

Nick Malcom Quartet



G l i m m e r s

Nick Malcom Trumpet
Olie Brice Bass

Alexander Hawkings piano
Mark Whitham drums

TRACK LIST

1. Glimmers
2. Multivarious
3. Call off Christmas
4. Tie Your Laces
5. Lehman Brothers Pak Coi
6. Mr Carr
7. Green Eyes
8. The Three little words
(Om Tat Sat)



FMR CD 335-0412



Finding playfulness in new and unexpected directions - The Nick Malcolm Quartet

To coincide with the release of their first album "Glimmers", the Nick Malcolm Quartet kicks off a six date tour at Oxford Jazz Festival.

We asked Nick to introduce the quartet and talk about his approach to improvised music.

Hi Nick – can you tell us about the quartet?

Although the band is only about a year and 4 months old, I've been playing with them all for quite a few years now. They're close friends and we've done a fair bit of learning and developing together and they're just an amazing bunch of musicians. I think what's so special about them is that they're very distinctive musical personalities rather than just being great musicians. That's something that is really important to me – I really want the way those personalities interact with each other through improvising to come out in the music.

What influences your music?

Musically, it would have to be Miles Davis – the way that he plays with space and rhythm – and Evan Parker has been a huge influence on me. Also, a lot of classical music – I'm really into Benjamin Britten. I also play quite a lot of what is, I guess, dance music – maybe afro beat or funk or soul.

A lot of my influences aren't musical – I'm very interested in Zen Buddhism and there's a lot of stuff in Zen about playfulness and non-attachment and surrendering, which I find a really interesting link to improvisation. I think that when you sit down to write a piece of music a really interesting thing to do is to sit and let it come – to let whatever is influencing you at the moment write the piece.

I think that translates into a really important lesson about improvisation, which is that when you're sitting with a feeling that you're not sure about what you're going to play next, that's where the inspiration comes from. When there's a pause and you're not sure where the music is going to go next, you can panic and fill it with learned stuff and the conscious mind takes over. But I think to be able to just accept not knowing where the music is going to go will take it where it needs to go, often in new and unexpected directions. I think that's the way you can allow musical and non-musical influences to play together and interact with each other and then something magical appears.

Does the quartet play completely free improvisation or is there some compositional element?

Every tune has at least some written material. The way that I see it is that the compositions are a way to frame the improvisation with a particular mood or feeling - you've got all this momentum and inspiration and you're just trying to lightly harness it. I think getting the balance between improvisation and composition is a lovely challenge.

I'm very interested in combining unusual influences together and getting an unusual juxtaposition of music and I think composition is a useful tool for doing that.

How did you first hear jazz?

My parents are both very musical - my mum's a very fine classical singer. My first jazz came from my paternal grandfather who was a very fine British trad jazz pianist - he used to play in a band called Harry Gold and his Pieces of Eight. He used to come down and visit us during the summer and would play me his old records. He had these old tapes I think he made for my grandma – it was all the big bands from the 30s and Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra ... so I grew up listening to all the standards. He also introduced me to trumpet players like Harry James and Louis Armstrong.

Can you tell us about the forthcoming album?

The music that we'll be playing at the festival will be what's on the album, together with some new pieces I've written. I think there are a really broad range of musical approaches – from some fairly abstract improvisation right through to more traditional jazz swing grooves through to quite heavy almost rock, funk or soul grooves and some really fierce passages of improvisation and then some really lyrical pieces. There's quite a lot of variety and hopefully there's something for everybody.

Which other artist at the festival would you like to hear and why?

I feel very lucky to be a part of Emily Wright's Moonlight Saving Time. Emily is an amazing vocalist - the really special thing about Emily is that she treats her voice as another instrument in the band. Because of her approach she has the ability to get the rest of the band to listen at the same level that she does – she's really special in that way. She's just an amazing improviser.

There are six of us in the band and we all feel there's room for us to play ourselves - I don't feel I have to leave my free jazz at the door. As a bandleader Emily has a really special ability to encompass all these different approaches. She's one to look out for - catch her while you can!