

The Hot Sardines - French Fries And Champagne (2016)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Running Wild* 2. *People Will Say We're In Love* 3. *When I Get Low I Get High* (feat. Alan Cumming) 4. *Addicted To Love* 5. *Sweet Pea* 6. *Comes Love (L'amour S'en Fout)* Medley 7. *Here You Are Again* 8. *Until The Real Thing Comes Along* 9. *French Fries & Champagne* 10. *La Fille Aux Cheveux Roux (Weed Smokers Dream)* 11. *Gramercy Sunset* Co-founders: "Miz Elizabeth" Bougerol (frontwoman, washboard) Evan "Bibs" Palazzo (piano, bandleader) + Fast Eddy Francisco (tap) Jason Prover (trumpet) Alex Raderman (drums) Evan "Sugar" Crane (bass) Nick Myers (reeds) Mike Sailors (cornet/trombone)

Jazz-Dixieland stalwarts The Hot Sardines are one of a select handful of newer bands playing old school, 1930s-style swing music. The band is celebrating their 9th year on the jazz circuit with the release of their sophomore studio album *French Fries & Champagne*. The follow up to their largely successful self-titled debut recording, *French Fries & Champagne* showcases some of the best that the current Dixieland movement has to offer.

Unlike some of the other successful swing revivalists such as Big Bad Voodoo Daddy and Cherry Poppin' Daddies, The Hot Sardines seem to keep away from modern sounds entirely. The band is both hindered and strengthened by staying completely away from contemporary influences. Because they arrived on the scene a bit later than the two aforementioned acts, The Hot Sardines missed the boat on the peak of swing revival music, which hit around 1998. (Big Bad Voodoo Daddy ended up playing the halftime show at the 1999 Super Bowl.)

Some of the tracks on *French Fries & Champagne* are definitely standouts, such as "When I Get Low I Get High" featuring British actor/public figure Alan Cumming. In addition, there's a great cover of Robert Palmer's "Addicted To Love" included early on the LP. The instrumental solos on this album are tremendous, especially the trumpet work by Jason Prover. Bandleader/Pianist Evan Palazzo also did an exceptional job.

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The album title French Fries & Champagne comes from the style that The Hot Sardines try to convey: their mixture of the stylish and the tenacious, as well as the combination of French and English lyrics. This dichotomy gives the album a unique flavor. However, the band would do well to take this contrast further and try to incorporate a more pioneering sound into their repertoire. While there is a definite need for older styles of music in today's marketplace, it would be nice if they try to "jazz it up" (pun completely intended) similar to The Cherry Poppin' Daddies and the Squirrel Nut Zippers.

However, what The Hot Sardines lack in innovation, they make up for in pure, crisp musicianship. Their creativity and effort on the album shines, and far outstrips the negative aspects of this record. Regardless if you're a newer jazz fan or someone who owns every single Miles Davis and John Coltrane album, this is a record that is designed for the old school music connoisseur. --- Ben Roster, pastemagazine.com

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