

# THE AUSTRALIAN

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## Four jazz musicians create a stunned silence



*L-R, Hamish Stuart, Mike Nock, Jonathan Zwartz, Julien Wilson...PHOTO  
CREDIT ANTHONY BROWELL*

### **MUSIC**

Nock Stuart Wilson Zwartz

John Painter Hall, Australian Institute of Music, Sydney

February 8

Published in The Australian, February 12, 2020

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### **ERIC MYERS**

This performance by four fine jazz musicians had so much going for it, that a large audience, and this reviewer, were left speechless. The venue had excellent acoustics, the sound balance courtesy of the celebrated Ross A'hern was

faultless, and the musicians played beautifully. Nothing went wrong, so what is there to say?

Pianist Mike Nock, drummer Hamish Stuart, saxophonist Julien Wilson and bassist Jonathan Zwartz launched their warmly received album *This World*, which includes compositions from all players. Also, this was part of a 14-gig Australian tour, the length of which apparently these days is remarkable, given current difficulties in finding an audience for jazz.

Several aspects of the performance were striking. First, the extraordinary energy of Nock. Whether hunched over the keyboard with his head and shoulders at right angles to his body, or standing up on his feet to attack the piano, the 79-year-old projected a passion that dominated much of the music.



*Mike Nock: he projected a passion that dominated much of the music... PHOTO CREDIT ANTHONY BROWELL*

Second, the more unlikely phenomenon of Zwartz's slow-moving and relatively simple compositions, which suggest spiritual depth. They were also able to dominate the concert, in an entirely different way. Their titles were suggestive: *Home, And In The Night Comes Rain*, and *This World*. Rarities in the current jazz repertoire, and deeply affecting, these works ask the listener to slow down and reflect. I think of them as hymns to life.



*Bassist Jonathan Zwartz: his hymns to life also dominated the music... PHOTO CREDIT ANTHONY BROWELL*



*Drummer Hamish Stuart: his composition Any Heart enabled the group to experiment with sound... PHOTO CREDIT ANTHONY BROWELL*

Subtle, tasteful drummer Stuart deserves praise for his willingness to leave space in the music, and his indispensable ability to sound light and flexible even at high energy levels. His composition *Any Heart* enabled the group to experiment with sound, taking the music gently into the avant-garde. Here

Wilson in particular was able to produce a variety of sounds and effects that are possible on the tenor saxophone, where he is a compelling virtuoso.



*Saxophonist Julien Wilson: a compelling virtuoso... PHOTO CREDIT ANTHONY BROWELL*

The musicians chose to end the concert with the album's title track *This World*. As the last note faded, no-one in the audience was prepared to disturb the exquisite mood established, with the vulgarity of applause. There was a stunned silence for several seconds until someone was brave enough to clap.

The Sydney Improvised Music Association provided this opportunity for a very hip audience to experience a rare musical conversation between four exceptional artists. Nock, Stuart, Wilson and Zwartz obviously enjoy hanging together, and are united by friendship and empathy. There should be more nights like this.

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*This quartet is midway through an Australian tour. Subsequent performances are in Brisbane Feb 21 & 22, Byron Bay Feb 23, Uralla Feb 25, Bellingen Feb 26, Hobart Feb 29 & March 1.*