

Review: Pink Martini, 'Je Dis Oui!'

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By: Stephen Thompson

Pink Martini is just showing off. To take in *Je Dis Oui!* is to experience a globetrotting victory lap across no fewer than eight different languages — English, French, Farsi, Armenian, Portuguese, Arabic, Turkish and, in a cover of Miriam Makeba's glorious "Pata Pata," Xhosa — all tackled with cosmopolitan sophistication and the playfulness of pop. Everything the 15-piece Portland band touches has an air of precision, but these surprising songs don't feel sterile or studio-bound, either.

It helps that Pink Martini spreads its vocal duties around, well beyond singers China Forbes and Storm Large. Rufus Wainwright, a natural guest participant in this Technicolor spectacle, turns up to sing "Blue Moon," while a seemingly less-natural collaborator, fashion icon Ikram Goldman, takes the lead in "Al Bint Al Shalabiya." Portland civil-rights activist Kathleen Saadat lends growling power to "Love For Sale," while NPR's own Ari Shapiro — who's been popping up on Pink Martini records dating back to 2009's *Splendor In The Grass* — returns to sing lead in "Finnisma Di."

Pink Martini founder and bandleader Thomas Lauderdale has been carrying out this vision since 1994, during which time the group has performed worldwide, often with orchestras to back it up. His ageless music has only gotten bolder and farther-reaching on the nine albums Pink Martini has made, while never shedding the sense of joy around which its sound revolves.

Source: <https://www.npr.org/2016/11/10/500998629/first-listen-pink-martini-je-dis-oui>