



Ottawa International Jazz Festival – Day Four, June 26, 2005

By [John Kelman](#)

When it comes to delivering some of the real surprises of the festival, the 4 pm Connoisseur Series is the one to consistently deliver. The performance of Moutin Reunion Quartet will surely go down as not only a highlight of this season, but of any year. Co-led by twin brothers Louis on drums and François on acoustic bass, the group also features saxophonist Rick Margitza and Pierre de Bethmann on piano and Fender Rhodes. Margitza played briefly with Miles Davis in the late '80s, and he's one of those players who slowly but surely just keeps getting better and better and has, curiously, remained farther below the radar than his prodigious talent deserves.

People often talk about twins sharing a special connection, and the two brothers indeed demonstrated a beyond-telepathic oneness during their 75-minute set. François relocated from France to New York City ten years ago, and this quartet came about a couple of years back, when they decided they just *had* to play together again. The incredible interplay between the two—especially highlighted three songs in, when they performed a bass and drums duet that incorporated a number of Charlie Parker tunes, including “Donna Lee”—was all the more remarkable in that, while Louis’ kit faced the rest of the group, rather than the audience, his head was usually turned out, and so there was very little eye contact with François. The way that the two would converge from the midst of unfettered free play into a single voice was nothing short of magical.



The compositions, written by Louis and François, are heavily in the contemporary post bop camp, with clear respect for the kind of open-ended experimentation that defines the music of artists like McCoy Tyner and Tony Williams, although their writing is often more complex. The title track, from their forthcoming third release, *Something Like New*, is a prime example, with plenty of solo space, but adjoining passages found the group navigating through a number of rhythmic feels and harmonic centres. Margitza, a creative musician who moved from the US to Paris a couple of years back, played with the kind of conviction and a constantly-searching aesthetic that constantly begs the question of why he isn't better known. Both he and Bethmann performed with the kind of imagination that breaks through more restrictive bar lines, creating solos rife with broader narratives.

What made Moutin Reunion Quartet's set so invigorating was their clear and uncompromising spirit of “going for it.” As the group charged out of the gate, the audience knew it was in for something special from the first few notes. François' rich tone and harmonic flexibility—reminiscent of Dave Holland at times—along with Louis' almost reckless Tony Williams-like abandon, created a relentlessly exciting and ever-shifting backdrop for Margitza and Bethmann. At the end of the show, the audience seemed as paradoxically energized and spent as the group itself. While there was no encore despite the audience's enthusiastic response, the Moutin Reunion Quartet's performance couldn't have been better. Satisfied yet at the same time hungry for more, everyone was talking about this performance well into the evening and, like guitarist [Kurt Rosenwinkel's performance](#) at last year's festival, this will undoubtedly be one of those shows that everybody's raving about long after the festival has ended.