



Nick Maclean Quartet feat Brownman Ali: Convergence

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The Nick Maclean Quartet is a highly respected Canadian outfit, here featuring upper-echelon trumpeter Brownman Ali, marked by a deep reverence for the past and a bold leap into the future. Central to this album's appeal are its original compositions, which are not merely exercises in style but profound statements of artistic identity. These pieces are deeply influenced by the innovative spirit of Herbie Hancock's work in the 1960s, among other Blue Note Records artists during this fertile period for jazz.

Nick Maclean, a pianist of exceptional skill and sensitivity, channels Hancock's pioneering ethos into the quartet's original compositions, creating a sound that is at once nostalgic and forward-looking. The pieces on *Convergence* are instilled with the sophisticated harmonic textures and rhythmic complexities that characterized Hancock's seminal works, like "Maiden Voyage" and "Empyrean Isles," while also pushing into new territories. Yet Maclean's compositions stand out for their intricate structures and the way they facilitate dynamic group interplay and individual expression, serving as the perfect canvas for the quartet's explorations.

Ali adds a layer of depth and invention to these compositions. His solos are a highlight of the album, weaving through Maclean's compositions with precision, soulfulness, and a daring spirit of exploration. His ability to do so complements and challenges, as Maclean's piano playing underscores the album's dynamic tension and collaborative spirit.

Listen to their take on Hancock's "Dolphin Dance," abetted by Ali's smooth as-silk rendition of the primary theme, contrasted, and underscored by Maclean who also circles the melody, followed by bassist Ben Duff's resonating solo, performed with a limber gait. However, the band mixes it up during Maclean's funky jazz piece, "Why the Caged Bird Sings," as Ali's affectionate manner of playing the main motif with pop and a touch of sizzle whereas Ali opens it up via his hip wah-wah-induced lines.

The rhythm section deserves equal praise for their contribution to the album's success. Their tight, intuitive playing grounds the music, allowing the soloists to soar. On Maclean's "Verboten," Duff provides the intro, segueing to drummer Jacob Wutzke's slippery beats amid the soloists' tight and bristling unison choruses. Moreover, the musicians generate false endings as the pianist harmonizes with Ali amid cascading harmonics and deft flurries. The impeccable audio production captures this interplay beautifully, presenting a sound that is both polished and alive.

Track Listing

Dolphin Dance; Road Warrior; Brotherhood; Why The Caged Bird Sings; Eye Of The Hurricane; True North; Butterfly; Verboten; Lie Of Easy Attainment; Fragility Of Being; Wisdom Of Aurelius