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Vs

— ON THE TOWN —

MOUTIN REUNION QUARTET "Power Tree"

Dreyfus

One of the most memorable jazz concerts in town last year found piano virtuoso Martial Solal at the French Embassy, collaborating with bassist Francois Moutin and drummer Bill Stewart. Moutin's contributions that night were often inspired—by turns soulful and sophisticated, subtle and striking.

The same virtues enhance the performances on "Power Tree," an extended family affair that teams the bassist with his twin, drummer Louis Moutin, and two fellow Frenchmen—pianist Baptiste Trotignon and saxophonist Sylvain Beuf.

It's clear from the outset that the quartet isn't going to settle for anything approaching a stock arrangement. The opening track features the brothers Moutin exclusively, recasting "La Vie en Rose" as an exceedingly nimble bass and percussion duet. When Trotignon and Beuf enter the picture on the next cut, Louis Moutin's "Free Climbing," the quartet quickly forges a compelling sound, full of probing harmonies and propulsive rhythms.

With Beuf doubling on tenor and soprano saxophones, the band then goes on to conjure a variety of moods, often within the framework of the same performance. "Toutes Directions," for example, begins casually enough before the rhythm section locks

into a churning modal gear and Beuf's horn acquires a bright, insistent tone. Similarly, a medley of "Les Copains d'abord" and "Le Gorille" juxtaposes Trotignon's gliding lyricism with a fitful rhythmic attack and Beuf's now simmering, now searing sax. But in the end it doesn't much matter if Francois Moutin is going it alone, as on the evocative ballad "Africa," or the full quartet is fired up, as on "Song for a Cat." The level of musicianship and invention is consistently impressive.

— Mike Joyce

Appearing Friday and Saturday at Twins. ■ To hear a free Sound Bite from the Moutin Reunion Quartet, call Post-Haste at 202/334-9000 and press 8107. (Prince William residents, call 703/690-4110.)