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## Charles Papasoff: Stoner Jazz

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Charles Papasoff

[Gésu - Centre de Créativité](#)

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The Gésu - Centre de Créativité is one of the most intimate venues in Montreal. It is designed in such a way that even if you were sitting in the last row, which I was, you still feel as though you are just a whisper from the stage. The space demands your silence and attention. Charles Papasoff's music was no different. Accompanied by long-time collaborators Martin Auguste (drums) and George Mitchell (bass), Papasoff was joined by a relatively new bandmember, Jocelyn Tellier (guitar).

As we entered the space and began to take our seats, a figure could be seen, already on stage, seated and looking straight at us. It was George Mitchell with his long dreadlocks and shades sitting in the shadows. Meditating? Sleeping? I don't know, but if this was his pre-game stretch, he was certainly "en forme!" As it turned out, Mitchell would later provide the heavy, hypnotic, grooving bass lines of Papasoff's compositions.

These compositions were recently recorded for the album *Papasoff - Stoner Jazz*, which is to be enjoyed in Papasoff's words, "in spite of the smoke." And, as Papasoff implied, no illicit substances are necessary to enjoy this music. The ambient sounds of Tellier's guitar and gadgets provided Papasoff with new colors for his improvisations. Auguste's rhythmic figures were picked up by Papasoff on a dime and used as fuel for exploration. Needless to say, the level of communication was impressive.

With melodic lines as their foundation, these compositions evolved slowly. Each player taking turns introducing thematic material. Sometimes the bass would introduce a melodic groove, as in "Le tango de l'homme filigrane," followed by the baritone saxophone weaving in a counter-melody. On "Rambour," the baritone took the lead as layer upon layer were added. Eventually each composition expanded its parameters to allow room for improvisation.

Some of the most compelling jazz compositions are those in which the boundaries between composition and improvisation become imperceptible--the effects of which can be very moving. Physically, people were nodding their heads and grooving in their seats. There was even, as my friend put it, "a freaky dude dancing in the isle."

To allow time for Papasoff to change reeds on his bari or to tune his soprano there were two solo interludes--one played by Tellier; the other by Mitchell which were intriguing semi-composed improvisations, particularly the one played by Mitchell. Mitchell's interpretation took on captivating speech-like qualities when contrasted with the more lyrical moments of the solo. He accomplished this sound by convincingly pairing repetitive atonal motifs with tonal melodies.

The experience was at times spiritual, enhanced by the excellent acoustics of the amphitheatre. We were, after all, in the basement of a church.

This year the Gésu played host to the JAZZ D'ICI concert series, a showcase for local talent. Papasoff was clearly among friends and fans familiar with his work. After announcing the title of one of the last compositions of the evening, "You Only Love Me Ten Days A Year," the audience erupted in laughter after realizing that Papasoff, in jest, was referring to listeners' fickle taste for jazz.

For the final piece of the set, the quartet played John Coltrane's "Equinox," a very appropriate selection to the audience interested in jazz beyond just the concert. It was a mesmerizing, inspiring, and intimate evening of fine music.