



## Review: François Bourassa Quartet at the Vortex



### **François Bourassa Quartet**

( Vortex. 30th September 2013. Review by Matthew Wright)

In these days of international festivals and a global music scene, we expect reputations to travel as easily as people. Yet the **François Bourassa Quartet**, from Montreal, despite being multiple prize-winners in Canada, do not yet have much of a profile in the UK. The quartet began a two-week European tour at The Vortex last night. After a highly impressive performance of powerful yet fluidly lyrical music straddling post-bop, free improvisation and contemporary classical music, that certainly deserves to change.

Drawing on both its most recent album, *Idiosyncrasie*, from 2012, and earlier material, the quartet played

a long second set that started quite classical, becoming more boppy as the adrenaline flowed and midnight approached. Bourassa composes for the group and led with authority, though all four contributed prodigious, searching, technical solos, and passed the soloist's harmonic baton around in a series of impressively lithe exchanges. Saxist **André Leroux**, playing both tenor and soprano, combined monstrous speed and power with delicate phrasing and nuance, while drummer **Greg Ritchie** gave a masterclass in rhythmic control, his playing, especially with the soft sticks, melting exquisitely into the others' playing. **Guy Boisvert**, on double bass, offered a rare combination of delicacy and skill, though his sound was perhaps too gentle to penetrate individually for much of the time.

Bourassa, meanwhile, clearly knows everyone from Brubeck to Boulez, as both composer and performer, though the debt to Thelonius Monk was perhaps the most prominent. His compositions were wholly convincing, and his impressively broad and mature range of influence was intelligently synthesised to Bourassa's own voice. These were not, perhaps, sounds that will change the face of the music, but the skill, panache and sensitivity with which Bourassa combined his jazz influences, then seasoned them with a touch of the classical avant-garde results in an utterly compelling musical statement. Catch them if you can.