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Jazz Notes

Drum/bass duo a pair since birth

By Bob Blumenthal
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

While fraternal bass/drum teams are not unheard of (think Percy and Albert Heath, or the Wooten brothers of the Flecktones), a rhythm section of twin brothers is truly an anomaly. It exists in the persons of Francois and Louis Moutin, the Paris natives who bring their Moutin Reunion Quartet to Scullers on Wednesday in support of the new CD "Power Tree" (Dreyfus Jazz).

According to Francois, the bass-playing member of the team, the Moutins have been into making music together for most of their 40 years. "But when we started playing music at age 5," he explained in a conversation from his Manhattan home, "my brother was a pianist and I played guitar.

"But Louis has really played drums all his life, in a sense. Our parents were big jazz fans and took us to see everyone who came to Paris. When we were 6 or 7, we saw [blues pianist] Memphis Slim; Louis started drumming on the table during the set, and Mem-

phis Slim started jamming with him. Then he came to our table afterwards and told Louis, 'Man, you're a drummer!'"

Yet it was Francois who first formally changed instruments. "A few years later, when we saw Oscar Peterson's trio, I became totally fascinated by Ray Brown. But I was still too young to pick up an upright bass, so my father bought an electric to start learning on. I finally got my own upright when I was 18."

Outside of the family, the Moutins found few friends or teachers who shared their passion for jazz. "There was one open-minded high school music teacher," Francois recalled. "He would jam with us on clarinet secretly, in a hidden room. Louis was still playing piano, but during our senior year he ended up drumming in a school rock band, because they found out that he sounded better than their trained drummer."

Louis's fate was finally sealed after graduation. "When you're a musician, you want to share," Francois explained, "and after high school we decided to form a trio. In looking for a third musician, we decided that Louis would

stay on piano if we found a drummer, or switch to drums if we found a pianist first. We found [pianist] Jean-Michel Pilc, and that was it."

The brothers' rhythm-section affinity was immediate, and has grown over the past two decades through work with piano giant Martial Solal as well as their own

bands. As the primary composers for their quartet, they even write tunes together on the telephone. "We have always been complementary," Francois reported, "and I don't think we chose our ultimate instruments by chance. I've always been the empathic guy, which the bass has to be in a band, and he's been more upfront. That dichotomy exists with many twins, with the first-born being more of a fighter, and it certainly holds true for us."

The brothers' current group is their second — hence the name Reunion Quartet. "We had another band 10 years ago, a quintet," Francois said. Saxophonist "Sylvain Beuf was in that band, and was so great that it was obvious to include him when we reformed. We didn't have guitar or piano in that first band, though, and wanted something more classic this time. I had met Baptiste Trotignon shortly before I moved to New York in 1996, and he made a strong impression. He was the first pianist we tried, and he sounded so great we didn't look any further."

The Reunion Quartet under-

takes its first US tour with a four-year history of roughly 40 concerts per year, even though the brothers now live on different continents. "I joined France's subsidized national jazz orchestra in the mid-'80s," Francois explained, "and several of the band's guest soloists, as well as some American musicians who live in Paris, encouraged me to come to the US. I had good gigs at home, though, and didn't feel the urgency.

"It took me 10 years to make the decision, and by that time my brother was married and had four kids. It wasn't so simple for him to pick up and move to New York, but it turns out that our current situation is even better. I promote the band here, and he does it in Europe."

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FRANCOIS MOUTIN

Old South cool

— Yesterday afternoon saw Semanya McCord in the first of five "Cool Jazz" events at the Old South Meeting House. The series, cosponsored by WGBH, brings music to the historic Boston church at 12:15 p.m. each Thursday in January, with Cercie Miller and Tim Ray dueting this week, followed by DJ Eric Jackson's survey of jazz styles; singer/pianist Ferdinando Argenti's set of jazz and Latin music from Italy; and swing tunes from Jim Porcella, Dick Johnson, and Jack Senior.

Other week moments — *Tonight-tomorrow* (and Tuesday through next Saturday): Bob Nieske (Top of the Hub). *Tonight*:



Twins Francois (left) and Louis Moutin bring their Moutin Reunion Quartet to Scullers in support of "Power Tree."

SOUNDCHOICE

JAZZ

When guitarist **Marc Ribot** found an audience and an Atlantic Records contract with his Arsenio Rodriguez cover band **Los Cubaneros Postizos**, he vowed not to allow success or a major-label contract to stifle his more iconoclastic notions. After two successful albums of Latin jamming, Ribot proved the point with "Saints," the recent solo effort that finds

him playing bottleneck and even singing a bit in a program that draws upon Albert Ayler, the Beatles, John Zorn, and "West Side Story." No compromise here — but some spellbinding sounds that Ribot will reprise in a solo appearance at Johnny D's on Thursday.

BOB BLUMENTHAL

Drummer/vocalist Riko Barr's swing-oriented sextet celebrates the release of its new disk "The Guido Shuffle" (Ryles), Mark Kross/Herb Pomeroy (Icarus), Billy Novick (Union House, Framingham). *Tomorrow*: Stan Strickland's Acension (TCAN, Natick). *Sunday*: Dave Whitney (Union House).

Tuesday: Jean Kelly (Sherborn Inn), Marcelle Gauvin (Casa Vecchia, Salem, N.H.). *Thursday*: Electric jazz unit Kumollama in a new weekly supper-club series (Milky Way Lounge).

RIP — Word of the following passings arrived too late for inclusion in last week's 2001 memorial column. Joseph Arena, a.k.a. Lester Parker, tenor saxophonist and one of the true characters on the Boston jazz scene for more than 30 years, died Oct. 10 at age 72. Herbert "Hank" Hankinson, a bassist who formerly taught at Berklee and performed locally with the Blue Horizon Jazz Band and others, died Dec. 17 at age 64. Ralph Sutton, a latter-day giant of stride who billed himself as the Last of the Whorehouse Piano Players, died on Sunday at age 79.