

**Django New Orleans II: Hors-Série**  
**Stéphane Wrembel (Water Is Life)**  
**Un Harmonica Pour Django**  
**Yvonnick Prené (Minor Major Music)**  
 by Jason Gross

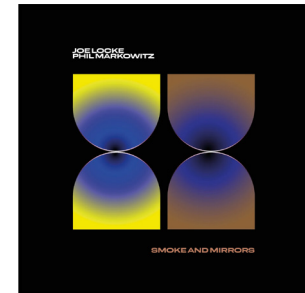
Almost a century after his first recordings, masterful Belgian guitarist Django Reinhardt (1910-1953) and his breezy, fluid style, dubbed “gypsy jazz,” has enchanted musicians from big band leaders of the Swing era to rock stars decades later. One of his greatest torch bearers has been NYC-based French guitarist Stéphane Wrembel, who has led the Django A Go Go Music Festival since 2003, and who has released six volumes of his “Django Experiment” series, stretching Reinhardt’s style in a graceful, airy, but utterly recognizable context.

Now with another series, beginning with 2023’s *Django New Orleans*, he follows up with a second volume, *Django New Orleans II: Hors-Série*, melding Reinhardt’s style with Dixieland. Leading almost the same nine-piece ensemble, featuring cherubic vocalist Sarah King, the song selection is noticeably more adventurous than in the first outing. A pair of lovely Edith Piaf torch songs, notably “La Vie en Rose” and “Nature Boy”, done as a march, are charming creations—but other tracks are interestingly more exploratory, such as with Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla’s strident “Libertango”. Wrembel ventures into singing on Serge Gainsbourg’s languid “La

javanaise”, King luxuriating in Antônio Carlos Jobim’s sublime “Waters of March” and a pair of fascinating Wrembel compositions (the thorny yet soaring “Holden Caulfield” and the sadly reflective “Ménage à Trois”), taking Reinhardt’s style to far-flung places.

Another recent Reinhardt tribute comes from French harmonica virtuoso Yvonnick Prené who previously covered Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, John Coltrane and Miles Davis, and who also released a Jobim tribute album last year. On *Un Harmonica Pour Django* with his quartet, Prené trades leads with guitarist Adrien Moignard, sometimes doubling the melody together. He shows the similar grace and flow of the legendary Toots Thielemans (1922-2016) and took to heart the sides that fellow harmonica player Larry Adler recorded with Reinhardt. After Prené begins with a pair of Reinhardt originals (the elegant “Nuages” and the jolly “Django’s Tiger”), “Coquette” reveals the harmonica player’s mastery as he alternates solos with the spidery sound of Moignard, while his own swaying, waltz-like “Mystérieuse Parisienne” features a virtuoso solo from the guitarist. Guest Biréli Lagrène has some impressive guitar turns as well, starting with a lightning-fast solo on “Sweet Georgia Brown” and ending the album with “Body and Soul” as a duet with the leader, which is almost as sad and beautiful as Reinhardt’s version. In all, this album is more traditional than groundbreaking, but is still delightful fare of some of Reinhardt’s best known repertoire of songs.

For more info visit [stephanewrembel.com](http://stephanewrembel.com) and [yvonnickprene.com](http://yvonnickprene.com). The *Django Reinhardt NY Festival Concert* is at Sony Hall Nov. 13 (with the *Django Festival All Stars*). Wrembel’s album release concert is at Dizzy’s Club through Nov. 2. Prené is at Drom Nov. 18 (part of *New York Gypsy Festival*). See Calendar.



**Smoke and Mirrors**  
**Joe Locke/Phil Markowitz (Wire Walker)**  
 by Pierre Giroux

The release of *Smoke and Mirrors*, a live recording from a concert at East Stroudsburg University, stands as a powerful tribute to the lasting partnership between Joe Locke (vibraphone) and Phil Markowitz (piano). Having worked together for four decades, these two master musicians have cultivated a shared language that goes beyond simple interaction, reaching a level of communication that feels almost telepathic. This duo recital removes all safety nets, leaving only the honesty of their improvisational dialogue.

The program features seven tracks, including six original compositions and a luminous version of Mal Waldron’s classic “Soul Eyes”. Locke contributes three pieces, including the title track, “Dawning Dance” and “Broken Toy”, each showcasing his distinctive compositional voice while highlighting the pair’s intuitive responsiveness. The title tune is built around an undulating motif that acts as both an anchor and a starting point. Locke’s shimmering mallet work creates a sense of mystery, while Markowitz explores beneath the surface with chordal clusters and subtle reharmonization. The



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