

THE RONGETZ FOUNDATION

BROKEN DOLL BEAT

The Rongetz Foundation has set up shop in New York!

After starting out in Lyons, then settling down well in Paris, the project has now set up its headquarters in New York. Stéphane Ronget, the musical director, moved over to the other side of the Atlantic with his Parisian colleague Jérémy Brun, a graduate of the CNSM music school, to get things moving.

Specialized in wonky grooves, the Foundation are now trading in broken doll beats after the European success of their 'One-Leg Dancer' (their debut album).

To launch this new product in a country where competition is stiff, the management assembled a brand new rhythm section. They called in the 25-year-old drummer Jerome Jennings again after he'd proved his worth touring with Sonny Rollins, Slide Hampton and the Lincoln Centre Orchestra. On bass, they've brought in a promising young musician of about 20 by the name of Chris Smith, whom we've already heard before, particularly with Jose James.

Stéphane Ronget's quest to discover some new beats over in New York put him on the trail of the fantastic conguero from Eddie Palmieri's band – Orlando Vega. The Nurican music connection is also there in the shape of the bewitching flautist Carlos Jimenez, a follower of Dave Valentin and regular playing partner of Hilton Ruiz and Mike Longo.

The Foundation can also draw on the musical experience and harmonic knowledge of a legendary but little-known saxophonist, Jazz Messenger Dave Schnitter, who played sax in Art Blakey's band from 1974 to 1980. During that time, Dave also made a handful of wonderful albums for the Muse label and took part in one of the most beautiful funky, Afrocentric jazz recordings, Harry Whitaker's 'Black Renaissance', before joining Freddie Hubbard's band at the beginning of the eighties.

Last but not least, Stéphane Ronget's trumpet playing is still as funky as ever, but he's handed over the singing on the album's four vocal tracks to young Saunders Sermon, author of a very good first album, 'Classic Delight', and one of the leading trombonists on the hip-hop and soul scene. Saunders is currently recording and on tour with the likes of Jay Z, Maxwell, 50 Cent and Jill Scott.

This New York Foundation, like the previous one, favours rarely played classics such as Frank Foster's cult piece 'Simone' or the funky 'Zap Carnivorous' by the godfather of bop vocals, Eddie Jefferson. Above all, though, they give us some original tracks where composer Stéphane Ronget's skilful, delicate chord progressions take on hip-hop textures to underscore inspired solos by this close-knit team.

This original and off-beat reworking of the sounds of the CTI label, one of the pillars of the contemporary jazz club scene, is a sign of the project's success (and its initiators') in the United States and on the international market.

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