

# DBDBD NY

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## Concert review: META – proved again to be a well-blended confection of jazz and African (both Subsaharan and Northern) musics and sensibilities

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**Date:** April 27, 2013 **Venue:** Nublu (NY)

### Review by Matt Cole

On Saturday, 27 April, [META](#) played the early set at Nublu, giving a high energy performance to an attentive and willing-to-dance crowd which grew as the show went on. META is a multinational band which consists of frontman **Meta** on multilingual vocals and occasional percussion, [Ari Hoenig](#) on drums, [Francois Moutin](#) on bass, and [Thomas Enhco](#) on keys.

**META**'s sound draws from many influences. While overall, they usually maintain a jazzy sensibility on song structure and improv, often with a predominantly jazz over Subsaharan pop feel, the rhythms often veered into funk territory, and the band occasionally steered into dubby spaces, and even gave a few hints of prog rock (and the jam bands which drew influence therefrom). The band is notably tight and together live, even when mixing styles or melting into chaos, and displayed a talent for grooving well in odd meters. On occasion, two of the instruments (including Meta's soulful voice) would play in unison together. They tended to stay inside more than a straight-up downtown unit might, but went out sparingly and tastefully; that is, not for show, but in service to the music.

Individually, the performers were and are all outstanding musicians who gave top notch performances. Meta sings in a high and soulful voice, stylistically melding jazz with both North African and Subsaharan sounds, and even occasionally giving hints of Indian Bol. He sings in several languages, projecting hope and optimism that is easily understood by the listener, regardless of whether he or she can understand the words. At times, Meta would use his voice as another instrument, expanding the band's sonic

palette. At one point, during an a capella moment, I felt as if I was in the Atlas Mountains; Meta had taken me thousands of miles with only the power of his voice.

Keyboardist **Enhco** leaned towards angular, jazzy chords as accompaniment, reminding one of Monk at times. Enhco built his solos skillfully, leaving ample space at first, and then building to climactic finishes, making good use of altered notes, and even at times playing chords orthogonal to but fitting with the rest of the band (not unlike space guitarist On Ka'a Davis). Bassist **Moutin** kept things going with driving, busy lines, mixing funk and Sub-Saharan pop, and took some intricate, rapid-fire solos. At other times, Moutin would take the lead, forging lyrical melodies from the low end. Drummer **Hoening** laid down a propulsive foundation, leaving space when appropriate, providing some very good, bouncy hi hat work a la Tomo from God Street Wine. Hoening showed a particular talent for varying the details of a rhythm, while keeping the overall shape and maintaining a steady pulse.

In all, this was a very enjoyable performance at a venue that proved to be a good fit for META. The sound was appropriately just a little rawer than when I saw them at [Le Poisson Rouge last year in June](#). but the band was just as tight. By the end of the night, a number of audience members were dancing, and the crowd clearly wanted more when the set ended. Afterwords, I got to chat with Meta a little, and he apologized for his rusty English. I told him not to worry, that the band's energetic and enjoyable performance was statement enough.