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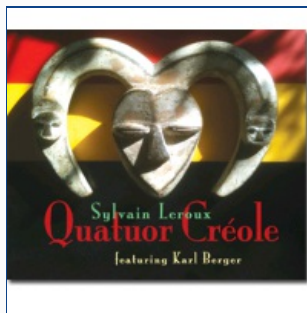
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Sylvain Leroux: Quatuor Creole (2012)

By [HRAYR ATTARIAN](#), Published: August 7, 2012

Flautist Sylvain Leroux's debut, *Quatuor Créole*, is an enchanting *mélange* of Guinean sounds, French influences and jazz inflections. In that aspect it is essentially Creole, but not necessary a work of New Orleanian or Haitian folkloric music.



Leroux plays the *tambin*, a West African reed flute, and a *dozon ngon*, a lute from the same region—often alternating between the two on the same track. This is heard on the bluesy, hypnotic and *griot* (*jeli*)-style "Gambalou." Elsewhere, Leroux channels his inner [Rahsaan Roland Kirk](#) on "Le Message," an original composition that starts with atmospherically sparse bass notes and simple piano lines, before the fluttering melody takes off, featuring the breathy sound of Leroux's flute with his simultaneous French chant about peace and environmental harmony.

Leroux's mentor—musicologist and longtime [Ornette Coleman](#) collaborator [Karl Berger](#)—brings his unique set of skills to the set. His ethereal mallets build a deceptively simple, yet powerful improvisation on "Oxassi," anchored by his band mates' percussive rhythms. Berger's singing piano hints at the bal-musette-inspired sounds of Hot Clubs but is far more advanced and stimulating, especially when paired with [Matt Pavolka](#)'s strummed bass and [Sergo Décus](#)' syncopated percussion.

The sublime and intense camaraderie among the quartet makes "Fantasie Créole" a highlight of this otherwise solidly creative record. Drawing upon Bach and [Baden Powell](#), the musically ambitious work starts as a melancholic fugue, with Leroux, Berger and Pavolka engaging in a mellifluous, three-way conversation. Décus backs them with his shakers and deeply resonant thrums. As the tune evolves into a Latin-tinged piano and flute dance, Pavolka and Décus lay down dark and irresistible polyrhythmic harmonies that conclude with exuberant group interplay.

The ever-evolving "Notis" best expresses the multicultural spirit that is the essence of the album, with the Levantine themes melting into African ones with dashes of Mediterranean lyricism. Far from being radically innovative, Leroux's freshman effort is, nevertheless, quite a treat for the ears and a worthy addition to the canon of the world- jazz subgenre.

Track Listing: Oxossi; Tanganika; Fantaisie Créole; Fantancolo; Le Message; Dans La Forêt; Notis; Monk in Paradise; MIH; Gambalou.

Personnel: Sylvain Leroux: *tambin*, flute, alto sax, *khaen*, *dozon ngon*; Karl Berger: piano, vibraphone; Sergo Décus: congas, percussions; Matt Pavolka: bass.

Record Label: [Engine Studios](#)

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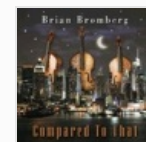
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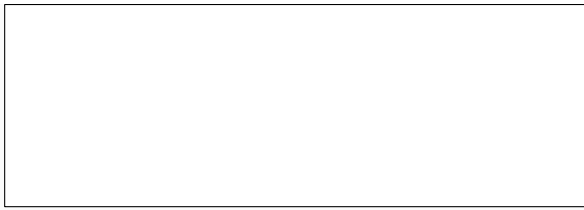


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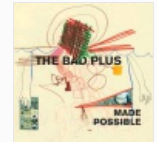
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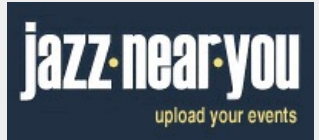
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