

# Mp3 Harri Stojka - A Tribute To Gypsy Swing

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Highly virtuosic gypsy swing in the Django Reinhardt style - in a guitar-led instrumental quartet 13 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Swing/Big Band, JAZZ: Traditional Jazz Combo Details: There is an undeniably infectious quality to the formidable, freewheeling spirit of gypsy jazz, that ebulliently swinging music introduced to Stateside fans during the 1930s by the immortal gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt with The Quintet of the Hot Club of France. A peerless virtuoso whose flawless technique was marked by pyrotechnic excursions up and down the neck of his Selmer-Maccaferri guitar, executed with uncannily fluent phrasing, Reinhardt influenced generations of players throughout Europe and the States. Indeed, his influence continues to hold a powerful sway over legions of gypsy jazz practitioners appearing at Django Reinhardt festivals all over the world. Such renowned guitar players as Bireli Lagrene, Frank Vignola, Jimmy and Stochelo Rosenberg, and Dorado Schmitt continue to fly the flag for Reinhardt. Add the name of Harri Stojka to that elite list of Djangophiles carrying on the spirit of gypsy jazz today. On A Tribute To Gypsy Swing, the Austrian-born guitarist burns up the fretboard with astounding technique that combines strength, speed, finesse and soul into one scintillating package. Born in Vienna in 1957 as a Roma gypsy, Stojka began playing guitar at age six. My Daddy, who was a singer, forced me really to play and to get into gypsy music, Harri recalls. As a Roma gypsy, I grew up with Hungarian and Viennese gypsy music. And from that its just one step to Django Reinhardt, who was a Sinti gypsy. Harris professional career began in 1970 and by 1973, at age 16, he formed his first band, the Harri Stojka Express. I played many different kinds of music growing up, he explains. I played fusion, jazz, even heavy metal, rock and blues. He says his interest in Djangos music was sparked by hearing the great gypsy guitarist on a radio broadcast in 1974. I was instantly fascinated by his incredible technique, his feeling and his sound, Harri recalls. Django, of course, has been a huge influence on my playing throughout my career, but my influences also come from George Benson, Pat Martino and Joe Pass as well as other great guitarists like Jimmy Raney, Hank Garland and Tal Farlow. So there are many influences in my playing but its always in the spirit of Django. Through the 70s and 80s, Stojka kept busy playing in a variety of styles. I played in three or four bands at the same time, he explains. One day I played bebop, another day I played fusion, then Id

play heavy metal. It was like having parallel careers. During that period, he became thoroughly immersed in the music of alto saxophonist and bebop innovator Charlie Parker. I was a Bird fanatic, he says. I played all those songs -- Donna Lee, Confirmation, Yardbird Suite -- and learned everything I could out of the Charlie Parker Omni book [a collection of transcribed Bird solos]. And now I think I know more about bebop than other Django inspired players. I played bebop for 18 years and now I'm trying to mix it with the spirit of Django. Through the 1980s, Harri played in a fusion band that covered the music of such great guitarists as Pat Martino and John McLaughlin, among others. But this phase ultimately proved unsatisfying to him. It wasn't really my style, he says. When I got back to gypsy music, I felt like I had found something that was missing. So I can say this is truly my music now. In recent years, Stojka has been spreading the gospel of Django Reinhardt throughout Europe and parts of Asia with his Gipsy Swing band. And during that time he has noticed a growing legion of fans for this joyfully swinging music. With gypsy jazz, you have this incredible technique mixed with this irresistible feeling, he says. And this is a mix that really goes to the heart of the audience. Because in heavy metal, for instance, there are many incredible speed players, but that's just technical command and you can't feel anything. But when you listen to Django or Bireli Lagrene, Stochelo Rosenberg or Claude Debarre or any of the great Django styled players of today, the feeling still comes through even at the highest speeds. And I think this is what the people are waiting for...not just feeling music and not just speed music, but the mix of these two things. That is what makes it so appealing. On *A Tribute To Gypsy Swing*, his followup to 2004's joyous *Live at the Roma Wedding*, Stojka puts his own personal stamp on familiar Django vehicles like *Avalon*, *Limehouse Blues*, *Sweet Sue Nuits De Saint-Germain-Des-Pres* and *Nuages*, as well on other popular Swing Era fare like Sidney Bechet's *Petite Fleur*, Fats Waller's *Undecided*, and Sammy Cahns *Bei Mir Bist Du Scheen*, a big hit for the Andrews Sisters in 1938. Stojka reinvents the old Viennese folk song *Schnee* as so a Ringlspu while turning in a clever swing interpretation *Swanee River* by 19th century American composer Stephen Foster. The guitarist hits an emotional highpoint on his touching *Song For My Daddy*, a personal ode written for the father who once inspired him to become involved in gypsy music and is now suffering from the dreaded Alzheimers disease. This is a sad story, says Harri. My Dad is sick, and it's just a question of time when he won't know me anymore. It happens sometimes now when I call him and he says, Who is Harri Stojka? So this song is my farewell to him. Backed by colleagues Claudius Jelinek on rhythm guitar and banjo, bassist Ivan Ruiz Machado, drummer Heimo Wiederhofer (who

provides a brisk but subtle undercurrent with brushes on a snare) and guest violinist Eva Berky, Stojka plays his unique brand of gypsy swing on a beautiful pure-toned acoustic steel stringed guitar built in 1987 by Parisian luthier Joseph Di Mauro. A friend from Prague got this guitar for me, says Harri. I remember holding it for the first time and playing the first lines on this instrument. And from that moment, Djangos spirit was in my house, immediately. Stojka conveys that irrepressible spirit throughout A Tribute To Swing, which will serve as an introduction for Stateside Djangophiles to a major guitar talent. -- Bill Milkowski Bill Milkowski is a regular contributor to Jazz Times (USA), Jazzthing (Germany), Guitar Club (Italy) and Guitar (Japan). He is also the author of JACO: The Extraordinary and Tragic Life of Jaco Pastorius (Backbeat Books) Recorded at Gipsyland Studios, Vienna, September 2004. Engineer : Rudi Mille. Produced by Harri Stojka, Rudi Mille Christoph Moser. Photography : H. Strohmer, J. Scheibenreif. Package Design: 3+Co. (threeandco.com) Executive Producer: Joachim Becker. harristojka.com

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