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Can You Hear Me? By Nick Maclean (Browntasaurus)

BY JAMIE LEE RAKE JAN. 06, 2022 8:10 A.M.

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Might Nick Maclean be to Canadian pianists what Kamasi Washington has become to U.S. saxophonists? In terms of creating a lengthy, wide-ranging document of modern jazz with some agenda and ideology supporting its musical invention, Toronto-based Maclean's *Can You Hear Me?* possesses commensurate scope and vision to



Washington's name-making *The Epic*.

But working largely on his nearly 150-minute, 18-cut opus, Maclean has to keep listeners' attention with his two hands instead of relying on interaction with a band.



He largely succeeds, melding the experimentation, melodicism and impression of forebears including Keith Jarrett, Braf Mehldau and Bill Evans into his own approach that bears repeated, rich listening.

Dividing selections between original compositions, spontaneous improvisations, and remakes (sourced from as wide a spate as The Beatles and Wayne Shorter to Herbie Hancock and a Disney cartoon movie), Maclean keeps plies the sort of versatility that should whet newcomers' audio appetites to hear him in the two bands of which he's a part. Less uniformly appealing are the found/inserted vocal snippets interjected in a few pieces. It makes enough sense to include bits of Maya Angelou on a piece named for one of her most famous works, but at other times, the effect from others Maclean and producer Brownman Ali excerpt gives the effect of the aural equivalent to social realist painting. The placements of such pontifications aside, the answer to Maclean's *Can You Hear Me?* is not only a “yes,” but “more, please,” too.

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Jamie Lee Rake

Jamie Lee Rake is a freelance writer based in Waupun, Wis. whose wide breadth of tastes in and studies of music and food put him in good stead to write about those very things for Shepherd Express.

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