



## Featured Artist: Manhattan New Music Project

**CD Title:** Jazz Cycles

**Year:** 2007

**Record Label:** MNMP Records

**Style:** Progressive

### Musicians:

Shane Endsley (trumpet), Bruce Williamson (soprano and alto saxophone), Tim Ries (tenor saxophone), Jim Ridl (piano), Vic Juris (guitar), Jay Anderson (bass), Grisha Alexiev (drums)

### Review:

Guitarist and composer Paul Nash passed away in 2006 from complications due to brain cancer. Before he passed away he organized a two-CD project meant to represent the definitive works that sum up his career. This CD is the first of those with *Avant Noir* being the other.

Born in the Bronx, Nash earned degrees in both jazz and classical composition from the Berklee College of Music and Mills College in Oakland. In San Francisco Nash formed the ten-piece Paul Nash Ensemble and later was co-founder of Bay Area Jazz Composers Orchestra. The ensemble playing his music on this release is the Manhattan New Music Project (MNMP), a group Nash organized in New York in 1990 which brought together various new music performers. The individual musicians in this band, there are two other CDs by the MNMP on Soul Note Records containing different performers, are some of the brightest but still unheralded jazz musicians on the scene today.

The music contained on *Jazz Cycles* is not as forward-thinking as one might expect from reading the liner notes. True, there are no tunes in the traditional “head – melody – head” outline, yet the music is usually in the pocket. Nash, as a composer, works within well-defined formal outlines, always sectionally based and many times in layered structures, that still provide the individual musicians with the opportunity for improvised solos. “Night Flight” is a good example. With a quasi-polymetric background figure in four the piece begins with a series of superb short solos by trumpeter Shane Endsley, guitarist Vic Juris and tenor saxophonist Tim Ries. Following a drum break the layering of horn lines brings the piece to its logical close.

Highlights on the disc include the ballad “Desire.” This short work has a hauntingly beautiful melody before the tune transitions directly into “Wind Over The Lake,” a tune like “Night Flight” with sectional and layered components. The hip swinger “It’s Only A Dream” is a fairly straight-ahead and delightful tune that features a great piano solo by Jim Ridl followed by some hot swing playing by Bruce Williamson. “Outside In” is just as its title implies and is worthy of analysis by beginning jazz composers.

There are no standout performers on this recording for the simple reason they are all equally excellent top-flight musicians. Shane Endsley plays trumpet with a clean tone and fine articulation of phrase, that long-time stalwart guitarist Vic Juris is still not getting the attention he deserves is a mystery to this reviewer and drummer Grisha Alexiev is as tight and thoughtfully responsive a drummer as anyone could hope to have their band.

All-in-all this disc, with production help from Julia Reinhart, is as worthy a final testament to Paul Nash as any jazz musician/composer could desire. The playing is always flawlessly executed with just the right amount of nuance to convey emotion and depth of feeling. You may come to the disc to hear the music of Nash, but you’ll listen to it over and over because of the high artistry of the performers.

**Tracks:** Passaglia, Night Flight, Desire, Wind Over The Lake, Interlude 1, Strange Rife, Outside In, Ballad For T, Interlude 2, Interlude 3, It’s Only A Dream, Tamalpais Night, Starlit Skylight, Night Flight (Reprise) and Epilogue

**Record Label Website:** <http://www.mnmp.org>

**Reviewed by:** [Thomas R. Erdmann](#)