

theWholeNote

Convergence - Nick Maclean Quartet featuring Brownman Ali

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It may be a tad late – some may say outdated – to use terms, such as “bop” and “hard-bop” today. It’s either music that beckons you to be still and listen with your heart, or listen with your heart and then get up and dance, on the beat, behind it or ahead of it. The music on *Convergence* by the Nick Maclean Quartet does all those things and it does each of them exceedingly well.



The pianist Maclean has a prodigious gift for the melodic. Together with trumpeter Brownman Ali he has been a magnet for some fine young musicians – a bassist and drummer for instance – who certainly appear to be big on heart and technique, but low on ego. This makes for superbly natural sounding performances.

There is a heady appeal to music that is simple – Herbie Hancock’s ostinato-driven *Butterfly* and its later metamorphosis into a Caribbean species – and complex. Two beautiful examples are songs where long, sculpted inventions (Maclean’s *Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Ali’s *Wisdom of Aurelius*) draw you into their ornamental spiderwebs with their alluring mix of elegance, energy and precision.

It is not as if the brilliant soli and ensemble is shared just between Maclean and Ali. Bassist Ben Duff and drummer Jacob Wutzke also get in on the action. Even founding-bassist Jesse Dietschi displays his rhythmic chops in all their unearthly beauty on Hancock’s *Dolphin Dance* to kick off this celebrated recording.