NICK MACLEAN QUARTET
featuring BROWNMAN ALI
Convergence

[released Oct 27, 2023 on Browntasauras Records]

This album, the sophomore release from the Nick Maclean Quartet, represents a continued modern re-imagining of the spirit of Herbie Hancock's primordial 60's quartet, extending many of the ideas from their first award-winning recording "Rites of Ascension". Evolution abounds throughout this 2nd recording, with greater cross-pollinated experimentation between genres, more sophisticated & intricate writing from Maclean's pen, and further exploration of Herbie Hancock's classic cannon. As per their 1st album, the depth of the synergistic connectivity between these 4 hand-picked members of Maclean's quartet are again a cornerstone to the ensemble's sound and group dynamic. Maclean advances his examination of the modern jazz ethos here, with all the intriguing challenges, opportunities and possibilities that go with it.

Former Editor-in-chief of CODA magazine, and highly regarded jazz journalist Daryl Angier was asked to write this album's liner notes. He is a world-class writer with astonishing insight into Canadian jazz artistry, nurtured by his time with CODA. His depth of knowledge of Maclean, Brownman, modern jazz artistry, and Herbie Hancock's work, made him an apt choice for this recording's commentary. Below he thoughtfully dissects the album starting with a stirring comparative essay.

Converging at an Apex of Interplay

By Daryl Angier

In his slim volume The Anxiety Of Influence published in 1973, eminent literary critic and scholar Harold Bloom presents his argument that "poetic history…is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves." Bloom's argument can be difficult to follow, but at the core of it is the inescapable truth that artistic originality can only emerge once an artist has squarely confronted the "immense anxieties of indebtedness" and transcended flattering imitation to create something truly new and fresh. A potential yardstick for the artist's success in this endeavor may be found in the words of another poet, Seamus Heaney, to create something that is "at one moment unforeseeable and at the next indispensable."

This metric of success is usefully applied to the artform of jazz music where the unforeseeable—whether through improvisation or rhythmic and melodic innovation—is a fundamental tool for its creation.

Which brings us to Ottawa-born, Toronto-based pianist and composer Nick Maclean and this album from his modern jazz quartet, "Convergence". Maclean is open about the influence of pianist Herbie Hancock on his playing and composing—unsurprisingly, given that Hancock stands higher than most in the history of jazz, not unlike a J.S. Bach

or Beethoven figure in classical music. As a milestone on his own creative journey, Maclean returns here to confront Hancock and his influence once again, just as he did on the quartet's previous release, Rites of Ascension (Browntasaurus Records, 2017), re-interpreting some Hancock compositions and offering originals infused with Hancock's esthetics of sophisticated funk and playful emotional introspection. Convergence picks up on these themes and challenges expressed not only on Maclean's previous quartet release, but also on his double album "Can You Hear Me?" (Browntasaurus Records, 2021), a solo piano outing recorded at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when the previously-benign activity of assembling four musicians in the confined space of a recording studio for several hours suddenly became a public health risk.

It is not possible to discuss Maclean's creative journey without discussing the various roles and mentorship along the way of Brownman Ali, the quartet's trumpet player and the producer of all of Maclean's recordings on the Browntasauras label, including this one. Maclean and Ali first met through Chelsea McBride's Socialist Night School 22-piece big band when Maclean was in his early 20s and Brownman was beginning to round into an established statesman of the Toronto jazz scene. Through various projects, the two have since developed a close musical bond over a ten-year period in a relationship that makes perfect sense. After all, a key episode in Brownman's own origin story is the time he spent in New York City formulating his own sound under the tutelage of his idol, Randy Brecker. A principal outcome of this period was Brecker successfully helping Brown to overcome his own personal daemon of influence and indebtedness, the high-flying style of trumpeter Freddie Hubbard. What better companion for Maclean could there be, then, as the two of them explore material from recordings where Hancock and Hubbard themselves were so fruitfully paired together. Hancock's albums as a leader for the Blue Note label during the '60s such as Maiden Voyage and Empyrean Isles (as well as Hubbard's as a leader featuring Hancock such as Hub-Tones), are the central touchstones for the Maclean quartet, continuing to yield new interpretations and new forms of intellectual and emotional expression for grappling with the problems facing a post-millennial population.

Maclean's original writing on this album attempts to, through the voice of his quartet, illuminate and confront a multitude of existential topics including the bond created by shared road experiences, a tribute to poet Maya Angelou, metaphors for moral theory, commentary on social taboos, and what could easily be the soundtrack to a gripping medical drama. His growth as both a writer and improviser is on keen display throughout this recording as this, now 30-something pianist, continues to evolve beyond the language of the 20-something pianist that appeared on "Rites Of Ascension" (Browntasauras, 2017). But that ascension is most fully realized in the freedom and abandon with which Maclean's group tackles compositions Brownman is on record as calling "incredibly difficult music to make sound easy". The remarkable adroitness with which Maclean's Convergence quartet performs this music will leave the listener attuned to the depths of exploration this highly interactive foursome delivers.

There is a technique Brownman, as both producer and player has employed since I first heard him 30 years ago, evidenced throughout his own work as a leader, that comes

from improvised comedy, where the most successful improvised skits come from an artist's ability to take any action or speech another artist puts forth, embrace, and extend it. By embracing, accepting and extending output from another, comedic improv then has a natural flow, as no idea is then rejected by anyone on stage. "As a producer Brown takes an attitude that's similar to comedic improv," said Maclean in a TV interview. "This idea of always saying, 'Yes,' or always saying, 'Yes, and.". Maclean, Brown, Duff & Wutzke -- two of the most ferocious 20-somethings on bass and drums I've heard in a long time -- have fully adopted this ideologue, extending and extrapolating every idea the soloist of the moment presents. By combining this "Yes,and" approach and by successfully embracing the spontaneous genesis of new ideas -- despite the fact that each tune was written by a composer with a singular vision -- everyone in this remarkably synergistic ensemble injects themselves into every moment. The final result? --> Freshness abounds across this albums' offerings, from Herbie classics, to Maclean's intricate originals to the powerhouse Latin Brownman penned album closer.

The artistic goals and the creative techniques of "Convergence", converges at the apex of virtuosic interplay and group consciousness as the NICK MACLEAN QUARTET ushers listeners towards a modern jazz musical experience as rare as the planetary alignments depicted on this album's cover.

Let's take a closer look at this recording:

CONVERGENCE

1) Dolphin Dance (6:29) by Herbie Hancock

Solo order: trumpet, piano, bass

This album begins with a fitting homage to this ensemble's roots – the classic Herbie Hancock composition "Dolphin Dance", a Maclean favourite, which originally appeared on Herbie's '65 release "Maiden Voyage". A performance of lyricism and introspection, the group starts this album's journey exhibiting a gentler side of their artistry - flowing and prismatic - in a tribute that demonstrates these musicians' adoration for Hancock. Brownman's evocative solo showcases a rich, dark tone that moves from Miles Davis minimalism to Freddie Hubbard aggression, while Maclean's more Evans-esque approach is subtle and melodic. Special guest Jesse Dietschi, the group's original bassist who appeared on their 2017 release "Rites of Ascension", delivers a solo that feels right at home in its inventiveness. After returning to a gentle melody the group finishes in an exciting climactic Latin jam that winds down little by little to finish on Brown's airstream into the mic. With Dietschi departing the band on this track, in many ways this 1st tune is reminiscent of Miles' "Seven Steps To Heaven" recording where the 50's musicians in Miles' camp made way for the new, younger 60's musicians, ushering in a new era of Miles' sound.

2) Road Warrior (6:31) by Nick Maclean

Solo order: trumpet, piano

This tune's title manifests itself from the joys and trials of touring and is the antithesis of the previous tune, with the group wasting no time before launching into a burning tour-de-force. Off the top, Brown and Maclean swap fiery statements before launching into a melody that has tinges of Freddie Hubbard's "Bolivia" with some imaginative rhythmic twists. Hubbard's ferocious spirit continues to be heard in the acrobatic and angular lines that Brownman deftly weaves through his solo followed by an athletically muscular piano performance by Maclean. Driving this fast-paced venture is bassist Ben Duff and drummer Jacob Wutzke who together form an unstoppable freight train, spurring the ensemble forward with an urgency that captures the inspiration behind this composition – the hectic and perilous pace of touring, and the excitement and adventure of the journey.

3) Brotherhood (6:14) by Nick Maclean

Solo order: piano, trumpet, bass

For jazz musicians, playing improvised, highly interactive music with other humans has a way of building connections and relationships that form powerful bonds of friendship and camaraderie. Maclean wrote this tune in the early days of the pandemic after the cancellation of multiple tours and live performances left him feeling both shut off, and cut off as he discovered it wasn't just the music that was missed -- but the bonding experiences between the players as well. This tune attempts to encapsulate those feelings with its medium-swinging lilt, not unlike Herbie's own "Driftin". Ben Duff in particular shines on this tune, the wood of his deep bass tone resonating throughout his solo. Beyond the breeziness of the melody, and the pirouetting solos of both Brown and Maclean, this bond between players is evidenced at the 2:02 mark as the listener can hear Brown yelling "whoa!" in response to Maclean's line of the moment. Brotherhood indeed.

4) Why The Caged Bird Sings (5:12) by Nick Maclean

Solo order: piano, trumpet, bass, drum trading

Originally appearing on Maclean's double-CD solo piano recording "Can You Hear Me?" (Browntasauras, 2021), this tune has clear gospel influences. When Brown, in the producer's chair of the solo piano record in 2020, first heard it - he loved it, and asked if it could be later adapted for the quartet, and 3 years later we now see the results of that adaptation. But in 2020 the tune was still unnamed, so Brown asked if Maclean had ever investigated the work of Maya Angelou, whom the song continued to bring to mind for him. After spending some time with her poetry and performances Maclean agreed that her fullness of life and striking optimism were cornerstones of both Angelou and this tune. Brown and Maclean both felt her spirit and manner were so well

captured that they named it "Why The Caged Bird Sings", after one of her iconic books and poems. The addition of hip-hop influences to the bridge, coupled with some very specific Jacob Wutzke driven J-Dilla phrasing was something the group had been experimenting with under Brown's knowledgeable tutelage (as the former Guru's Jazzmatazz trumpet player, his knowledge of hip-hop is encyclopedic and a resource Maclean has been tapping for some time now). This is the first time Brown's electronic effects pedals ever make an appearance in this quartet, which provides a foil to Maclean's acoustic grand piano sound. The group delivers short but engaging solos, with Wutzke putting his Brian Blade influences on display during drum trading, before this Maclean Quartet church tune comes to its reverent close.

5) Eye Of The Hurricane (4:37) by Herbie Hancock

Solo order: trumpet, piano, bass, trumpet, drums

Hancock's impact again reigns supreme as the group dives into the whirling, chaotic depths of one of this jazz legend's more angular compositions. Taking off at break-neck speed, Maclean and Brownman are joined by two special guests – the multi-Juno winning bassist Mike Downes, and young rising star Mateo Mancuso on drums. Long an admirer of Downes' work, Maclean was overjoyed when Downes agreed to sub into the group's 2017 album release show whereupon the whole band watched in amazement as Downes deftly navigated challenging compositions requiring them a year to master. His contributions on this track, ingenious and masterful, bely the depth of his artistry and Maclean considers his inclusion a deep honor. With Jacob Wutzke now a mainstay of the Montreal jazz scene, Mateo Mancuso became the ensemble's primary drum sub during the summer of 2021, immediately gelling and injecting compelling colours of his own playing personality. Maclean knew that he wanted to feature Mancuso somewhere on the group's upcoming album, and paired with the venerable Downes, the two form a driving backbone that propels Brownman and Maclean to new heights. Maclean, Downes, and Brownman all contribute powerful improvisations rife with interplay before Mancuso takes the reins, embodying the hurricane with sublime cymbal work, gusting the group into a restatement of the melody before the final climactic thunder.

6) True North (5:24) by Nick Maclean

Solo order: trumpet, piano, bass

This tune's formation was informed by a geographical metaphor for moral theory. As heavy as that may sound, a deeper look reveals how this seemingly abstract idea is concretely captured in both composition and performance. Maclean states, "True North is a fixed point on the Earth, whereas Magnetic North shifts with the magnetic poles of the planet - mostly by small amounts except in rare times of Geomagnetic Reversal when the poles swap places". History is rife with tragedy resulting from ethics

that drift and shift in the pursuit of some higher objective. Maclean proffers an ethical bedrock formed on foundational principles as the antidote, which for him is True North. Brownman uses an ultra-dark tone to paint subtle colours, while the Quartet shifts between drifting ebb-and-flow and sections that swing with a Blakey-esque surety of purpose, deftly representing the piece's ideological underpinnings.

7) Butterfly (7:48) by Herbie Hancock

Solo order: trumpet, piano

Starting spiritually in a similar place as the original "Butterfly" from the Headhunters' seminal 1974 album "Thrust", the group proceeds with their slightly more energized take awash in colour and space, simmering through an effervescent funk. Beginning his solo with haunting lines echoed by delicious delays, Brownman soars above the roiling rhythm section punctuating stirringly forlorn statements with energetic outbursts that rise in vibrancy. Upon reaching the peak of his rousing crescendo, magnified by a flurry of drums, Brownman's trumpet settles into a melodious proclamation of a quiet sorrow before passing the torch to piano. Maclean begins with a high, delicate statement of equal parts melancholy and foreboding that gives way to something more urgent as the group gradually builds towards a second climax. The trio percolates and intensifies until the pressure can be borne no longer. Melancholy gives way to joy - exploding into a spirited salsa rhythm. Joined by Brownman on the cowbell and punctuated by lively montunos from Maclean, the group revels in the excitement of the moment before easing back to the funkified calm of Herbie's original melody.

8) Verboten (6:43) by Nick Maclean

Solo order: trumpet, piano, drums

With hints of Freddie Hubbard's "Red Clay", Verboten takes ideological inspiration from the overly sensitive and censorious culture of the modern west which routinely attempts to shield the public from things that are otherwise funny/truthful/productive for fear of risking offense or transgressing a hard-to-define social taboo. The offered cure? To inoculate people with regular doses of brash 'wrongness' in order to rebuild the tolerance of a population grown brittle. Duff opens the track in exactly that spirit with a bass solo that begins deceptively gently before probing, questioning, and cussing defiantly, advancing into a driving groove. The group plays with an intensity and an irreverent attitude with solos that are muscular and unapologetic. Maclean starts with a slow-burning intensity giving way to virtuosic Corea-esque lines, before Brownman funkily snakes through the chord changes with Brecker-like aplomb, with Wutzke opening up at the end for some bombastic drum blowing.

9) Lie Of Easy Attainment (7:51) by Nick Maclean

Solo order: electric trumpet, piano

Maclean has often spoken of the exception he takes with the facade of the ease and success social media users often feel compelled to push forward; this rose-tinted digital perfection often immaterial to the realities of the work, sweat, and day to day drudgery that's often on the other side of that veneer. Maclean's "Lie Of Easy Attainment" deals with this reality -- from hard effort to payoff, and then the growing restlessness of needing to move into whatever the next phase is, and start the process all over again. This tune's frequent texture shifting and tempo modulations borrows from the stylistic influences of Miles Davis' 2nd great Quintet's "Live at the Plugged Nickel" recordings. Brown's solo here is a swirling, chaotic dance; his adept and colourful playing punctuated by trumpet effects again making his time with Brecker apparent here. This solo is enhanced by some truly wild production choices for drums and bass. Maclean's solo is rife with fresh ideas throughout the long story-telling arc it takes -- beginning with a counterpoint against the bass, which settles into a waltz, before ramping up to chaotic madness, and finally completely deconstructing back down to hip-hop introspection. This creates one of Maclean's strongest solo narratives on this recording, supported at every step by the deep interaction of Wutzke and Duff.

10) Fragility Of Being (8:41) by Nick Maclean

Solo order: bass, piano, trumpet

This tune apparently began as something else entirely, but when Brown commented that it sounded more like the soundtrack of a medical drama, it re-focused Maclean's intention. This final recorded version now tells an instrumental story of someone being given the news that they have a debilitating illness, and follows them through the rigors of treatment, encouraging medical interventions, and sobering contemplations on the finality of death. This is a story that has played out countlessly during the Covid-19 pandemic and is a commentary on these times. Maclean's own stomach-clenching existential fear of death is best expressed in the post-solo section at 5:43, however, amidst Brown's exceptionally warm tone; Ben's deep bass tonalities; and Wutzke's swirling cymbal work - the tune ends in a major key center depicting a joyful, though cautiously optimistic recovery to this fictional patient's story.

11) Wisdom Of Aurelius (8:06) by Brownman Ali

Solo order: trumpet, piano, congas, drums

Brownman reads an enormous amount, consuming on average 3 books a week and believes firmly in the transformative power of literature. A byproduct of a 2016 obsession with Roman Emperors was "Madness Of Nero", a tune Brown wrote specially for this quartet's debut recording "Rites Of Ascension", which would win several awards and be a finalist in the American Song Writing Competition. That tune depicted Nero's

descent into madness, so for this record Brown has written a follow-up with a second installment to what we hope will be a series of tunes about Roman Emperors, this time with Nero's antithesis -- the wise Marcus Aurelius, one of the greatest emperors and philosophers Rome has ever known. This composition incorporates the joyful flavours of Salsa and Cuban-jazz, but takes its time getting there, first starting in a camouflaged waltz (but isn't), before gradually working its way to an exuberant and intricate Latin-jazz space as an apt representation of the brilliance of Aurelius. This tune, like "Madness of Nero" is a true odyssey and will take the listener on a rich journey as melodies and counter-point themes are developed in fresh and interesting ways through the course of its epic 8-min run-time. Maclean's months of work preparing this tune have paid off, as he delivers piano montunos with a reverence for its origins. Wutzke's own Latin fire on drums is akin to Dafnis Prieto's, with Duff being the foundational rock this music requires. Brownman soars over it all, his experience as a Latin-jazz artist blazing a fiery path through this tune. Featured on this track is Luisito Orbegoso -- the conga player from CRUZAO and widely regarded as one of Canada's greatest living Latin percussionists. His presence on congas and a variety of Latin percussion elevates the track to true Latin-jazz standards, and ends this album in so raucous a manner it will be hard to sit still to.

Success, when embarking on a truly collaborative approach to modern jazz, requires supreme acts of trust: from the bandleader, who trusts that his overarching vision is understood; and from his collaborators who trust there is room in that vision for their own voices. In their combination they birth something greater than could exist in isolation. By embracing the Quartet's collective conception to the emotionally unexpected while confronting his influences, this album demonstrates the considerable success Maclean is having in, as Bloom cites, “clearing out his own imaginative space”. Through his playing and collaboration with Brownman Ali, as well as his rhythm section Ben Duff, and Jacob Wutzke, Nick Maclean continues to build a body of work that extends the lineage of great Canadian jazz pianists, while profoundly exploring the imaginative space where “Convergence” lives.

-- **Daryl Angier** | March 2023, Toronto

Daryl Angier is a noted jazz journalist based in Toronto. He is the former editor-in-chief of CODA, Canada's premiere jazz magazine from 1958 to 2010, and the author of “The Brow-Raising Jazz of Brownman,” CODA, issue 335, Sept 2007. Daryl has written several liner notes for Browntasauras Records over the years, his extraordinary prose and deep encyclopedic knowledge of the jazz artform being in high demand with label artists.

About NICK MACLEAN QUARTET

This contemplative and often thrilling quartet's explorations of modern, original repertoire is led by a fast-rising star in Toronto's jazz piano community, 8x Global Music Award winner NICK MACLEAN. Formed in 2016, Maclean's foursome delivers jazz between the two poles of thoughtful introspection and powerhouse conveyance, taking influences from Herbie Hancock's primordial 1960's Blue Note era recordings, while paying tribute to some of the greatest improvisers in jazz history.

Repeatedly regarded as a modern take on the ferocious and hard-swinging post-bop era, the group is frequently lauded for the strength of their collective improvisatory vision and features one of Canada's most provocative improvising trumpet-playing iconoclasts BROWNMAN ALI, standing shoulder to shoulder with Maclean & two of Toronto's top-tier rhythm section 20-somethings: BEN DUFF on bass and JACOB WUTZKE on drums. The synergy of the 4 is always palpable in concert.

www.NicholasMaclean.com/nickmacleanquartet for more info on this group.
www.NicholasMaclean.com for more info on Nick Maclean.
www.Brownman.com for more info on Brownman Ali,

NICK MACLEAN QUARTET is:

Nick Maclean - keys, Brownman Ali - trumpet, Ben Duff - bass, Jacob Wutzke - drums

Nick Maclean – bandleader / pianist / composer

Born in Ottawa and now based in Toronto NICK MACLEAN is the winner of 8 Global Music Awards and has quickly become one of the most in demand piano players in Toronto's bustling jazz scene. Maclean received his Bachelors of Music from Humber College studying with David Restivo, 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 & David Braid. Braid in particular had an enormous influence on how Maclean approaches playing and composing. Maclean has also been mentored by acclaimed trumpet player Brownman Ali since he was 22, who signed him to Browntasauras Records shortly after meeting. From Miles & Hancock to Weather Report & Snarky Puppy, Maclean's musical influences are diverse. Maclean also leads the award-winning, groove-based, electric-jazz project SNAGGLE, who's release THE LONG SLOG was awarded 3 Gold-Standard Global Music Awards and has received international critical acclaim. The future is bright for this young visionary as he continues his upward ascent in jazz artforms of all shapes & sizes.

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 2x National Jazz Award winner, and protégé to his teacher, Grammy-winning trumpet legend Randy Brecker, he tirelessly leads 8 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 is now a home to all his ensembles as well as the NICK MACLEAN QUARTET. 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.

Ben Duff – acoustic bass

Born in Hamilton, and a winner of Humber College's prestigious Eddy Sossin Jazz award, Ben Duff is one of the most in-demand young bassists in the Toronto jazz scene. Known for his virtuosity and stylistic flexibility, he's the anchor of countless rhythm sections as well as being a brilliant and inventive improviser.

Jacob Wutzke - drums

A graduate of Humber College & McGill University, and now a mainstay in the Montreal & Toronto scenes, Jacob Wutzke's drumming is often lauded for his exceptional technique, his creative brilliance, and his fearless improvisatory intuition. A highly in demand sideman, he's performed with luminaries like Juno winners Caity Gyorgy, Allison Au, and Pat Labarbera.

Words from Nick Maclean on Convergence

"Don't ever become a pessimist, Ira; a pessimist is correct oftener than an optimist, but an optimist has more fun - and neither can stop the march of events."
- Lazarus Long (“Time Enough For Love”, 1973)

I love this quote from Robert Heinlein, and coupled with another bit of Lazarus Long wisdom "Pessimist by policy, optimist by temperament..." I think the sentiment aptly sums up the creation of this record.

“Convergence” was first started in 2020, after Brown and I returned from our Canadian National tour with Ben Duff and Jacob Wutzke. Ben and Jacob are a special breed of player. Brown and I developed a real chemistry with them on the road, and we desperately wanted to record this incarnation of the group. Tunes were written, players assembled, a tour was booked to get us ready for the studio... and everything was very quickly cancelled by the subsequent "march of events" : the Covid pandemic.

At the end of 2021, amid more lockdowns and a new unknown Omicron variant, Brown and I decided "screw it, let's take a gamble on 2022". So for the second time, we assembled our band, we booked our tour, we booked our studio time... and we hoped beyond hope that circumstances would allow us to prepare and record this album. And then, a series of amazing things happened.

We got a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts... and then another one from the Toronto Arts Council... and then finally the Ontario Arts Council came back with a THIRD grant. Suddenly not only had I the budget to pay my musicians what they deserved, we could record in Canada's top recording studio AND hire a crack team of videographers to get stunning footage of the sessions - all for a project that Brown and I strongly felt had the right mix of tunes and musicians for something magical to potentially happen. This was both incredible and terrifying. We had such an opportunity, but so much depended on no lockdowns, no cancellations, and no-one catching Covid.

When you listen to the record, hopefully you'll agree with me that this story has a very happy ending. This record's name 'Convergence' owes to the extremely fortuitous circumstances that allowed its completion, but there were many near misses that could have spelled doom along the way - all in a global environment that was anything but fortuitous. What I've learned from this, and another lesson I plan to teach my quickly-growing daughter, is that Convergence depends on your autonomous choices just as much as it does on blind luck. Without being an "optimist by temperment", you'll avoid the risks necessary to chase your goals. Without being a "pessimist by policy", the contingencies and planning vital for mitigating those risks will be inadequate to see those goals through. On very rare occasions, those who strive to embody these principles will be able to turn random

good fortune into Convergence. Because they were very lucky, yes. But also because they were ready.

This particular instance of Convergence hopefully hasn't finished with the record. We were very lucky to receive support from the Canada Council of the Arts to do a cross-Canada tour in the spring of 2023, and spanning 2 months and 40+ bookings, it is the largest one we've ever attempted. As of this writing there continue to be enormous challenges to be surmounted before we leave and whether our luck will hold remains to be seen; but by golly are we ready...

... and I cannot be more excited or grateful.

THANK YOU!

Nick Maclean wants to thank his producer, and star trumpet player Brownman Ali. You sound incredible on this record. Your inventiveness, the strength of your artistic statements, and your boundless energy is inspiring and world-class. I think there are going to be a lot of jaws on the floor, especially among those who find out that this brilliant playing came during a dreadful battle with bronchitis and pneumonia all they way through recording. I'm so lucky for your continued guidance and wisdom which can be felt all over this record. Ours has been an enormously transformative journey for me, I would scarcely recognize myself when we first met 8 years ago and I am excited for things to come. Thank you my very dear friend. Ben Duff and Jacob Wutzke, you are a ferocious rhythm section delivering some of the most interactive and fearless bass playing and drumming I've ever had the pleasure of playing with. The amount of care and respect with which you approached my music humbles me and fills me with pride and admiration. I absolutely ADORE you both - on the stage and on the road - and I look forward to many more years of music-making together, whatever that looks like and wherever it takes us. Jesse Dietschi, the Quartet's founding bassist, as the demand for you in the classical world grows more and more I'm so glad you were able to guest on this record. You sound absolutely phenomenal and thank you for all you've done for the group over the years! Mike Downes, I have enormous admiration for your deep skill and profound artistry. It was such an honour to have you, one of Canada's great jazz bassists, guest on this record. You sound astounding, my deepest thanks. Mateo Mancuso, you are easily one of the best young drummers on the Canadian scene today. You absolutely embody the Hurricane on your track and I greatly look forward to working with you more often! Luisito Orbegoso both for his generosity and his unparalleled percussive genius on 'Wisdom of Aurelius' which elevated the track to new heights. Kim Cooke (booker), Stephen Koszler (lead engineer), and Luke Schindler (assistant engineer) at Revolution Recording - you gentlemen run a world-class operation and it was an absolute pleasure to record with you. Thomas Varey (director of photography), Brittany Farhat (camera crew), and Matthew Fong (camera crew) for their incredible video work during the sessions. The footage is absolutely sublime, the quartet has never looked so good! Wayne Ferguson for his piano tuning expertise and for saving the day when torrential-rain-induced humidity broke the piano. Josh Bowman who's exceptional engineering ability created beautifully rich and detailed mixes. Justin

Gray for his generosity and mastering brilliance. Dean Shu who's creative visual prowess made epic album art worthy of Asimov. Daryl Angier for his insightfulness and poetic brilliance in the writing of the liner notes. Herbie Hancock for being such an inspiration. Mum and Dad who never cease to be an overwhelmingly supportive force in my life - I love you both dearly. To my brother, Adrian and his partner Allena. It's so nice to have you in Toronto these days! To my wife Erin who is my deepest friend and my closest partner in all things - I'm so lucky to be sharing my life with you, I love you so much. To Ollie, my darling daughter, you fill my life with joy at your endless curiosity and enthusiasm. In one year of life you've already grown so much and have been sending us down an indescribably wonderful adventure. Andrew 'Nickel' Nicholson for his sage advice and hard work on behalf of us and other Browntasauras artists. Brianne Carey for being such a firm friend and supporter. Drom Taberna, Royal City Studios, RCHA Club and all the other clubs, venues, and festivals across Canada and Europe who've supported this band's growth and development. To the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Council for providing generous funding support to allow this album's creation. 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.

- Nick Maclean

CREDITS

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Nick Maclean – piano : all tracks: 1-11
Brownman Ali – trumpet : all tracks: 1-11; cowbell, track 7, 11
Ben Duff – bass, tracks 2, 3, 4, 6-11
Jacob Wutzke – drums, tracks 1-4, 6-11

Special guest: Jesse Dietchi – bass, track 1
Special guest: Mike Downes – bass, track 5
Special guest: Mateo Mancuso – drums, track 5
Special guest: Luis Orbegoso – congas, bells & misc perc, track 11

NICK MACLEAN QUARTET
featuring BROWNMAN ALI
CONVERGENCE

NICK MACLEAN QUARTET
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CONVERGENCE
NICK MACLEAN QUARTET
1) DOLPHIN DANCE (Herbie Hancock) feat. Jesse Dietschi 6:29
2) ROAD WARRIOR (Nick Maclean) 6:31
3) BROTHERHOOD (Nick Maclean) 6:14
4) WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS (Nick Maclean) 5:12
5) EYE OF THE HURRICANE (Herbie Hancock) feat. Mike Downes & Mateo Mancuso 4:37
6) TRUE NORTH (Nick Maclean) 5:24
7) BUTTERFLY (Herbie Hancock) 7:48
8) VERBOTEN (Nick Maclean) 6:43
9) LIE OF EASY ATTAINMENT (Nick Maclean) 7:51
10) FRAGILITY OF BEING (Nick Maclean) 8:41
11) WISDOM OF AURELIUS (Brownman Ali) feat. Luisito Orbegoso 8:06
NICK MACLEAN piano
BROWNMAN ALI trumpet
BEN DUFF bass
JACOB WUTZKE drums
Recorded June, 2022 by Stephen Koszler & Luke Schindler at Revolution Recording, Toronto
Mixed Oct, 2022 by Josh Bowman at Bowman Sound, Toronto
Mastered Dec, 2022 by Justin Gray at Immersive Mastering, Toronto
Produced by Brownman Ali, Brooklyn, NY
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Liner notes by Daryl Angier, Toronto
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Produced by BROWNMAN
TOTAL RUN TIME: 73m:36s
Nick Maclean - piano
Brownman Ali - trumpet
Ben Duff - bass
Jacob Wutzke - drums
Catalog# NCC-1701N
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Osborne Bay
PUB

QUOTES / REVIEWS **(after “Rites Of Ascension” release)**

"Maclean's foursome delivers jazz between the two poles of thoughtful introspection and powerhouse conveyance, taking influences from Herbie Hancock's primordial 1960's Blue Note era recordings featuring Freddie Hubbard, while simultaneously paying apt tribute to some of the greatest improvisers in jazz history."
- Memphis Marty, The Jazz Music Blog (Australia)

"From Canada comes this updated soul jazz in the vein of the Blue Note acid jazz compilations. Fresh and youthfully joyful reworkings of three Herbie Hancock standards lead the disc off before we settle into several of pianist Maclean's own compositions. Key to the sound is the gloriously expressive trumpeter Brownman Ali, who contributes one of his own tunes here, the funky "Madness of Nero", as well as producing."
- Hobart Taylor, KUCI 88.9FM (California, USA)

"...Nick MacLean may have set out to make this a homage to Mr. Hancock, he has, in fact also paid his proverbial, obligatory dues to the venerable pianist, he is ready – and has – moved on very quickly into a musical territory that has rightfully claimed as his own. “Goldberg Machine and “Elasticity of Time and Space” are two of the highest “highs” on this record. Each melody is so lyrical that often during the choruses one feels as if there is a spectral voice somewhere, “singing out the melody”. This is Mr. Maclean’s music, evocative of the poetry of feeling. It is also a great fortune to have fellow rhythmists in bassist Jesse Dietschi and drummer Tyler Goertzen along for the ride. And what a thrill it appears to be to have Brownman Ali to be the other lead voice on this recording. The trumpeter’s burnished notes – even those articulated using a wah-wah pedal effect – make for gleaming phrases and his solo on his original, “Madness of Nero” is utterly memorable...this music does more than just swing delightfully, but also seeks to reflect on more profound aspects of human existence. This together with the fact that you will be hard-pressed to find another production this good makes Rites of Ascension quite as unforgettable."
- Raul da Gama, Toronto Music Report (Toronto, Canada)

"Rites of Ascension [...] is a tribute to Herbie Hancock’s elemental 1960s Blue Note era recordings, and a daring original musical statement on its own. ... These four musicians [...] have a great synergy and drive, and some serious chops. Their renditions of Hancock’s four classics are full of energy and forward momentum while managing to retain the unhurried character of the earlier compositions. Maclean’s creative mind and aesthetics are obvious in every aspect of this album, his piano solos both lyrical and invigorating, supported by a stellar rhythm section. The album features fiercely strong trumpet solos from Brownman Ali, indicative of Freddie Hubbard’s style at times and distinctively unique."
- Ivana Popovic, The WholeNote (Toronto, Canada)

"Rites Of Ascension ... here’s a hot CD by a Canadian-based jazz group playing four pieces by Herbie Hancock mixed in with a plethora of original tunes by the leader [Nick Maclean] and trumpeter Brownman Ali, clearly one of the more arresting and individual players I’ve heard in a long time... this band is like a tonic; they wake you up and put some pep in your step! An outstanding album, one that should put the Maclean Quartet firmly on the musical map. No two ways about it, the Nick Maclean Quartet has staked out its claim in the jazz world and intends to stick around."
- Lynn Rene Bayley, The Art Music Lounge (Cincinnati, USA)

About BROWNTASAURAS RECORDS

Initially formed in 2009 as a singular home to trumpet player Brownman Ali's 7 various ensembles, the flagship release for the label was Brownman Electryc Trio's "Juggernaut", with several recordings that previously appeared on other labels being re-issued. In 2015 Brownman opened the doors to other ensembles which showcased his trumpet playing, but for whom he was not a leader. All of the ensembles on the label -- CRUZAO & BROWNMAN ELECTRYC TRIO in particular -- have been the recipients of many awards & accolades, all receiving critical acclaim.

The label is unique in that all artists receive 100% of all profits, with the label receiving exactly 0%. It is a true not-for-profit with Brownman's vision for the label to be "a catalyst for the creation of new jazz art", and not a typical capital venture as has been the goal of most traditional record labels.

The label is now widely regarded as a vanguard for new and visionary talent in the evolution of Jazz in Canada, with signed ensembles including all 8 of Brownman's own groups, Nick Maclean's Quartet, his Solo Piano recording & SNAGGLE; Chris Lesso's MODUS FACTOR; and Chelsea McBride's SOCIALIST NIGHT SCHOOL. Browntasauras Records is honored to represent such world-class talent.

www.Browntasaursas.com (Official website - for more on the label)
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