

THIS JUST IN

Jazz quartet to stop here on its first U.S. tour

French-born bassist Francois Moutin says he loves the variety of the New York music scene, but is even more thrilled at working with his Reunion Quartet.

"It is a band that thinks like a band, and that is rare," he says of the group that also features his twin brother, Louis, on drums. "Staying together is what we want to do."

The quartet will bring its forward-looking style of jazz to the James Street Restaurant on the North Side on Thursday in its first trip to the United States. The gig also is a preview of a possible festival swing in the summer.

Moutin says the six-city tour is promoting the band's first album, "Power Tree," which will hit the stands this week as well as being on sale at gigs. The titles also are designed to increase familiarity with the band, which is being considered for festival appearances, including the Mellon Jazz Festival here.

But more than anything else, the trip is another step in the growth of the band, which was put together in 1998 and also features saxophonist Sylvain Beuf and pianist Baptiste Troitignon.

The band plays a lively form of jazz that gives strikingly new life to old songs such as "La Vie en Rose," or new tunes by the Moutins that range from funky to rhythmically challenging.

"When Louis and I called Sylvain and Baptist, we knew from the very first session together that we had called the right people," Francois Moutin says. "I can write chord patterns on a piece of paper and tell them the basic idea of the groove, and they all get it."

Moutin, 40, has been playing bass since he was 5. While working on his studies in physics — in which he has a doctorate — he performed with pianists such as Martial Solal and Michel Portal. He also worked with his brother, who has a master's degree in math.

In 1996, jazz musicians Solal, trumpeter Randy Brecker and bassist Steve Swallow urged Moutin to move to New York City to center his performance career here.

"I love being in the New York scene," he says, mentioning his enthusiasm at working with players such as saxophonists Oliver Lake and David Liebmann. "But I still like playing with the Reunion Quartet the best."

By meeting a steady stream of fellow jazz players in New York, Moutin says he has begun to develop the sort of reputation that



Ursula K./Dreyfus Records

French natives and twin brothers Francois (left) and Louis Moutin play together in Reunion Quartet, which will play at 8 p.m. Thursday at James Street Restaurant on the North Side.

keeps him working when he can't get together with the other three members of his trio, who all still live in France.

"This is our first time in the United States, but let's hope it is not our last time," he says.

The Moutin Reunion Quartet will play at 8 p.m. Thursday at the James Street Restaurant on the North Side. Tickets are \$10.

Details: (412) 323-2222.

— Bob Karlovits

JAARED'S JAZZ

None of us will forget where we were the day those planes smashed into the nation's psyche. For saxophonist Jaared Arosemena, Sept.

11 holds a resonance both personal and professional.

Arosemena, who prefers to be called simply Jaared, was apartment hunting in New York when he and his girlfriend heard sirens and noticed emergency workers rushing toward the World Trade Center.

"We walked by a bank and a shopping center, and we saw a TV (in the window), and we heard that a plane had just hit the first tower."

Incredulous, the pair looked up and saw the second plane smash into the south tower.

"That's when ... we ran to the ferry boats" bound for New Jersey, he says. As they boarded the ferry,

"we looked back and saw the second tower fall. It was the sickest sight I have ever seen in my life."

But New Jersey was no refuge for Jaared. The Washington, D.C., native, who has Italian roots, returned to the city to volunteer — talent — but his brawn. He do grunt work at a maker and soup kitchen in the following the national tra

And that's when he began New York radio station repeatedly playing his version of the "Star Spangled Banner" his debut album "Foreward." "At first, it upset me, but I didn't want people to think I wanted to make a buck of it," he says. "I want my share of the Sept. 11th Fund."

In addition to the patriotic frenzy, the National Smooth Association has nominated Best New Artist of the Year, competing with the likes of A and Joe Fuentes, among others. His CD, a cross between the of Incognito and his idol L Sanborn, has flown up jazz fueled by his version of the national anthem and his Chante Moore's "Love's Train Over." Still, Jaared is taking in stride.

"Oh, my gosh, it's a wonderful feeling just to be on the lines," he says, adding that "you've got people like L Dross, Sade, Boney James Koz" and others nominating him for awards. "I'm in awe." As for the many remarkable album — there are five — says his next venture will be more original material.

"I didn't want to be known as an artist who was a cover artist," he says. "But if you really like smooth jazz stations now, 90 percent (of the music played) covers."

"There are polls that say a majority of people want to hear something they are familiar with."

And with the nation at a patriotic tunes are now down.

To vote for Jaared for the Jazz Award through Feb. 15, visit www.nationalsmoothjazz.com. To download a free Jaared's "Star Spangled Banner" visit www.marimel.com.

— Gannett News