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PERFORMING ARTS

Moutin Reunion Quartet

When twins Francois and Louis Moutin decided to take the Moutin Reunion Quartet to Washington, they didn't have to think twice about where to play: Twins, the U Street jazz club, of course.

The French jazz ensemble didn't have to contemplate what to play, either. Tunes from the new CD "Power Tree" provided a wide range of original and familiar material. Among those performed Saturday was the Edith Piaf signature song "La Vie en Rose," which featured the brothers Moutin—Francois on upright bass, Louis on drums—recasting the tune as an exceedingly nimble and thoroughly modern jazz duet. Common genes aside, they clearly are on the same musical wavelength.

"What Is This Thing Called Love" was the first tune to reveal the quartet's fluid chemistry and dramatic flair. Sylvain Beuf, playing tenor sax, took the lead role, combining sly melodic variations with bold harmonic leaps until the romantic theme took on a compelling thrust and urgency.

"Toutes Directions," composed by the Moutins, found the group exploring a funk groove without once resorting to a heavy-handed backbeat. Instead, the brothers created a weave of tricky syncopations before pianist Baptiste Trotignon colored the mood with blues-tinted runs and Beuf's tenor soared over a coiled rhythmic vamp.

The minor-key portrait "Song for a Cat" proved similarly engaging. In addition to being a splendid showcase for Beuf's stealthy soprano sax, it offered yet another example of the rhythm section's elasticity and prowess.

—Mike Joyce