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MOUTIN REUNION

Counting on Intuition

Watching twin brothers François and Louis Moutin load their van after a gig at Chicago's HotHouse last June, one could hardly imagine that they both hold a post-graduate degree from two of the most prestigious French engineering schools. But music has been part of their life since they were growing up. "Our parents had an extensive jazz record collection covering all eras," François said. "They also had instruments and they would take us out to concerts."

As they shared a passion for math and music, their educational path was actually directed by bad music instructors and great math teachers. In college, however, they got somewhat disillusioned with their classes and became more involved with music. After graduating, they met another pianist, Jean-Marie Machado, and that experience convinced them that jazz was going to be their bread and butter. They quickly started to garner attention and were hired by reed player Michel Portal and pianist Martial Solal.

Louis is cautious for fear of being misunderstood when asked about a relationship between math and music, but François is eager to answer. "The most pertinent common attribute is intuition," he said. "When you try to solve a problem or elaborate a theory, intuition becomes an essential tool. And you also use your intuition when you try to create music or improvise." This is reflected in their hard-bop/post-bop, which is far from cerebral and is packed with emotion and energy.

Their current project is called the Moutin Reunion Quartet for a reason. Following the advice of musicians such as Carla Bley and Peter Erskine, François moved to New York in 1995. "I loved it right away," he said.

During François' exile, the twins did not take part in too many projects together. "One day [in 1999], my brother called me and played a new composition over the phone," François said. "Since I had several of mine in stock it became natural to start a group."

Although the quartet is acoustic, its music occasionally suggests Weather Report. "I love that band," François said. "They created a language that hardly anybody has used since. They had a unique rhythmic approach to the melody and their music contained some harmonically elaborate elements."

Louis added: "We did borrow their approach to composition, the way they structured a piece and how this structure leads to improvisation."

While the two brothers co-lead the group, they do not co-write the tunes. However, the cohesion of their project shows once more what a special relationship they have. "If you listen to our music you can feel the differences," Louis said. "But at the same time, the music comes



Louis (left) and François Moutin

from the same vein and you can see a close kinship between our writing styles. We each have our own touch."

The group's line up also includes pianist Pierre de Bethmann and saxophonist Rick Margitza, who joined the quartet after sitting in on several occasions as substitutes. Their predecessors, saxophonist Sylvain Beuf and pianist Baptiste Trotignon, left as their own careers took a turn for the better. Without diminishing the contributions of these earlier band members, the Moutins feel that they have now the band they have been looking for. Their recent album, *Something Like Now* (Nocturne), is the first to benefit from a large U.S. distribution.

"We just want to play," Louis said. "Most French musicians don't get to perform outside of France. Playing all around the world with Martial Solal showed us that it was possible."

—Alain Drouot

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