Jens' soloing stands out nicely. That is followed by duo voicing and a sheer frolic to hear. Harp takes the song to an end.

– Django goes Wes (J.Fuglsang).

Solo guitar opens the song, harp follows on an intricate rhythm. Then the up tempo Swing kicks in and guitar solo galore . . . guitar and harp in duo sono, guitar solo, harp solo, duo sono, well done. This way the listener keeps his ears perked: "what's next?" Again it's not the most easy tune and it's sounding so easy..

– Sunday morning (Reed/Cale).

I know Lou Reed, I know JJ Cale, but this song as performed here sounds ever so nice too. Easy as Sunday morning, or words to that effect. Jens puts on his velvet voice and you'd want to pump up the volume on your stereo and wish the neighbors won't complain. After three verses singing the solo's come in. Guitar, harp etc. Always in an easy going kind of playing. What a nice tune. What a nice way to end this CD. Happy memories linger on.

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## – Café Django review from the french homepage [www.DjangoStation.com](http://www.DjangoStation.com) 2010 by Francis Couvreur

En 2006, l'ami Jon Larsen avait eu la bonne idée de sortir sur son label Hot club records un « best of » de ce groupe danois qui a 10 ans d'existence (et dont on ne parle guère), lui donnant ainsi une meilleure visibilité. Ce nouveau disque, paru en 2009, mais enregistré en 2007 et 2008, me donne l'occasion de (re)dire tout le bien que je pense de Jens Fuglsang, guitariste, chanteur et leader, et de ses petits camarades qui distillent un vocal gypsy jazz tout en fraîcheur et décontraction, avec un bel équilibre entre parties vocales et instrumentales, les refrains étant ponctués de judicieuses interventions d'un saxophoniste très en verve et d'un guitariste dont le beau phrasé délié conjugue finesse et clarté ; Chanteur crooner qui jamais ne force, avec un grain de voix entre David Bowie et Elliott Murphy, Jens est aussi un vrai songwriter ; Ce sentimental signe 6 titres, des chansons d'amour pour la plupart (cf RR heart ou Old moon) qui louchent parfois vers le pop rock (cf party over kill qui pourrait être signé Elliott Murphy). Pour le reste des standards dans des versions chantées conjuguant maîtrise instrumentale, cohésion, swing et excellente mise en place (cf le superbe exposé du thème sur Just one of those things ou l'accélération de tempo sur Embraceable you, après le premier couplet). Bref ces gars là ont tout compris ; ça joue, mais sans tape à l'œil. Sur 3 titres la belle Karina Kappel est venue pousser la chansonnette (cf Don't worry about me chanté à deux voix) et là on pense au swing léger d'une Susie Arioli. Voilà un disque vivement recommandé qui mériterait une distribution dans notre beau pays.

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## – The Best of Rêve Bohème from Hot Club News i Tyskland, [www.hotclubnews.de](http://www.hotclubnews.de) 2008

Neue CD: Reve Boheme – The best of...Reve Boheme ist DIE dänische Gypsy Swing Band. Das Quartett um den Gitarristen und Sänger Jens Fuglsang agiert nach dem Motto: Tauche in die Tradition ein um etwas Neues zu finden. Die Kombination von Djangogitarren, Sax/Klarinette und Gesang machen den Sound von Reve Boheme aus. Auf dieser HCR-CD sind die besten Aufnahmen der Gruppe versammelt und sie machen deutlich wie abwechslungsreich und vielfältig die Musik von R.B. ist. Eine schöne Compilation IB.G.

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## – The Best of Rêve Bohème from the french homepage [www.DjangoStation.com](http://www.DjangoStation.com) 2007 publié par Cristof.

Costar des années 50, guitare manouche, DS bleue sur fond de vieilles pierres et de pavés parisiens... Ce groupe danois a mis tous les arguments de son côté pour séduire les amateurs de swing de Paris avec la pochette de ce CD. Au lancement le disque, je suis impatient de savoir si le ramage de ce groupe de Copenhague se rapporte à leur plumage... La réponse ne se fit pas attendre. D'entrée le ton est donné avec une version chantée de « Just one of those things » qui ne manque pas de saveur. La voix est rauque et détachée accompagné d'une guitare « rabouine » à souhait. L'ambiance commence « fin de nuit dans un club de jazz » avant de se lancer dans un tempo d'enfer... Ce ne sont pas les premiers venus ces danois. Il faut dire que le leader Jens Fuglsang de passage à Paris en 1998 pour acheter une guitare et chercher des infos sur Django pour une thèse va faire ses premières armes dans le style au Bistrot d'Eustache et à l'Atmosphère. Depuis le groupe a écumé les festivals dédiés à Django dont un passage à Samois en 2002. Autre argument comme preuve de qualité, c'est Jon Larsen, du label Hot Club Records, qui décide de publier les meilleurs morceaux du groupe. Car ce CD est en fait une compilation des meilleurs titres des deux CD : Django Jalousie (2002) et Django's Dream (2005). Le nom du groupe « Rêve Bohème » est également un clin d'œil au swing de la grande époque puisqu'il est tiré d'une valse de Jo Privat. Mais le groupe ne se borne pas à répéter les standards du style comme c'est trop souvent le cas pour les groupes liés à Django, puisque 8 des 18 titres du CD sont des compositions. A noter d'ailleurs "Trying to" de J. Fuglsang. Comme vous l'avez compris ce quartet ne manque pas de saveur avec un guitariste au swing ravageur, un sax jazz en contre point et une rythmique propulsant le tout de la plus belle façon. Un groupe a consommer sans modération dont on attend la suite avec impatience et surtout un passage à Paris.

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## – Djangos Dream from Hot Club News i Tyskland, [www.hotclubnews.de](http://www.hotclubnews.de) 2006 Neue CD: Reve Boheme – Djangos Dream

Das ist die zweite CD-Veröffentlichung der dänischen Gruppe "Reve Boheme". Das Quintett orientiert sich in Material und Besetzung zweifellos am Djangosound der 40iger Jahre. Feerie, Peche a la Mouche, Place de Brouckere oder Nocturne werden unter Federführung von Sologitarrist Jens Fuglsang und Kasper Fredholm an Saxophon und Klarinette in ein durchaus ansehnliches neues Gewand gesteckt. Alle 14 Titel sind Reinhardt oder Reinhardt/Grappelli-Kompositionen. Die Band swingt mit eigenem Sound und persönlicher Note. Empfehlenswert ! Daß die CD auf dem deutschen Markt erhältlich ist, verdanken wir

dem Stuttgarter LEICOM Vertrieb, der auch Jon Larsens "Hot Club Records" in Deutschland vertreibt. Jazz-Network //Django's Dream. by Steve Royall, Django Swingpage  
www.hotclub.co.uk 2005The Hots Swinging Scandinavians are back with a great new CD – Django's dream.The quality of playing is second to none, these guys take this stuff seriously.

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## – Django Jalousie . by Steve Royall, Django Swingpage www.hotclub.co.uk 2003

Rêve Bohème put on a fantastic show at the 2002 Samoï festival, to coincide with this triumph they have released "Django Jalousie", a combination of standard gypsy repertoire and some fine compositions from the band.The band is from Scandinavia and as such this adds a subtle slant to the performances from all the members. The sound is both confident and proficient. We look forward to hearing more from this established group. Melodie au Crepuscule – Sofie swing – Limehouse Blues – Django Jalousie – Darn that Dream The night was humid – Vendetta – Rain Waltz voc – Appell Indirect/Micro – Mette's Melody Sentimental journey – Berlin – Wrong Smoke – Rain Waltz inst – My melencholy baby Django – Them there eyes – Solen er sa rod Jens Fuglsang Nielsen – Lead Guitar, Kasper Fredholm – Saxophone,| Robert Pilgaard – Rhythm Guitar,| Morten Ravn – Double Bass,| Plus featured guests.