

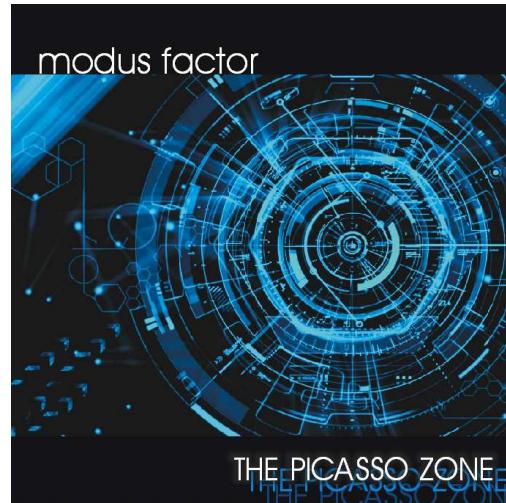
modus factor

The Picasso Zone

Browntasauras Records

[Release dates : Canada: Oct 15, Int'l: Dec 09 | 2016]

This album, the debut release from modus factor, represents the highly complex group synergy and interaction from 3 world-class musicians based in Toronto, Canada. It is highly diverse original music created by artists who are always ready to "say yes" to the proposition of in-the-moment musical adventures. While The Picasso Zone captures the trio in full flight both from a creative standpoint AND from a production vantage point, the record's completion is a snapshot in time of this unique group's intricate sound.



Iconic Canadian drummer, and personal hero to Chris Lesso -- the luminous Paul DeLong was asked to write this album's liner notes. He is a legendary figure in the drumset community in North America and his extreme versatility in a multitude of musical settings made him the only choice for this recording's commentary. Below, he thoughtfully dissects the album with an insightful breakdown.

Other World Music

By Paul Delong

Modus Factor is a modern electric groove trio led by in-demand session drummer Chris Lesso and features multiple National Jazz Award-winning trumpet player Brownman Ali and Juno-winning Sisters Euclid bassist Ian De Souza. The trio's tagline is "electro-ambient improvisational bedlam", which befits their live show well. BUT, interestingly, their debut recording "The Picasso Zone" is less about mayhem, and more about nuance, making that last tagline word "bedlam" seem less relevant for this recording. Given the amount of deep interaction these 3 artists engage in and the depth of their collective musical interplay, I think a more appropriate tagline for this magnificent debut recording is "electro-ambient improvisational intercourse". We'll see how many posters that makes it onto.

But regardless of the album tagline's last word, this recording is an outstanding, high-minded example of the musical richness that can come from 3 kindred artists when they all create together and move in a singular direction as improvisers. By making enough room for each other, the creations presented on this recording are greater than the sum of the individual parts.

The Picasso Zone is being released on Brownman's own label Browntasauras Records, now a home to a whole new breed of young visionaries as he opens the doors to other artists' output over the past year (2016). This recording will thus stand side-by-side the Brownman Electryc Trio's own award-winning recordings on the label. The similarities

of configuration -- trumpet, bass & drums -- may inspire this question, from fans of both bands : "how is this different?" Let me assure you, as someone who's played in Brownman Electryc Trio -- this is a COMPLETELY different ensemble. It's actually quite stunning to remember that both bands have identical instrument configurations and share the same trumpet player. Modus Factor is absolutely unique, and it's that defining uniqueness that was captured so elegantly by tracking & mix engineer James Pew, and luxuriously mastered by Brooklyn's Allen Farmelo.

Though I've seen Modus Factor often categorize themselves as "world music", I think a much more accurate description of them would be "OTHER world music". It's off-worldly and alien and weird and wonderful in all the best possible ways.

Let's take a look at the tunes themselves :

THE PICASSO ZONE

01) Brownian Motion (5:06) by Brownman Ali, Ian De Souza, Chris Lesso

Solos: bass, trumpet, drums

The record opens strongly with a melodic drum intro groove that sees Brownman and Ian in inverted roles -- Brown initially playing the bassline with his octave pedal, while De Sousa is in the guitar register, high on the neck. This transitions into a solid backbeat feel with a wah pedaling trumpet melodic statement before moving into a deadly fuzz bass solo, eventually again accompanied by basslines from Brownman on his octaver. From here the section eventually explodes into a blazing trumpet solo before returning to the original melody. A quick moment of drum'n'bass acts as an interlude before Lesso lays down a drum solo laden with metric modulation over some seriously tricky shots. This final open blowing section is most impressive. Lesso, wanting some interesting metric material to solo over, enlisted Brownman to quickly write that final section, the band having little time to learn it. The result is captivating, with Lesso sounding very comfortable, tight & consistent across his entire solo.

02) Now & Zen (4:19) by Brownman Ali, Ian De Souza, Chris Lesso

Solos: trumpet, drums

De Sousa's always interesting programmed noise-making opens this track before Lesso joins him with a groove that has it's downbeat heavily camouflaged. Brownman's snake-like delay pedal noodling creates an atmosphere of anticipation before the bustling angular melody enters. The next section drops to a half-time feel, an engrossing counterpoint to the frenetic melody. Brownman sneaks back in for an extended solo featuring a multitude of effects and sounds, yet what's vividly highlighted during this solo is the collective consciousness the trio seems to always have in play. Eventually, naturally, almost effortlessly -- the tempo redoubles back to fervently burning, couched in a deep jungle pocket. From here to the end the group is a

rocketship headed skyward as Brown's solo explodes into the final angular melodic re-statement, with the entire group jumping on the last phrase before leaving the solar system. This is the only really uptempo tune on the record, and it's a standout, likely why the group often concludes live sets with this track.

03) Still I Rise [feat. Maya Angelou] (3:44) by Brownman Ali, Ian De Souza, Chris Lesso
Special guest Andrea Koziol - all backing vocals

A dazzlingly track utilizing Maya Angelou's famous poem "Still I Rise" as its center piece, spoken by Maya Angelou herself (sourced after weeks of scouring the web, Brownman finally found this incredible piece of audio from Ms. Angelou). Interestingly, this tune began as a single in-studio completely improvised jam. The drum parts were then later chopped up and edited by Lesso in order to create a very specific tapestry of rhythms and sounds. It was then passed to De Souza, who would hire vocalist Andrea Koziol to sing the R'n'B flavored backgrounds before layering his basslines and additional electronic reverberations into the track. Much later, it would finally land in producer Ali's lap, who would layer in the Maya Angelou poem, re-track all the trumpet parts around Ms. Angelou's voice and build the tune up to create a composition that now stands as one of the main features of this recording. The resulting track is magnificent in it's naturalness. So much so that I, unaware that the voice was that of Maya Angelou herself, thought the boys had hired a session vocalist to come in and read the poem while the band played live. The beautiful interplay between ensemble and voice is so convincingly meaningful it's hard to believe it wasn't all conceived together in a single room. Maya's voice weaves in and out of the band throughout the tune, building to the end of the track, as the band simmers around her final statement : "I Rise!"

04) Casa Kimono (7:13) by Brownman Ali, Ian De Souza, Chris Lesso
Solos: trumpet / Additional percussion: Santosh Naidu

Opening with subtle muted bass notes, De Souza lays down a spacy open-ended funk groove that cooks delicately under the band before Ali's staggered triplet-filled horn work enters, creating a sense of mirthful mystery. Even as we exit the mosquito-esque trumpet solo, accentuated by Lesso's purposeful brush work, the band breaks down to a slow cooker filling this tune both with nuance and varied shades of expression. It is always textured and elaborate, right to it's gentle final moments.

05) Afindia (3:51) by Brownman Ali, Ian De Souza, Chris Lesso
Solos: Konnakol, drumset

The sounds of two seminal continents -- Africa and India -- collide on this track, with intriguing results. Lesso's Konnakol work is particularly spell-binding. I know Lesso has been working on that for years now, so it was fascinating to see that discipline appear on this recording juxtaposed with Brownman's Hugh Maskela type approach to

this tune. The unique musical approaches that stem from amalgamating these 2 continent's rhythms are further crystallized by De Souza's naturalness with the playing of off-beats. The entire tune is essentially a long-form drum solo shrouded and enveloped by engrossing musical elements from trumpet and bass, yet never so engrossing that you're pulled away from Lesso's rhythmic dual-continent story-telling.

06) Rounded Corners (7:36) by Brownman Ali, Ian De Souza, Chris Lesso

Solos: trumpet

Beginning with a statement from the Gift of Gab (Blackilicious), the openness of this tune is established immediately by Lesso's mallet work on toms. Coupled with De Souza's eerie sound programming, topped by Brownman's long languid phrases, the half-time spaciousness of the funk feel is deeply reminiscent of Miles Davis' exploratory electric-era forays into pure "spaceola". I also feel obligated to state clearly --> this is a deeply sexual tune, and may well serve as a catalyst for youthful encounters. I urge young men to keep this track handy when bringing over new dates.

07) King Ghidorah (4:55) by Brownman Ali, Ian De Souza, Chris Lesso

Solos: trumpet, drums

Originally called "Monster Funk" as the name place-holder in the studio, this track is a lumbering, fire-breathing, apocalypse with legs. How apt that the trio eventually settled on naming it "King Ghidorah" -- one of Godzilla's most feared enemies, and how equally apt that this creature, like Modus Factor itself, is a 3-headed beast. The heaviness of the Brecker Brothers style main theme evokes images of Tokyo burning as giant prehistoric creatures battle overhead in the midst of mayhem. Brownman unleashes a multitude of thunderous effects pedals to layer his fiery solo, Lesso reciprocates with drum displacement figures and intricate fills while De Souza holds the groove firmly in the head-bobbing arena. As the trio careens madly through the final melodic statements, Lesso unleashes a battery of drumset attacks before tune wraps up -- the monster having been vanquished. King Ghidorah defeated not by Godzilla, but by Modus Factor itself.

08) Jagaana (5:33) by Brownman Ali, Ian De Souza, Chris Lesso

Solos: trumpet, Konnakol w/ drumset, trumpet & bass

As drummer myself, I can't help but love this track. And, at the risk of tainting the opinions of readers, it is in fact my favorite track on the recording. Right away, Brownman's floating trumpet melody against Lesso's gracefully flaring hi-hats creates a hauntingly beautiful space, underscored by De Souza's programmed soundscapes. These tonalities immediately frame the tune as a modern day version of Miles Davis' seminal "In A Silent Way", though clearly borne of this generation. We're 1:45 into the track before Ian plays his first bass notes, further propelling the track forward. The tune

builds through multi-tracked trumpet layers and more high-neck bass loops from De Souza, peaking, then breaking down to the most delicately simple of sounds. Eventually we enter another Konnakol tour de force showcasing Lesso's comfort with these highly intricate vocalizations, surrounded by some of the most textural drumset playing from him we've heard yet. Drummers, take note: his hi-hats are shadowing everything his voice is saying. Throughout this section, the way the trumpet snatches small parts of the complex and sinuous Konnakol melody further illuminates Brownman's prowess not just as a trumpet player of uncommon skill, but also as a producer. The Konnakol builds slowly to a massive multi-horn release before the trio dances the tune delicately out the door with a series of highly textured improvised rhythmic statements. One last silky melody from the trumpet closes the tune off exquisitely.

09) Jeet Kune Flow (5:18) by Brownman Ali, Ian De Souza, Chris Lesso

Solos: trumpet, drums

Named after Bruce Lee's martial art discipline "Jeet Kune Do", this tune's main features are it's natural flow, unique sounds and varied peaks and valleys of energy. Starting with a bass ostinato, the trio slowly begins layering tonalities as the track builds. Brownman makes extensive use of his pedal rig creating an ever shifting palette of wildly varying colors and textures that his mentor Randy Brecker would be proud of. De Souza's multi-layered bass playing stacked on top of his own real-time loops underscore a veritable river of sound streams and melodies. After a spirited trumpet /drumset shared solo exchange, where Lesso's soloing brings to mind the freeness and freshness of Jack DeJohnette, the tune wraps up with a challenging and powerful 4 bar full-band figure to conclude the free-flowing stream of group creation.

10) Metanoia (2:57) by Brownman Ali, Ian De Souza, Chris Lesso

Solos: group improvisation

Exceptionally picturesque, the closing tune on the recording feels like a deep, cleansing breath being slowly exhaled. It is a simple track, was completely improvised in the studio (that's right - zero overdubs), having no effects usage whatsoever, and exposes the ensemble's open hearted frailties. The subtleties of Lesso's scintillating cymbal work, the intimate density of De Souza's anchoring bass lines, topped by the dark, rich warmth of Brownman's soaring horn leaves the listener feeling full of hope and promise as this short track closes quietly concluding the recording with a gentle, sweet whisper.

Over the years I've heard many artists try and do records like this, and they're almost always meandering, formless, substance-less disappointments. This is not that. This is the opposite of that. This record is a well-balanced mix of definitive, thoughtful

production and opened ended organic improvising. As soon as you put the recording on, it rings with that spirit. A band identity is clear and evident and is only heightened by the wide dynamic range of the music. Credit should be given to both mixing and mastering engineers for the 3-dimensionality of this recording's production.

Though most of the solos go to Brownman and Lesso, it should be mentioned -- likely from years of playing from Kevin Breit -- Ian De Souza's abilities to commit to whatever is happening in the moment is a driving force behind Modus Factor's sound. But even more than that, is the group's willingness to accept the moment. Nobody fights any ideas presented and anything presented is immediately accepted. The depth of listening between these 3 men is overwhelmingly prevalent in this music.

The Picasso Zone is always interesting, always engaging, in no small way due to Brownman's time in the producer chair. There's always something new leaping out of the speakers for you to marvel at. This is some of the realest, most mature music I've heard in the electric-jazz genre in recent years. Most importantly, it is a testament to the community-minded creative process that this band encompasses. There's not a lot of "I" thinking on this record -- it's all about "we" with Modus Factor. But make no mistake; the depths of the individual identities of these high-end musicians always ring through the collective, making this a truly inspired album of palatial creative music making. I encourage the listener to put the recording on, sit back, close your eyes, and join this ever searching trio on the journey that is The Picasso Zone.

-- Paul DeLong | Sept 2016, Toronto

Paul DeLong is one of Canada's most respected and influential drummers. Best known for his multi-platinum success with rock artist Kim Mitchell, Paul has forged a Juno winning career which encompasses funk, fusion, jazz and latin, working with such diverse artists as Tom Scott, Domenic Troiano, David Blamires, Gowan, Carlos Del Junco, Carol Welsman, Dave Restivo, Brownman Ali, Colm Wilkinson, Doug Riley, Hilario Duran, David Clayton-Thomas, Roger Hodgson, Rik Emmett, and The Canadian Tenors to name a few. Paul has been a faculty member at Humber College for the past 28 years, is a well published author of drumset instruction books and a highly sought after clinician with endorsements from Gretsch drums, Sabian cymbals, Remo drumheads, LP Percussion and Vater sticks.

About modus factor

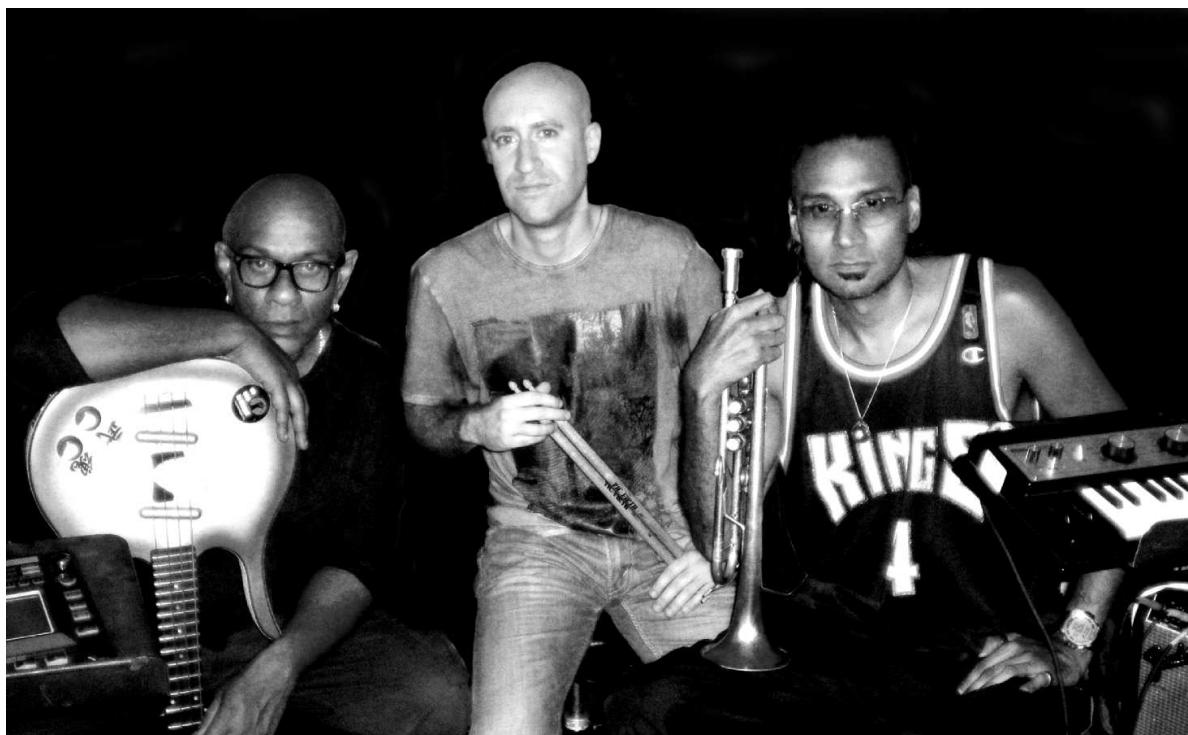
Three of Toronto's busiest studio musicians step back into the club circuit with MODUS FACTOR, all bringing their own considerable experience from from 3 different musical circles to the table to form a truly unique new electric jazz/groove/world music outfit. Influenced heavily by Frank Zappa drummers, Chris Lesso spent years touring the world with Tony "Wild T" Springer & The Spirit and is now a highly acclaimed figure in the country's rock and drumset community (endorsed by both Sonor Drums & Sabian cymbals he has toured the country as a drumset clinician); the Trinidadian born Brownman Ali is known as Canada's multi-award winning jazz trumpet icon heralded as "Canada's pre-eminent jazz trumpet player" by New York's Village Voice magazine; and

Ian De Souza is an extremely sought after bassist in Toronto's busy electronic & World music scenes and a founding member & bassist for Kevin Breit's Sisters Euclid. All 3 of these artists are heavy users of modern electronics to colour their sounds. Modus Factor, Lesso's brainchild, brings all 3 of these musicians and their one-of-a-kind sounds on stage together performing uniquely exploratory improvisations, setting the table for an engaging expedition into modern music that will resonate with sounds ranging from Miles Davis to Frank Zappa to Antonio Carlos Jobim.

www.ChrisLesso.com/modus-factor for more info.

modus factor is:

Chris Lesso - drums | Brownman Ali - electric trumpet | Ian De Souza - bass & effects



"Chris Lesso is one of the most positive drummers I've ever known, extremely committed & dedicated to his craft, always evolving."

-- Paul DeLong, Canadian drumset icon

"In dramatic improvisation there's always one rule - always say yes. Never deny what someone else has created. Say yes and create together. This trio embodies this ethos completely."

-- Brianne Carey, Browntasauras Records

"... on this record you'll hear high-level interaction, stemming from in-the-moment deep listening. No idea is ever turned away and we're always working hard to "say yes" to whatever's presented, by whomever. It's a risky way to make music... but the payoffs are extraordinary."

-- Brownman Ali, Producer of *The Picasso Zone*

CHRIS LESSO - drums

Chris began studying music on the piano at the age of 7, and received his grade 8 in classical piano through the Royal Conservatory at age 12. He began drumming when he was 9, and has never looked back. After gaining experience performing and writing music in various bands, he studied with many world-renowned artists such as Dom Famularo, Jim Chapin and Jim Blackley. Chris' unique blend of hard rock, jazz, and world flavored rhythms can be heard with his band Modus Factor (with Brownman and Ian DeSouza), and has also toured internationally with many acts including Cavalia Odysseo and Wild T And The Spirit. Chris is a proud educator teaching a full roster of students, performing motivational speaking and drum events, and is a guest faculty member at Metalworks Institute. Also a writer, he contributes regularly to Drums Etc and Canadian Musician Magazine. Chris is endorsed by Sonor Drums, Evans Heads, Sabian Cymbals and Vic Firth Sticks.

BROWNMAN ALI - trumpet / producer

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, BROWNMAN 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 MODUS FACTOR. 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.

IAN DE SOUZA - bass

Born in Kampala, Uganda Ian has recorded and performed live in almost every musical idiom imaginable. His deep understanding of the instrument is informed by the music of Africa with an equal dose of New York City. 20+ years of experience has made Ian one of the most sought after bassists in Canada. Most known as the bassist for the Sisters Euclid, his 15-year association with guitar icon Kevin Breit has made him one of the most responsive and interactive bassists on the scene today. In addition to his long affiliation with Kevin, Ian has worked with Jesse Cook, Melanie Doane, The Toronto Tabla Ensemble, Brownman Ali, African singers Jean-Christophe Matata and Ali Birra, Jamaican Jazz mainstays, steel-pan player Robbie Greenwich & guitarist Maurice Gordon, and rising Brazilian star Luanda Jones (often coupled with drum hero Marito Marques). He has also added his compositional and production skills to LAL, Rita di Ghent, and now Modus Factor.

THANK YOU!

Modus Factor modus factor would like to thank: each other -- Chris Lesso, Brownman Ali & Ian De Souza, without whom this project would never exist. Nancy Lesso, Brianne Carey, Joanna De Souza, Andrea Koziol, James Pew, Euphonic Sound, Josh Bowman, Allen Farmelo (& Nick Blagona, whom we all wish a speedy recovery!), Santosh Naidu & Mala Dub Caste, Andrew "Nickel" Nicholson, Julinda Morrow & R. Michael Swanson for their great images, dBs Duplication, Orange Grove Publicity. May Café, The Rex, Barrie Rhythmfest and all the other clubs and festivals who've supported Modus Factor's development and evolution. All Modus Factor bass alumni including Brad Cheeseman, Chris Gartner & Rich Brown. Maya Angelou, Jojo Mayer, Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins for their inspiration. Our amazing producer Brownman Ali and his fantastic team at Browntasauras Records. Chris would like to thank Ed and Wendy Lesso for giving him the foundation from which to build and inspire others daily. Finally, a huge thanks to YOU for having this record and reading what we have to say. I hope you dig it and that you'll stick around for the rest of our journey, wherever that takes us. Our deepest thanks.

Modus Factor -- Chris, Brown, & Ian

WORDS FROM THE BOYS

"This band means the world to me. To be able to have a musical conversation with two artists that sound unapologetically like themselves, like individuals, always pushes me to be the best version of myself I can be. This is rare in today's musical climate where technology can easily meet the need for perfection. To be pushed further than you thought possible, to surround yourself with those that plant this seed in you, is truly a gift. This band strives to stand on the shoulders of giants, to delve deeply in the rich history of the greats that have come before us, but also to move fearlessly forward into the unknown. This takes takes courage. Living the art of possibility everytime we play together is the spirit of this band. Thanks to my family, friends, teachers, mentors, and the 'dream team' of Sonor Drums, Sabian Cymbals, Vic Firth Sticks, and Evans Drumheads, my tools to create my sound."

-- Chris Lesso

"In an era where music (and everything else) is planned, angled, debated, vetted, supervised and branded, this band is not about those things. But it is about something that has lost its way (in music)...Danger. No idea is turned away, it is instead mined, prodded, tumbled and absorbed into the musical language of immediacy, improvisation. "

-- Ian De Souza

"Risk. Courage. Acceptance. These are 3 key elements to a group's abilities to successfully improvise tunes and form. To first risk the utterance of new language, then to have the courage to develop the birthed idea, and then finally to be able to accept what you - or your colleagues have created. In the pursuit of in-the-moment performance, we all continue to grow, evolve and accept.

-- Brownman Ali

The Picasso Zone was:

Recorded May, 2015 by James Pew at Euphonic Sound, Toronto

Mixed Dec, 2015 by James Pew & Brownman Ali at Euphonic Sound, Toronto

["Still I Rise" mixed by **Josh Bowman**]

Mastered Aug, 2016 by **Allen Farmelo** at **The Snow Farm, Brooklyn, NY**

Produced by **Brownman Ali**

Cover art & design by **Browntasauras Records**

Liner notes by **Paul Delong**, Toronto



Front of booklet



Back of booklet

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drums

BROWNMAN ALI
electric trumpet

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Tray Card

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NCC-1701H

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