

EXCERPTS FROM WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT FORGAS BAND PHENOMENA:

AXIS OF MADNESS / L'AXE DU FOU

2009

CUNEIFORM (RUNE 282)

Line-up: **Patrick Forgas** (Drums), **Igor Brover** (Keyboards), **Kengo Mochizuki** (Bass), **Benjamin Violet** (guitar), **Karolina Mlodecka** (violin), **Sébastien Trognon** (saxes & flute) and **Dimitri Alexaline** (trumpet & flugelhorn)

“French drummer/composer Patrick Forgas does things like make records based on Moisset's philosophic writings (*Synchronicité*) and write fusion-soaked symphonies epically long (*Soleil 12*) and majestically winding. That's what it takes to lead a fluctuating unit...easily comparable to Carla Bley at her wily frenetic finest. ...

... *L'Axe du Fou*'s four tracks benefit from raw-powered freshness... And though rich, this album is sharp, succinct and more streamlined than Forgas's last efforts, more dependent upon intimate rococo intricacies than big-picture blasts. Blame that on the tightly wound compositions whose manias are reined in by Forgas and Mochizuki's insistent rhythms as well on the band's ability to be as somnolent ("La Clef") as it is vigorous ("L'Axe du Fou"). ...”  
- **A.D. Amorosi, Jazz Times**

“... *L'Axe du Fou* [features] Forgas' most concise and streamlined writing to date, with little in the way of excess or overstatement.

While FBP has always been stylistically compared to the British Canterbury scene—and rightly so—in particular with groups like Hatfield and the North, National Health and Phil Miller's In Cahoots, *L'Axe du Fou* does begin to widen the gap, lending FBP a more singular and distinctive voice. A greater reliance on horns and violin with less on the more conventional guitar-keys-bass-drums line-ups of many Canterbury groups... FBP...even in the more sterile confines of the studio...proves capable of the kind of energy...associated with live performance. Forgas and Mochizuki form a relentless rhythm section capable of navigating the drummer's knotty compositional twists and turns, as well as firm grooves that support energetic solos ...

...emphasis is on strong melody, driven by ever-shifting rhythmic and harmonic foundations that ensure plenty of solo space. If new music from Forgas is as good as this, let's hope he continues the winning streak and...continue to produce music this full of vim and vigour.”

- **John Kelman, All About Jazz**, February 9, 2009, [www.allaboutjazz.com](http://www.allaboutjazz.com)

“[3 stars] ...their fourth CD...balances the genre's sometime excesses of grandiose structure and over-extended improv with plenty of groove and melody.”

- **Selwyn Harris, Jazzwise**, May 2009

“...those...who grew up on the Return to Forever/Mahavishnu Orchestra /Weather Report strain of modern jazz... will love this group. ... The distinct Euro edge of classic Canterbury art rock minus the abject self-indulgence, Forgas has sculpted extremely listenable music that keeps nostalgia to a minimum. "La Clef" starts the program and grabs you with its kinetic energy, as the violin of Karolina Mlodecka and trumpeter Dimitri Alexaline streamline a melody in 10/8 time effortlessly... The sixteen-and-a-half minute title track...weaves in and out from common-sense lines to wild abandon in 5/4 and 9/8 time signatures to a 7/8 electric guitar passage from Benjamin Violet... The piece closest to pure rock is "La Thirteeneme Lune/the Thirteenth Moon," a convergent road song where heavy beats in 6/8 and 2/4 meet Baroque-type dynamics with Sebastien Trognon's flute and Mlodecka's pepped-up flute. Forgas plays a solid and steady drumkit...but his highly intelligent and crafted compositions are the kind of jazz everyone can enjoy, and that baby boomers will not only relate to, but be startled by. There's no mincing words about the Phenomena tag this band is proud to own -- terrific music made by a wonderful band that cannot be a trade secret for too much longer. Vive la Forgas!”

- **Michael G. Nastos, All Music Guide**, [www.allmusic.com](http://www.allmusic.com)

“...This new release features Forgas' current...group...their tightly orchestrated approach to his lushly arranged compositions draws a straight line back to groups like Jean Luc Ponty era Frank Zappa. There are all the trademarks; the tricky time signatures and hop scotch shifts; polished flurries of reeds, electric keyboards for lush harmonies and then letting violinist Karolina Mlodecka loose over the top. ... The leader's lithe, fractured rhythms and Mochizuki's percolating electric bass course along underneath. ...long suite-like pieces allow plenty of room for the musicians to stretch out. ...”

- **Michael Rosenstien, Cadence**, Oct-Nov-Dec 2009

“...a brilliant musical saga entitled *L'Axe du Fou*... Consisting of four individual compositions with each one containing several movements or subplots that transport the listener through a sonic maze moving subtly through transient episodes and...lavish décor.

Though Forgas' first language is his native French, his album speaks in all languages, transcending the barriers that separate nationalities and music genres. His compositions and arrangements display elements of orchestral-jazz, ambient-rock, and progressive-bop with ethnic accents based in Eastern Europe cultures, the Middle East, and the Latin World. ...he pulls various influences out of the air, and transforms these bits...into magnificent complexes of multi-textured broths. Forgas never lets go of his high standards, making every track elaborate and melodically intriguing for the listener.

Beginning the saga with “La Clef” (The Key), Forgas and his ensemble takes audiences through challenging twists and expansive vignettes ...

The whispery trail of violin strings forged along “Double Sens” (Double Entendre) opens up into a topiary of progressive-bop flora and orchestral-jazz fauna...The piece has a trance-like pull on listeners... The final number “La 13eme Lune” (The 13th Moon) showcases the slow simmering bass lines of Mochizuki...

The Forgas Band Phenomena create music that is designed to make an impact on audiences. These are pieces that are meant to grab...and hold... It is an album with no wrong turns, only the ensemble's ingenuity...”

- **Susan Frances, JazzReview.com**

“*L'Axe du Fou*...retains only Forgas, keyboardist Igor Brover and bassist Kengo Mochizuki from the previous line-up... "Double-Sens"...opens with a violin-driven section worthy of a neoclassical ballet and weaves that strand with hints of Soft Machine's electronic jazz-rock... The sound on this album is almost baroque. Karolina Mlodecka, in particular, takes her place among the greatest rock violinists of all times.”

- **Piero Scaruffi, Piero SCARUFFI's KNOWLEDGE BASE**, [www.scaruffi.com](http://www.scaruffi.com)

“... On this outing complex jazz arrangements and specific small brass charts provide the appropriate accent as Polish violinist Karolina Mlodecka literally glides across the introductory piece “The Key.” Dual sax player Sébastien Tragnon radiates in a fashion similar to that of Wayne Shorter or Charlie Narino when spotlighted in a solo role. Overall comparisons to older recordings by Didier Lockwood come to mind but the ensemble itself holds together solidly as unit too. ... “Double Entendre” is...an organic approach somewhat like Ian Carr's Nucleus ...in part due to trumpet player Dmitri Alexaline's fine playing, the electric piano comps and the fiery spontaneous mid section break. Overall it's a crafted tour de force by a well rehearsed unit that should translate well to the live stage. ...”

- **Jeff Melton, Exposé**, Spring 2010

“Since his comeback in the 90s with Forgas Band Phenomena, drummer, bandleader and composer Patrick Forgas ups the ante with each new release...and they just keep getting better and better, like fine wine. ...the focus and trajectory is borne of Forgas' vision, taking the Canterbury

sound in a distinctly French direction... This band flows smoothly between beautifully layered melodic structures into tasty rave-ups of driving urgency and back again, commanding lengthy multi-sectional instrumental compositions...equal parts of jazz and rock, with a healthy injection of orchestral brilliance. ... Benjamin Violet (guitar) and Karolina Mlodecka (violin) trading lead and support roles... The listener can easily get lost in the labyrinthine complexities of the four extended compositions...a captivating and spellbinding journey...” - **Peter Thelen, *Exposé***, Spring 2010

“Patrick Forgas...has been releasing jazz-rock fusion gems since the late 70s. The latest incarnation on Cuneiform Records finds Patrick and his band mates...playing a sophisticated and smooth collection of four songs... inspired solos that flow and soar, producing an attractive, intelligent, and very listenable musical set. ... This new release is sure to please any fans of National Health, Soft Machine, Jean-Luc Ponty, and Passport.”

- **Henry Schneider, *Exposé***, Spring 2010

“...complex but free-flowing composed pieces, packed with fascinating detail and often set to comparatively tricky rhythms, but always sparked by easily memorable tunes.

Forgas himself is at the centre of the band’s sound, precise and neat yet irresistibly propulsive...

Tight and disciplined, but exuberantly powerful at its carefully built climaxes, this is tasteful, polished jazz-rock that uncontrivedly combines all the lightly borne virtuosity frequently associated with the former genre with the viscerally affecting punch and drive of the latter – wholeheartedly recommended, especially to anyone lamenting the apparent dearth of contemporary great exponents of the style pioneered by the likes of Soft Machine and Hatfield and the North.”

- **Chris Parker, *The Vortex***, [www.vortexjazz.co.uk](http://www.vortexjazz.co.uk)

"[6 stars] Masterpiece ... Four years after the release of “Soleil 12”, Patrick Forgas returns with a partially revamped lineup...and an absolute stunner of an album. This is one of those discs that manages to exude an authentically progressive feel, and where the inevitable influences are seamlessly worked into the fabric of the music... Just like the Canterbury bands, Forgas Band Phenomena manages to achieve that fine, often elusive balance between complexity and lightness of touch. Their music impresses for its apparently loose, yet highly disciplined structure, and the technical skills of the individual players, but at the same time brings a smile to your face... “L’Axe du Fou” (The Axis of Madness) is ...under 50 minutes...the ideal running time for an album that is amazingly dense on a musical level... The band functions like a mini-orchestra, all the instruments striving together to produce an impressive...volume of sound. ... Patrick Forgas and bassist Kengo Mochizuki lay down a groundwork of sophisticated subtlety, driving the music along... However, it is the commanding performance of Polish-born violinist Karolina Mlodecka, and her extraordinary mastery of her instrument, that proves to be the album’s single most important feature. ... As a whole, the compositions might be described as a...rich texture of instrumental prowess and melodic warmth. ... As my rating clearly shows, it is one of those rare, practically perfect offerings that are a real credit to the whole progressive rock genre. Forgas Band Phenomena are a brilliant outfit that deserve much more exposure than they have had so far – I, for one, will be looking forward to any future releases from them.

**Conclusion.** Undoubtedly one of the best releases of the past year, “L’Axe du Fou” is a highly sophisticated, yet curiously accessible album that can be safely recommended to all progressive rock fans. ...there is enough complexity to please lovers of more demanding stuff, and enough melody to make it pleasing to the ear of those who prize listenable potential above all. With stunning musicianship and flawless composition on display, this is a disc that deserves the highest rating at my disposal. Top-20-2009”

- **Raffaella Berry, *Progressor***, March 18, 2010, <http://progressor.net/>

“... Drummer Patrick Forgas delivers with L’Axe du Fou his best album in career. Modernized jazz-rock, well thought out, creative, tight... There’s an influence from the Canterbury style, but also from Mahavishnu Orchestra. Yet, the band has its own sound. ...”

- **Francois Couture, *monsieur délire***, October 06, 2009, [blog.monsieurdelire.com](http://blog.monsieurdelire.com)