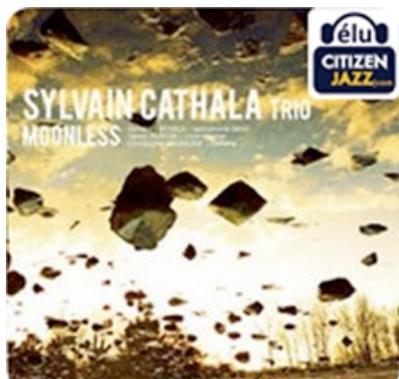


# PRESS REVIEW

## CD Moonless - Sylvain Cathala Trio (Ftm, march 2010)



### Elected Citizen Jazz

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After the excellent record by [Print and Friends](#) (1) which demonstrated, once more, his exceptional talent as a composer and arranger, **Sylvain Cathala** plays the same trick again with a perfect or almost perfect record with a trio that had been around for years under the name of **Rolex** and now bears his own name.

Right from the first bars, a magnificent introduction by **Sarah Murcia** and the saxophone lines which come to mix with it with the support of **Christophe Lavergne**, we guess that this *Moonless* is full of promise. First and foremost, the contrabass: power, speed, the strings that twang, the notes that bounce...What elegance, what musicality! Then, you are taken up with these rich compositions, never free from a new development. At times, the limit between composition and improvisation sounds tenuous because the three musicians sail with ease on complex compositions with rhythmical breaks and delicate melodies.

However, no intellectualism here, no rigidity but a disconcerting freedom whose principles are cohesion and coherence: cohesion between the instruments, their uninterrupted dialogue, their questions and answers on the one hand, and between the drums and the contrabass on the other, complicit and complementary; but also coherence of the discourse, a thorough exploration of a way, without needless repetition, but down to every twist and turn, to every nook and corner.

Of course, this trio's quality has to do with its collective tone, the perfect harmony between the musicians, but also with the remarkable personalities who assert themselves. Sarah Murcia dazzlingly sails through *Moonless's* seven pieces, whether in terms of rhythmical support or during her solos. Polyrhythmics-specialist-in-chief Lavergne provides the group with his touch, sometimes sharp and metallic, sometimes soft and melodious but always in harmony with the music. As to Cathala, this trio enables us to (re)discover "off Print", the instrumentist: his art of composition should not mask his talents as a saxophonist. On the contrary, it highlights them: his tone- shrill, tense or muffled- always serves his intention and his faultless technique enables him to fully exploit his associates'work while highlighting his own material.

*Moonless*, this group's first record has been a long time coming, but it was worth waiting. Its maturity enables it to offer a music, both complex and fluid, carnal and modern, mixing sensuality and elegance in the same movement. **The Sylvain Cathala Trio** is one of the most personal and successful syntheses of the last twenty-five years and of the musical advances that have marked them, more particularly within the sphere of influence initiated by **Steve Coleman**.

One of our first favourites in 2010.

(1) Around K. Yolk 2009.

[Elected Citizen Jazz by Julien Gros-Burdet. Published on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2010.](#)

The Cathala trio is an ensemble which releases records and gives concerts in which modernity takes centre stage. Therefore exit proper melodies and conventional swing. In their place, a strong musical structure involving every musician. Contrabassist Sarah Murcia has got fingers which can touch the instrument's strings to produce deep tones constantly infused with heat. As for drummer Christophe Lavergne, he brings with his sticks support and dialogue that are constantly in harmony with his fellow musicians while keeping a true rigour in his personal interventions. Leader Sylvain Cathala shows a technique that demonstrates his mature talent and highlights his musical approach with his tenor saxophone. This approach necessitates an intellectual research which drives his particular creativity as much in musical discourse as in composition; A young man who can, from now on, continue the wild adventure of jazz by using the different rhythms which give a constant vitality to the seven offered pieces; we mustn't forget his two partners who take advantage of the great freedom he gives them.

Gérald Mathieu – Jazz Notes February 2010

February 28<sup>th</sup> 2010 Sylvain Cathala Trio - Moonless

We had left Sylvain Cathala, Print's elegant tenor saxophonist and leader in this enlarged quartet, surrounded with magnificent improvisers evoking the urban and nightly atmosphere of Around K. Therefore, we are absolutely delighted to meet him again, this time with the Sylvain Cathala trio, Rolex group's new name, a recognized group on the Paris scene which, in the past, earned its leader an award for their first album. This present album, Moonless, continues the adventure led, since 2006, in company with two magnificent musicians, drummer Christophe Lavergne spotted-among others- with Francis and his Painters or The Chollet Diagonal and admirable contrabassist Sarah Murcia, Caroline Group's leader, a group we are particularly fond of, here. If the record gives us the opportunity to notice, once more, Cathala's talent for composition in a very expressive music which immediately transports us in a particular atmosphere outlined with a great deal of evocative polyrhythmics by a Lavergne more musical and metallic than ever ( witness the B. A. M. Piece), in a way, this record stands as Around K's solar reverse. Indeed, if Print's record was situated in the night, Moonless seems to evoke the midnight sun over the Baltic sea, a place where night sometimes doesn't exist, except in a sort of unreal in-between with the gradual appearance of a suspended and magnetic poetry that sounds very much like this trio's music. No wonder, maybe, if the Baltic Dance author investigates in the direction of this nonchalant rigour! An image-rich music for musicians experienced in working for the theatre or the cinema. So, in the album, telluric and seemingly intermixed pieces are next to pure moments of suspended emotion like "Fifth Ballad" with the Murcia-Lavergne connection, in which the contrabassist's bow seems to go through the toms...But Moonless is, above all, an ideal playground for these three improvisers who build a perfect triangle with complex edges in which each of the three musicians seems to play with the others a sophisticated music, where emotion rises from this luminous register. Everyone seems to bring everyone else to their best level without taking all the credit, without any particular predominance, except that of the tone, the power and the almost physical presence of the three fellows who, all three of them, play a fundamental melodic role beside Sylvain Cathala, as precise, refined and sparing of his effects as ever...So, right from the first piece, and in a much more obvious way on the "Black Dance" piece, Sarah Murcia fills the album which she splashes with the talent of her phrasing, full of roundness and musicality, with a seemingly inexorable simplicity before Cathala's languid tenor comes to support her, carried by the always well-tuned playing of Christophe Lavergne who builds a teeming musical base. This self-financed album is available on the Internet and at Le Souffle Continu as of March 1<sup>st</sup>. It is one of the most beautiful surprises of this first quarter...

Sun Ship Franpi - <http://franpi.canalblog.com>

Tenor saxophonist Sylvain Cathala has been, for more than ten years, the architect and the discreet but always inspired promoter of an introspective and intelligent jazz in which complex form and tone quality of the ensemble play in equal parts ( a remarkable job has been done with Print in company of saxophonist Stéphane Payen). The present trio ( formerly called Rolex), made up of Sarah Murcia and Christophe Lavergne, once more gives Cathala the opportunity not to push himself forward but to build an authentic group. Still more than the seven compositions, as intriguing as they are wrongly minimalist, all by the saxophonist, what amazes you from the start is the tone developed by this trio: both heavy and light at the same time, just like the Tim Berne-Michael Formanek-Jim Black trio, for example. Besides, Lavergne shares with the latter a fantastic propensity to destructure the tempo and tastefully pervert the drums' "academic playing". Sarah Murcia's discourse captivates once more by its density and dramaturgy. Then, flanked by such partners, all Sylvain Cathala has to do is to proceed little by little, as he likes it. His tenor tone, deliberately tight, ideally counterbalances the contrabass-drums' tandem's deep tone, a tandem whose exceptional sound recording quality would merely justify the purchase of an austere but impressive album.

JazzMagazine/JazzMan review April 2010. By Eric Quenot