

# **SNAGGLE**

## **THE LONG SLOG**

[ released Oct 15, 2016 on Browntasauras Records ]

This album, the sophomore release from Snaggle, represents a rich palette of highly diverse original music featuring the band's current incarnation. They initially faced much internal political turmoil and uncertainty in the early stages of the makings of this record - the end result being the departure of some players and the heart-felt welcoming of newer exciting additions. Thus its completion marks the triumphant end to a long stage in Snaggle's evolution and the beginning of a new chapter with all the intriguing challenges, opportunities and possibilities that go with it.



Iconic Canadian jazz piano player, and former teacher to Nick Maclean -- the luminous David Restivo was asked to write this album's liner notes. His extreme versatility as both composer and pianist made him the only choice for this recording's commentary. Below, he thoughtfully dissects the album with an insightful breakdown.

## **The Long Slog To This Long Slog**

**By David Restivo**

One of the great perks of being involved in music education is watching former students become peers and colleagues. It never fails to delight and inspire me to hear young musicians who start out from common reference points develop a singularity of vision. It's something I always try to nurture and encourage in students; one must develop a respect for tradition and a grasp of fundamentals, but then figure out what they need to say to the world that is reflective of their unique inner voice and personal culture.

When Nick Maclean came to me as a piano student at Humber College, he was one of those quiet guys with the kind of twinkle in his eye that told you there was a lot going on below the surface. As with any student of jazz piano, we dealt with universal issues like voicings, technique, and linear improvisation. However, I've always seen teaching as a creative, collaborative process, rather than a "one size fits all" situation. Early on Nick showed an infectious curiosity, and I encouraged him to explore his strong interest in developing composition and arranging ideas that ventured beyond the confines of what is generally considered jazz, into areas informed by pop, classical music, and beyond.

It is no great surprise, then, that Snaggle should emerge as the culmination of Nick's musical explorations to this point. This is music without borders, music that is at once sophisticated and inclusive, bristling with infectious funk grooves, rock riffs, and jazz-based improvisations woven into a tapestry of an ambitious yet accessible compositional palette that reminds one of the more inspired, less self-indulgent aspects of the progressive rock and jazz fusion movements.

### **01 ) SNAGGLE #7 (8:19) by Nick Maclean**

*Solos by Max Forster - trumpet, Graeme Wallace - tenor*

Snaggle #7 begins with a somewhat ominous, percolating bassline. The feeling of kinetic energy this establishes continues as the drums and keyboards layer in, creating a slow-burning backdrop for the horns, which enter with a bluesy melody. This melody unfolds in an unhurried manner as the rhythm section builds intensity underneath it, its languidness interspersed with some hard-edged soloing from guitarist Michael Murray. Maclean's subtle organ work, meanwhile, is the glue that holds these contrasting elements together. Following a deliciously dark-toned and adventurous exploratory trumpet solo by Max Forster, a breakdown occurs that brings about an abrupt change in mood and tempo, driven by Maclean's unaccompanied wah-wah Rhodes. Eventually, a press roll from drummer Tom Grosset brings the band back in, launching a seductively toned tenor saxophone solo by Graeme Wallace in the new, much slower tempo. Wallace builds strongly, peaking as the band seamlessly transitions back to the original tempo and groove, with a restatement of the main theme, followed by a final release into a moody synth and guitar duet.

### **02 ) Sad Ritual (9:14) by Nick Maclean**

*Solo by Mike Murray - guitar*

Maclean is on his own again at the start of Sad Ritual, coaxing some melancholic textures out of the Rhodes until he's joined by Wallace for an intimate dialogue, who in turn is joined by Forster for some contrapuntal lyricism. The deceptive peacefulness of the opening gives way suddenly to a driving rock groove, underpinning melodic exchanges from the horns, before they couple for the next thematic statements contrasted by Maclean's warblingly responsive synth. The centerpiece of the track is a lengthy solo by Murray, which starts from nothing and works its way to a stunning climax. The driving, punctuated horn lines of the chorus alternate with some fierce pitch-bend synth work from Maclean, before the stillness of the opening is restored. The tune itself is an amalgamation of a departed member's most interesting compositional contributions, chopped up, and re-imagined by Maclean.

### **03 ) Nonuhno (5:30) by Doug Moore**

*Solos by Nick Maclean - synth, Tom Grosset - drums*

Nonuhno, the only track not written by Maclean (it is the work of bassist Doug Moore), is full of the same joyful abandon one gets from a well-crafted EDM (electronic dance music) track and rings with the influence of Daft Punk. It features bop-inspired unisons, harmonized horn lines that evoke some of the early Brecker Brothers' work, an expressively potent synth solo by Maclean and a vigorous drum solo by Tom Grosset over shifting background figures.

#### **04 ) Track 5 (7:15) by Nick Maclean**

*Solos by Graeme Wallace - tenor sax*

The ironically titled Track Five begins once again with some evocative Rhodes work from Maclean, followed by the establishment of the track's haunting main melodic refrain. Led by a reoccurring figure from guitarist Murray, it then proceeds to chart a course through a number of jazz-rock realms, with a stirring and intensely emotional solo by Wallace. Following the original melody, a slow build to cacophony is underscored by Murray's wailing guitar, clearly highlighting his deep love of the Heavy Metal genre, before returning one last time to the reoccurring figure to conclude the track. Interestingly, the title of this tune comes from an error in the design of Snaggle's first album wherein the number '5' was accidentally skipped in the track order. The title, the track numbering, and the silent 5th track on this release are all subtle winks at that incident. The irony continues in the tune itself through numerous variations of 5/4, 5/8 and 10/8 meter.

#### **06 ) Tree Assassin (7:05) by Nick Maclean**

*Solo by Mike Murray - guitar*

Horns and guitar establish a quiet, yet disturbing beauty out of time at the beginning of Tree Assassin, a spirit which continues once the tempo is established. At around the three minute mark Maclean, starting out once again alone at the Rhodes, establishes a new tempo. This morphs into another noteworthy solo from Michael Murray, who coaxes some delicious Spanish flavours out of his guitar. For this guitar solo, producer Brownman Ali advised Murray to invoke the image of the entire Brazilian rainforest being slowly bulldozed into the ocean, noting carefully that Murray, in this scenario, WAS the bulldozer -- the Tree Assassin embodied. The ensemble reprises the opening theme but this time over a smoldering groove that gradually winds its way down to the end.

#### **07 ) Theorum (7:29) by Nick Maclean**

*Solos by Brownman Ali - electric trumpet*

The Brecker Brothers' spirit returns en force on the highly energized and break-neck paced Theorum, which provides a perfect platform for the single longest solo on the recording, an epic tale from beginning to end featuring hard blowing and angular lines from guest trumpeter (and producer) Brownman Ali. His influence as a protégé of Randy Brecker on forceful display throughout this high velocity, virtuositic odyssey. Not to be ignored is drummer Tom Grosset as he deftly lays down ferocious pocket at bullet-train tempo throughout, intensifying the entire track's high energy attitude. The name of this tune was originally 'Theorem' (with an 'e') which is an anagram of 'Here Tom' – a reference to the fact that Grosset had been asking Maclean to write the band something fast. In a correspondence with Ali Maclean accidentally misspelled the tune name but

soon found out that 'Theorum' is a proper word unto itself - a synonym of 'scientific theory' which was invented by the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins to differentiate it from 'theory's' frequent usage as a synonym for 'hypothesis'. Both Ali and Maclean are big fans of Dawkins and his work, so the name stuck.

### **08 ) SAW (9:28) by Nick Maclean**

*Solos by Nick Maclean - synth & rhodes + talkbox*

Saw starts with a nasty synth-talkbox patch that sets up an equally beastly, greasy groove all floating in a sea of sounds seemingly snatched from the Predator movie franchise. As with much of Maclean's music, seemingly irreconcilable influences vie for attention, from heavy, Zeppelinesque rock riffery to gentle jazz-funk, with hints of Radiohead and the Brian Blade Fellowship Band sprinkled in for good measure, all stitched together in a seamless, somehow inevitable way. The melody shifts from understated to effervescent to brash and bluesy before winding down to the start of Maclean's big solo showcase. An unaccompanied visceral rhodes-talkbox interlude evolves into a blistering, extended improvisation backed by a rhythm section which sizzles with vitality. The tune wraps, as any grand saga would, with a monumental final proclamation befitting any modern Space Opera.

### **09 ) Lagaan (8:06) by Nick Maclean**

*Solos by Brownman Ali - trumpet, Tom Grosset - drums*

Lagaan exudes an infectious buoyancy in its joyful thematic guitar and horn statements before catapulting Brownman's horn prowess into a contrasting (from Theorum) long-form solo, this time evoking traces of Freddie Hubbard in his lyrical line construction. It culminates in a spectacularly bombastic drum solo from Grosset, reminding us all why he was named in 2013 as the Guinness Book of World Records Fastest Drummer alive. This funkified-samba is inspired by an anime series entitled 'Guran Lagann' which (giant battling robots aside) champions the power of optimism and the 'fighting human spirit'.

### **10 ) The Long Slog (8:52) by Nick Maclean**

*Solo by Nick Maclean - organ*

The album closes with The Long Slog, which kicks off with Murray setting up a funky wah-wah guitar groove, joined in short order by Maclean, whose Rhodes comping provides a rhythmic counterpoint. When the rest of the band enters, the resulting feeling lies somewhere between the jazz-funk of the classic Blue Note Records era of the 1960s and the "acid jazz" movement of the 1990s, though it stands apart by virtue of being placed in a 5/4 meter, which proves a good catalyst for a firey organ solo. The gentler middle section gives way to a free duet between Wallace and Maclean, which in turn moves into time as the other band members rejoin. This final section begins as a

lyrical ballad, but works its way, via a long, gradual accelerando, towards a powerful zenith, with some powerful rock shredding from Murray paired with more jaw-dropping drumming from Grosset. This, the title track of the record, is aptly visually depicted in Nick Ragetli's sci-fi cover art where a Space Tiger has seemingly crash landed on a planet and has been slogging his way through the desert, glowing footprints following in his wake until he's now in frame, fully visible, and clearly dangerously annoyed.

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Maclean and the members of SNAGGLE, with the help of Brownman, have crafted a very personal and compelling musical statement, bursting with wide-ranging influences tied together by a sense of unified purpose, chock-full of hidden treasures and layers to be uncovered through repeated listening. So settle in, close your eyes, and let the voyage unfold.

-- David Restivo | June 2016, Toronto

David Restivo is one of Canada's most respected and influential jazz artists. A pianist, percussionist and composer, he is a 3-time winner of the National Jazz Awards' "Keyboardist of the Year Award", and is listed in the current edition of Canadian Who's Who. He is well known for his work with Rob McConnell's Boss Brass and Tentet, the Mike Murley Quintet, and legendary songwriter Marc Jordan.

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## **About SNAGGLE**

Often described as Canada's answer to Snarky Puppy, Snaggle combines influences from jazz, rock, metal, classical and everything else they can get their hands on to create their own brash and infectious brand of hard funk. With a sound ranging from Miles Davis to Rage Against the Machine, Snaggle features a repertoire of exciting, dynamic and highly diverse original material which is garnering them more and more attention both at home and abroad. This all-star line up of players, including the fastest drummer in world, are among some of the best 20-somethings on the scene and represent the next generation of irreverent, boundary pushing Canadian players and composers. Snaggle is an artist on the roster of the award winning record label Browntasauras Records.

[www.SnaggleMusic.com](http://www.SnaggleMusic.com) for more info.

### **SNAGGLE is:**

**Nick Maclean** - keys, **Graeme Wallace** - tenor,  
**Max Forster** - trumpet, **Michael Murray** - guitar,  
**Doug Moore** - bass, **Tom Grosset** - drums



*Brownman Ali writes:*

“Metric modulations, meter changes, tempo shifts, counter-point lines, but all with underlying melodic ideas that captivate the ear -- all while shifting from hard funk to gentle motifs, sometimes all within the same tune!... these guys are SERIOUS, a truly astonishing group!”

*BlogTO.com writes:*

“Snaggle's sound is influenced by such an eclectic mix of genre's that classification becomes impossible and more importantly, irrelevant. Each song is vast and eclectic, while maintaining a consistent and distinct sound. If dynamic and instrumental music is your thing then you should definitely check them out!”

### **Nick Maclean - bandleader / keyboardist / synthist / composer**

Born in Ottawa in 1991, 25-year old Nick Maclean is "a fast rising star in the Toronto jazz community" (BlogTO) and has quickly become one of the most in demand 20-something piano players in that city's bustling jazz scene. SNAGGLE is his groove-based all-original eclectic electric-jazz project, sporting a 6-man lineup, compositional odysseys and often compared by media to Snarky Puppy. Nick received his Bachelors of Music from Humber College in 2013, having studied with Dave Restivo (who graciously wrote this album's liners), Bernie Senensky and Nancy Walker. He then went on to do a Masters in Jazz Performance at the University of Toronto researching synthesizer pedagogy while studying under David Occhipinti, Andrew Downing, Chris Donnelly and David Braid. Braid in particular had an enormous influence on how Maclean approaches playing, composing and teaching. Additional musical influences include the likes of the aforementioned Snarky Puppy, Weather Report, Brecker Brothers, Miles Davis (electric), Brownman Electryc Trio, Jason Lindner, Avishai Cohen (bass), Kneebody, Metalwood, Rage Against the Machine, Tool, Hiromi Uehara & Brad Mehldau. Aside from SNAGGLE, Maclean also leads a more straight-ahead hard-swinging quartet featuring Brownman Ali on trumpet. The NICK MACLEAN QUARTET's spirit is centered heavily around Herbie Hancock's primordial group from the 60's. The future is bright for this young visionary as he continues his upward ascent in jazz artforms of all shapes and sizes.

### **Brownman Ali - producer / special guest trumpet player**

Trinidadian-born, NYC-schooled & heralded as “Canada’s preeminent Jazz trumpeter” by NYC’s Village Voice, multi-award winning trumpet player Brownman Ali stands at the forefront of innovation in the Canadian jazz community. A protégé to his teacher, Grammy-winning trumpet legend, Randy Brecker, he tirelessly leads 7 unique ensembles of his own including the internationally acclaimed, Miles Davis influenced, BROWNMEN ELECTRYC TRIO. In 2009 he launched his own record label: Browntasauras Records, which saw the Electryc Trio's 2 now acclaimed recordings garner substantial accolades and press. The label is now a home to all his ensembles as well as the newly signed SNAGGLE. Now, using the label as a breeding ground for

new and visionary talent in the modern jazz realm, Browntasauras and Brownman himself are widely regarded as vanguards for the evolution of Jazz in Canada.

## **THANK YOU!**

Band leader Nick Maclean wants to thank the members of Snaggle (Doug Moore, Tom Grosset, Graeme Wallace, Mike Murray, Max Forster) playing with you guys is nothing short of inspirational. You're all incredible musicians and such warm genuine people, I have so much love for each one of you and this album is a real testament to all of your hard work and dedication! Brownman Ali, your kind and generous spirit knows no bounds and you are such a treasured friend. Your playing, wisdom and experience is quite frankly unparalleled and your guidance continues to have an enormous impact on Snaggle, my playing and my life philosophies. You've put an unfathomable amount of loving attention into this album and it bears your mark just as strongly as it does ours. Josh Bowman who's mixing expertise created the best mixes Snaggle has ever had. Brian Legere, our recording engineer who's generosity with studio time helped make this album possible. Joao Carvalho for his mastering brilliance & to Nick Blagona on a speedy coronary recovery - and to both of them for their kind support of all Browntasauras artists. Dave Restivo for writing our liner notes – it is a supreme honour to have the thoughts of this monstrous pianist and former mentor on this album. Milos Karanovic for totally nailing our artwork concept. Nick Ragetli for making our album art concept such a compelling reality (and for putting up with our crazy requests!). All of our Indiegogo supporters - without your philanthropic support there would be no album! To my colleagues and students at Elite and Lippert Music for helping give me the means to pay for the rest of the album. Mum and Dad who have always been an unwaveringly supportive force in my life despite my insisting upon a career with few financial prospects! To my brother who took the chemistry road and is kicking some serious ass with it! To my wife Erin who is my best friend and my partner in crime - I love you dearly. David Braid who has forever changed the way I think about music, the piano and my personal growth. Snarky Puppy for being such an inspiration. May Cafe, Duffy's Tavern and all the other clubs and venues who've supported Snaggle's development and evolution. Andrew 'Nickel' Nicholson, River City Junction, Ken Wallace & Madeline Tonelli, Brian & Gayle Moore and Kendra & Stuart Brooks for being such firm supporters of the band. Lyle Moore for graciously giving us so much amazing artwork for our previous releases. The former members of Snaggle (Emily Denison, Nick Barz) and anyone who's played with us in the past (Denielle Bassels, Mara Nesrallah, Will Bowes, Noah Sherman, Geoff Bruce, Julian Nalli, Chelsea McBride, Christian Brown, Joe Auty, Brad Eaton, Sean Clarey). Al Purcell for the inspiration to write 'Sad Ritual'. Finally, a huge thanks to YOU for having this record and reading what I have to say. I hope you dig it and that you'll stick around for the rest of our journey, wherever that takes us. My deepest thanks. Cheers!

- Nick Maclean

## **The Long Slog was:**

Recorded Jan, 2016 by Brian Legere at Bishop Allen Academy, Toronto

Mixed May, 2016 by Josh Bowman at Bowman Sound, Toronto

Mastered July, 2016 by João Carvalho at João Carvalho Mastering, Toronto

Produced by Brownman Ali

Cover Art by Nick Ragetli

Liner notes by David Restivo



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## THE LONG SLOG





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<b>NICK MACLEAN</b> keyboards / synth <b>MAX FORSTER</b> trumpet <b>GRAEME WALLACE</b> tenor sax	<b>MIKE MURRAY</b> guitar <b>DOUG MOORE</b> bass <b>TOM GROSSET</b> drums
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SPECIAL GUEST: **BROWNMAN ALI**  
electric trumpet

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Cover Art by Nick Rageth, Toronto  
Liner notes by David Restivo, Toronto

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1 SNAGGLE #7 (Nick Maclean)	8:19
2 SAD RITUAL (Nick Maclean)	9:14
3 NONUHNO (Doug Moore)	5:30
4 TRACK 5 (Nick Maclean)	7:15
6 TREE ASSASSIN (Nick Maclean)	7:05
7 THEORUM feat. Brownman (Nick Maclean)	7:29
8 SAW (Nick Maclean)	9:28
9 LAGAAN feat. Brownman (Nick Maclean)	8:06
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Nick Maclean - synth, keyboards  
Max Forster - trumpet  
Graeme Wallace - tenor saxophone  
Mike Murray - guitar  
Doug Moore - bass  
Tom Grosset - drums

Produced by **BROWNMAN**



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SNAGGLE

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MIKE MURRAY guitar	GRAEME WALLACE tenor sax	TOM GROSSET drums

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