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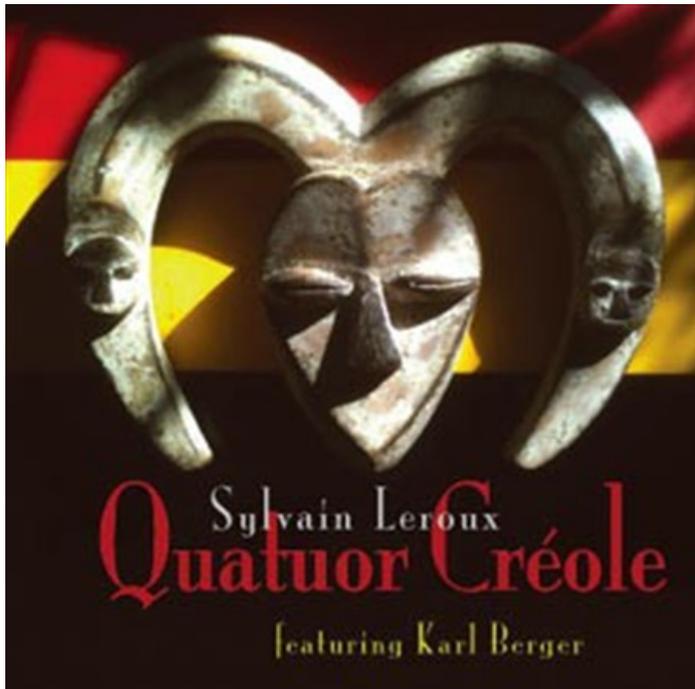
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**Leroux, Sylvain – “Quatuor Creole” – [Engine Studios]**



A Quebecois and his quartet...operating in a jazz space neighboring Kahil El'Zabar's rituals and rhythms. As El'Zabar often had the mighty Malachi Favors, Leroux often rests his composition on the sturdy backbone of Matt Pavolka's bass. Check out his playing on "Notis" balanced by smooth conga shuffling by Sergo Decius. Leroux is an interesting cat, drawing inspiration from Thelonious ("Monk in Paradise") and the Fulani people of West Africa. Evidently Leroux went to Gambia and studied the Fule. That flute adds a hint of raspiness to this album; check out "La Message" where Leroux also gasps out falsetto phrases between the notes. Excellent! Other highlights are the opening and closing tracks where Leroux works a strung-gourd called the Dozon Ngoni getting a great buzz and bounce that the band amplifies. They create a feeling of buoyant clairvoyance. Tellingly, on those tracks Karl Berger bypasses the piano to tinkle in vibes. "Fantancolo" offers similar serenity. "Fantaisie Creole" is an old school "mash-up" not mp3 melding, but the quartet taking two recipes stirred into one gumbo. It is the one track cracking 10 minutes, and clearly has the most evolution going on it. KFJC often hits a lot of "exorcist jazz" (and I dig the fire music) but this release is all about the cool. Pace, playing and instrumentation flow gentle as a river in the afternoon sun.

Thurston Hunger

Reviewed by Thurston Hunger on July 25, 2012 at 5:16 pm

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