

Excerpts from what the press has said about Forgas Band Phenomena:

SOLEIL 12

2005

CUNEIFORM (RUNE 218)

Line-up: Patrick Forgas (Drums), Sylvain Ducloux (Guitar), Igor Brover (Keyboards), Kengo Mochizuki (Bass), Frédéric Norel (Violin), Stanislas De Nussac (Tenor & Soprano Sax), Denis Guivarc'h (Alto Sax), Sylvain Gontard (Trumpet & Flugelhorn)

"...drummer/ composer Patrick Forgas...leads an eight piece instrumental band of relatively young musicians whose skill and authority within the genre of jazz rock fusion is simply breathtaking.

Even the 35 minute "Coup de Théâtre"...is easily devoured...thanks to the versatility of the composition and instrumentation - I really enjoyed the interplay between guitar, organ and violin in its rockier moments and sections reminded me of the great Chicago Transit Authority... What's astonishing about all this is that the superb brass work and rich soloing is all confined within a sound compositional framework. ...

There is not a dull moment on the album...its treasures are easily accessible to the widest audience of musical enthusiasts. Indeed the opening track has shades of Pink Floyd and King Crimson and "Soleil 12" will certainly appeal to fans of progressive rock... The soloing is exceptionally concise throughout and the rhythm section is quite brilliant of course! 'Soleil 12' is a musical and compositional extravaganza that should not be missed by serious music lovers!"

– Phil Jackson, *Acid Dragon*, November 2005

"... French drummer Patrick Forgas has been called "the French answer to the Canterbury scene." Part of the same 1970s community that included bands like Magma and Zao, Forgas...eschewed the more extreme view of these groups, aiming for the same kind of lengthy episodic compositions that characterized Canterbury bands like National Health and Caravan. All but disappearing during the 1980s, Forgas re-emerged a decade later with Forgas Band Phenomena--a group that, despite its elaborate leanings, is a true *performing* band.

Soleil 12 is the Phenomena's third release... Recorded live at France's Le Triton...it features a revamped octet of mostly twenty and thirty-something players...

The four extended compositions...are all characterized by similar conceits. While there's a degree of complexity in terms of the number of discrete musical passages that come together to form a longer piece, individual sections often revolve around relatively simple changes--albeit usually in odd time signatures. ...there's always a logical and organic flow, despite knotty and sometimes orchestral transitions. With two saxophones, trumpet, and violin augmenting the more conventional guitar/keys/bass/drums lineup, there's plenty of textural diversity. There's also plenty of solo space, with violinist Fredric Norel and keyboardist Igor Brover standing out amongst the band's overall high level. ... a resistance against bombast and a clearly melodically leaning disposition align Forgas Band Phenomena's version of fusion more closely with the Canterbury aesthetic...

Still, *Soleil 12* has more than enough meat to satisfy fans of American fusion. Its combination of singable themes and rock rhythms will appeal to Canterbury devotees specifically..."

– John Kelman, *All About Jazz*, www.allaboutjazz.com, October 15, 2005

"The music of drummer Patrick Forgas' octet is intriguing and sometimes a little difficult to classify. In ways it is reminiscent of some of the more adventurous fusion band projects of the 1970s, blending together the sound and power of rock with jazz improvisation yet in a scope that is a bit like a classical symphony. The four selections on *Soleil 12*...keep one guessing but they generally progress and evolve logically. Most rewarding among the soloists are violinist Frédéric Norel and saxophonist Stanislas De Nussac (whose soprano playing on "Éclipse" is outstanding). ...this is an enjoyable set of Patrick Forgas' original music".

– Scott Yanow, *All Music Guide*, www.allmusic.com

"Patrick Forgas...is one of the most interesting representatives of that kind of Jazz-Rock that is currently being done. ..."Soleil 12" is an album that transpires freshness from all its pores."

– Alejandro Hinojosa, *Amazings*, www.amazings.com, March 27th, 2006

"The previous Forgas Band Phenomena album ROUE LIBRE was one of the big surprises of the late-1990's. ...a quite remarkable album that sounded more like SHAMAL era Gong, but extended into big elaborate works, riddled with solos and entwining themes, fleshed out with all sorts of things.

... But, eight years on, we have...a much jazzier band...with three winds players and a violinist. So, none of that trippy Gong sound, but more Jean-Luc Ponty and Didier Lockwood, a blending of French and American style fusions with occasional nods to the Canterbury mood. Again though, the unique aspect to it is the really big and complexly composed tracks that take up the bulk of the album, like *Coup de Théâtre* winding its way around in patterns and diversions for some 34 minutes plus. ...

Overall this is a good album... if you've never heard Patrick Forgas before it's not a bad starter. ..."

– Alan Freeman, *Audion*, Issue #52, Summer 2006

"On *Soleil 12*, Forgas Band Phenomena blends jazz fusion with the ambitious scaling of progressive rock. ... While the horn charts and Brover's tasteful comping are particularly jazzy on "Soleil 12", Forgas's forceful drumming and Ducloux's spacey guitar textures impart an element of prog to the proceedings.

The band is at their most ambitious on "Coup de Théâtre," a thirty-four minute long epic that is chock full of energetic episodes and solo turns from practically every member of the band; contributions by Norel, Ducloux and De Nussac are particularly fine. ... After an atmospheric introduction, "Pieuvre a la Pluie" rounds the album out with a hot chart played with razor sharp coordination".

– Christian Carey, *The Daily Copper*, www.copperpress.com, 2005

"... Listening to the wonderfully diverse, panoramic *Soleil 12*, assorted aspects of jazz, rock, classical (19th and early 20th-century styles), film music come to the fore. But where a lesser posse of players might forgo subtlety, thereby blitzing the listener with lots of flashy technique...these Euros take a different tack.

The four lengthy tracks...feature distinct melodies and tight, urgent, almost suite-like arrangements vaguely recalling Frank Zappa and Carla Bley, which nonetheless give each player chances to strut their formidable stuff. There's restraint, ebb and flow... Forgas BF can be as

diabolically busy as electric-era Bill Bruford, as groove-y as Brian Auger and soar with easy grace as Jean-Luc Ponty. They don't fire on all cylinders all the time, soloing with focused lyricism, not ego. They don't pound when they can soar. There's precious little "funk"... Maybe because they're not Americans, but Europeans weaving aspects of their cultural heritage into their overall sound without sounding pompous or elitist. This dandy platter proves there's plenty of possibilities left in the fusion realm. If you have ever embraced the electric sounds from across the pond, legendary prog-rockers PFM, Hatfield & the North, Matching Mole, and/or the proto-fusion works of Zappa, Ponty, Gary Burton or Gil Evans (circa early 1970s), the bracing, mostly harmonious *Soleil 12* should be a priority."

– Mark Keresman, *Jazzreview.com*, www.jazzreview.com

"... Patrick's expression...is...a more controlled warm sound ; jazz performed like artrock. His band is an 8-piece band performing brass instruments with drums, guitars, a J.L.Ponty like jazzviolin and a bit of electric piano. The music is in the right mood from start to finish. The tracks are rather long, but are built up and evolve in a convincing way. The listener...should have no notice of the time during the musical experience. ... This particular album should not be unnoticed by jazzrock-fusion lovers."

– Gerald Van Waes, *Progressive Homestead*, progressive.homestead.com

"The third release from...Forgas Band Phenomena, titled *Soleil 12*, is four songs of rich, captivating, and exploratory Canterbury styled fusion. Led by drummer Patrick Forgas...this big band ensemble of eight players will instantly remind you of 70's groups like National Health, Hatfield & the North, Soft Machine, Gilgamesh, Bruford, Caravan, as well as American acts like Frank Zappa and Miles Davis. All instrumental, these songs flow and soar, with biting solos and symphonic full band arrangements that are melodic and instantly memorable. ... From the raging fusion sounds of the opening title track, to the more laid back and melodic progressive jazz of the monster epic "Coup De Théâtre", this is some seriously inventive stuff. The skill of the players is extremely high throughout... The weaving violin/sax/trumpet melodies on "Coup De Théâtre" for example are just scrumptuous, with the busy underpinning of Forgas' drum work and the meaty guitar chords and solos of Sylvain Ducloux providing the perfect foil. "Eclipse" is more in a progressive rock style, with intricate keyboard textures from Igor Brover laying the groundwork for Frederic Norel's soaring lead violin, which reminded me of Jean Luc Ponty's 70's work, that is until Sylvain Gontard's horn joined the mix for a spot of pure jazz. ...

As usual, Cuneiform Records comes up with another winner. 70 minutes of prime fusion is a good reason to celebrate, and the Forgas Band Phenomena deliver the goods in a big way. One of the best fusion releases of the year! [4½ stars]"

– Pete Pardo, *Sea of Tranquility*, www.seaoftranquility.org, October 22nd, 2005

"...71 minutes of effervescent music recorded live at Le Triton, Les Lilas, France, on March 15, 2005.

...the drums: demonstrative with their complex and constantly evolving rhythms. These tempos propel the music with comfortable zest, describing peaks and sweeps that constitute a thrilling ride... Delicate guitarwork wanders through the music, injecting slippery riffs... Cheerful keyboards produce celebratory chords... Energetic violin provides passionate embellishment to the peppy music...

Basslines rumble...

... these compositions certainly evoke the breathtaking joy of partaking of amusement park rides, with heart-wrenching lifts and wind-in-your-face thrills. ... The tunes consist of four tracks...affording the band a full range of durations to explore the riffs and harmonies generated by their jocular intentions."

– Matt Howarth, *Sonic Curiosity*, www.soniccuriosity.com

"I missed out on the Forgas Band Phenomena for the longest time, having heard Patrick Forgas' 70s work and not caring much for it. The incredible performance by this group at Les Tritonales in 2004 changed everything... Forgas Band Phenomena is an eight-piece group featuring mostly younger musicians led by Forgas... The material is orchestral jazz-rock with a healthy dash of Canterbury of the kind scarcely made anymore; virtuosic, tasteful, and melodically pleasing. Apart from Forgas the highlight for me is Frédéric Norel on violin, whose parts add a bit of Mahavishnu/Arti e Mestieri to the already impressive brew. ... Even more impressive, the entire set was recorded live at Le Triton in March 2005, scant months after the aforementioned festival performance. On a label renowned for strong releases, *Soleil 12* stands out as an essential acquisition in the 2005 releases".

– Sean McFee, *Exposé*

"... The opening track brilliantly underscores overlapping melodic lines played on saxes, flugelhorn and violin with a cyclical guitar figure, supported by keyboards and the guiding groove and precision of the rhythm section; at the first break guitarist Sylvain Ducloux launches into a ripping solo that belies the otherwise Canterbury-ish nature of the piece. The amazing thing is that this is a live take - in fact the entire album is, recorded at Le Triton last spring. The centrepiece of the disc is the multi-part suite "Coup De Théâtre", combining stunningly beautiful melodies with a driving jazz-rock propulsion that takes the listener through seemingly endless labyrinthine curves and canyons, shifting effortlessly from soaring flights to gentle sections of repose and back again...with each new section highlighting a different aspect of the amazing group interplay. Complex and melodically riveting, repeated listens will recall familiar moments, yet there's always something new to discover each time... Simply put, music just doesn't get much better than this".

– Peter Thelen, *Exposé*

"The Forgas Band Phenomena's latest release blurs idiomatic considerations so extensively they render stylistic definitions irrelevant. No one can accuse bandleader and principal composer Patrick Forgas of being tame or conservative in his writing and arrangements. ...

...this octet version has a twin sax, trumpet, guitar and violin frontline ably suited for works whose opening melodies quickly give way to furious exchanges, spirited solos and passages bouncing back and forth between avant-garde jazz and shorter, rock-tinged statements. The band members with the most prominent jazz pedigrees include tenor/soprano saxophonist Stanislas De Nussac, violinist Frédéric Norel and alto saxophonist Denis Guivar'ch, whose rich tone and bright, soulful lines embrace the modern bop tradition and also dip into the soul/blues vocabulary. Keyboardist Igor Brover and guitarist Sylvain Ducloux add sonic spice and rock leanings, with Forgas' sparkling drumming uniting disparate elements into a rhythmically smooth and fluid sound. ... *Soleil 12* is captivating." – Ron Wynn, *Jazz Times*

"Imagine my surprise to put on this disc of recordings from March, 2005...and be immediately transported to the familiar violin-led soaring fusion sound of classic Jean-Luc Ponty, which is some of my all-time favorite music. ...this is a superb program of music in a style sadly neglected these days and it will be welcomed as warmly by 70s fusion junkies like me..."

As it turns out, this material should have the feeling of an earlier era, because it's primarily a reworking of veteran fusion drummer Patrick Forgas' pieces from an aborted 1978 album... For this project, Forgas harnessed seven other musicians mostly a generation or two younger than him... Unsurprisingly, aspects of 80s and 90s fusion have crept into the music as well...

The three-piece horn section certainly calls to mind some of Billy Cobham's mid-70s work, like *Crosswinds* or *Total Eclipse*, and the more laid-back moments of The Eleventh House from the same period, but a comparison with Cobham's largely funk-infused 70s work brings out a crucial aspect of the Forgas Band Phenomena sound: its mellifluous, very non-funk rhythmic feeling (one of the key similarities to the Ponty work mentioned above). ...very prototypical non-Zeuhl French fusion sound... The violin-heavy passages...call to mind...mid-70s folk fusion gems of Flying Island. The mellow, loungey, smooth passages in alternation with driving, energetic passages is another hallmark of mid and late 70s fusion archetypes.

Overall, what we have is simple, straight-ahead fusion based around vigorous rhythm section vamps, solos and unison themes with bright, lush conventional melodies and harmonies, distinguished by its broad orchestral palette and long suites of themes recycled and developed along a familiar post-Mahler arc. Non-avant fusion is a minor presence in the Cuneiform catalog, but this definitely sits aside the past two decades of work by Hugh Hopper and Phil Miller previously documented, and has a similar shade of easy-listening Canterbury along the lines of the softer mid-70s work of Ian Carr's Nucleus. As with all Cuneiform releases, quality is never an issue... this is 70 minutes of polished, somewhat ambitious, and fully realized vintage fusion that cannot fail to delight".

– Michael Anton Parker, *Downtown Music Gallery*

"You gotta hand it to the people at Cuneiform, when it comes to tracking down innovative music they take second place to no one. And this is the perfect label for the first North American release for the Canterbury influenced jazz-fusion 8-piece known as the Forgas Band Phenomena. This live recording entitled *Soleil 12* traces the history of a giant Ferris wheel in Paris..."

Compositionally the one-hour and ten minute CD consists of only four tracks...believe me there is a lot of music packed into these compositions. What is fascinating is just how diverse these pieces are. It would be a bit of an oversimplification to call this strictly jazz fusion because there is much for the symphonic fan to appreciate here. Each of these compositions contains moments of beautiful symphonic progressions with horn accents, only to switch on a dime to deliver some amazing jazzy solos, which then slide into the more Canterbury business of light jazz. ...there is a tremendous amount of room for multiple soloing from almost every instrumentalist... It's during this soloing where the jazz feel takes...from the horns and violin...also the bass and drums. ...when the eight members are playing in unison these pieces become very majestic...when the guitars make their presence known they take on a decidedly rockier flavor. Just when you think it's getting a little too jazzy or too complex, they reel it in and move in a more symphonic vein. Truth is it never goes too far out.

Lovers of jazz fusion with a strong Canterbury leaning are going to love *Soleil 12* from the Forgas Band Phenomena. ...there's a little something for everyone. I'd recommend this to lovers of symphonic prog who are looking for something a little more experimental or challenging. ... Forgas Band Phenomena create music that is an excellent bridge to the more complex without losing the listener in the process."

– Jerry Lucky, *Progressive Ears*, www.progressiveears.com

"...This is a live album recorded with mastery that keeps all the warmth and brilliance of this wonderful ensemble of jazz musicians. The length of some of the tracks - 34 and 18 minutes - gives an idea of how much this band is oriented to improvisation, but always within the parameters of a progressive and structured basis. If I had to remark upon something special from this album, it would be the wonderful and tasteful playing from each and every one of its members, including the nice solos from saxists Stanislas De Nussac and Denis Guivarc'h, eclectic guitar playing from Sylvain Ducloux, the backing but ever-present diverse keyboard work by Igor Brover, and the effective driving force from the percussion of Patrick Forgas.

... A top 10 album for Jean-Luc Ponty and 70's jazz rock fusion fans who are not afraid to discover new music talents."

– Koldo Barroso, *Intuitive Music*, www.intuitivemusic.com, December 28th, 2005

"...the texture of **Forgas** music is... intense, but does lean more to what one might think of as Canterbury, though I don't think the tag is a terribly good match overall. The jazz quality is there - in fact, the soloists are quite impressive, particularly Denis Guivarc'h's alto saxophone, which has a hard-cornered, Kenny Garrett quality - but not so much the sense of humor. Not that the music is serious, but **Forgas'** vision is panoramic and anthemic, and doesn't include overt humour. No need for it : his writing is memorable and achieves a genuinely uplifting quality, not just a simulacrum of one. The compositions are remarkable, moving as they do through multiple areas each, with distinct personalities that manage to add to the whole - rather rare in non-classical pieces of this length.

This Cuneiform release is this band's first outside France, and is reputed to be the best of the trilogy. Hopefully we'll hear more in the future from this great drummer-composer-bandleader..."

– James Beaudreau, *One Final Note*, www.onefinalnote.com, January 9th 2006

LIVE REVIEW:

"Recent years have offered an embarrassment of riches in terms of progressive rock festival lineups, but the lineup at Les Tritonales was one for the ages. This festival, in its second year, is located at the Triton Club...on the outskirts of Paris, France. ... In just over three weeks, the event featured 18 concerts with some of the most respected names in progressive music (they are so respected they probably would demand not to be called progressive. Ah, funny world). ...

... The Forgas Band Phenomena is currently a seven-piece led (of course) by drummer Patrick Forgas, a member of the "French Canterbury scene" (Gong, etc.) going back to the 70s. ... Their excellent set consisted of three pieces, "Declic" (from *Roue Libre*), a new very long piece which will be on their next album, and "Extra-Lucide" (from the album of the same name) to close. The new piece was the centerpiece, a thoroughly composed suite of jazz-rock brimming with purpose at every twist and turn. The larger number of instruments allowed for a great variety in expression, as they tended not to all play at once. ... Think *Arti e Mestieri* arranged for a jazz orchestra and you get a rough idea. I can't say enough about how good these guys are. ..."

– Sean McFee, "Three Weeks in Paris: Les Tritonales", *Exposé*, Issue No. 30, September 2004