

February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**OttawaJazzScene.ca's Jazz pick of the week for February 12 to 18, 2018: Nick Maclean Quartet CD Release at the Avant-Garde Bar**

*Each week OttawaJazzScene.ca recommends a live jazz or improvised music performance in Ottawa-Gatineau from the dozens of live jazz events in the comprehensive Jazz Bulletin we send to donors. There's a lot of wonderful jazz being presented, so it's often a difficult choice.*

**Saturday, February 17, 2018, 8 p.m.: Nick Maclean Quartet CD Release: "Rites of Ascension" at the Avant-Garde Bar**

Ottawa-raised, now Toronto-based, pianist Nick Maclean, speaks in several musical voices: the groove and electric-jazz group Snaggle, and his mainstream-jazz [Nick Maclean Quartet](#). It's the quartet which he's bringing to Ottawa this Saturday, as part of a mini-tour that will also bring them to Montreal, Kingston, and Cobourg.

They're celebrating the release of the quartet's first CD, *Rites of Ascension*. It's an all-acoustic exploration of modern jazz in the vein of Blue-Note-era Herbie Hancock. The quartet also features Brownman Ali on trumpet (heard last summer in Ottawa with Snaggle), Jesse Dietschi on bass, and Tyler Goertzen on drums.

Maclean told OttawaJazzScene.ca that the quartet's music is inspired by Hancock's 1960s quartet with trumpeter Freddie Hubbard. "We're taking a lot of influences from his albums *Maiden Voyage* and *Empyrean Isles*, but we're exploring it with original tunes, also drawing from more modern ideas, so a couple of the tunes groove a little bit more than they swing. We're dealing with odd meters a lot more, odd phrasing, so stuff you didn't quite see quite as much in those two records, though Herbie certainly did explore that kind of stuff to an enormous degree later in his career."

The album's title refers to the process of living an examined life, what Maclean says is "a path filled with twists and turns, conflict and confusion... but also joy, meaning and purpose for those who walk well."

The album includes six originals by Maclean and one by Brownman, plus four re-imagined Herbie Hancock classics – all given a fine improvisatory shakeout. As Dave Restivo notes in the album's liner notes, this is "Hancock as inspiration/catalyst, as opposed to an imitative effort". It opens with three pieces by Hancock, including his memorable "Cantaloupe Island" and the "One Finger Snap", played even faster than the already-challenging original, and then moves into the originals, several directly inspired by Hancock, before ending with the wistful "Tell Me a Bedtime Story".

Expect hard-swinging modern jazz, leavened by ballads and blues: very much in the tradition, but with a modern twist.