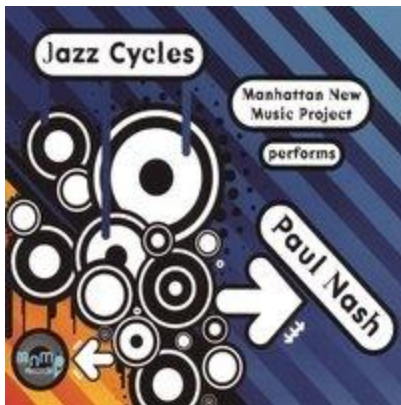


## J.B. Spins

Jazz and improvised politics.

### Jazz Cycles—the Music of Paul Nash



Typically, artists do not realize when they are recording their final sessions, but when Paul Nash went into the studio on December 6, 2004, he understood the likelihood that would be the case for him. Nash, a composer and guitarist who led groups featuring musicians like Mark Isham and Tom Harrell early in their careers, would record his final sessions a year after being diagnosed with a brain tumor. [Jazz Cycles](#), the first of the two resulting CDs to be released, is a fitting requiem for the composer.

A composer-led session, the music of *Cycles* was played by the latest incarnation of Nash's Manhattan New Music Project (MNMP), consisting of many top musicians with impressive associations on their resumes, like tenor saxophonist Tim Ries, well-known for playing in the Rolling Stones' back-up band and his own jazz-oriented Rolling Stone Project, and trumpeter Shane Endsley, who first gained notoriety for his work with Steve Coleman. Vic Juris had the intimidating duty of filling the guitar duties and acquits himself well. Together with alto and soprano saxophonist Bruce Williamson and a rhythm section of pianist Jim Ridl, bassist Jay Anderson, and drummer Grisha Alexiev, they perform Nash's compositions with passion and precision.

Nash's classical influences can be heard throughout, including the opener "Passaglia," with a fervent alto solo from Williamson. It blends uninterrupted into the next track, the more urgent "Night Flight," with short but vital solos from Endsley, Juris, and Ries.

"Wind Over the Lake" is actually adapted from a larger orchestral work, one of two the [Paul Nash Memorial Fund](#) is raising money to record. Introduced by Williamson's plaintive soprano, it shifts mood several times, suggesting the full original will be well worth hearing. Ridl contributes a tasteful solo and Ries makes an impassioned tenor statement, propelled along by Alexiev's drums.

*Cycles* demonstrates Nash's range, including an idiosyncratic blues like "Strange Rife" and an up-tempo workout like "Outside In," sparked by Williamson's soprano and Juris' guitar. However, "It's Only a Dream" in many ways best represents the session. It is a brisk, buoyant tune, featuring a swinging solo from Ridl, yet seems to have a wistful quality beneath the surface. The same is true of "Night Flight (Reprise)," except the undercurrent of melancholy is emphasized slightly more through Williamson's soprano. It serves as an excellent vehicle for ensemble swing from a highly sympathetic group, emphasizing interplay over ego.

Clearly, the musicians assembled by Nash were inspired by the material. Nash composed some intriguing and pleasing melodies, which he well documents with the help of his friends and colleagues. It is a worthy memorial project and makes one hope the Paul Nash Memorial Fund has further success in bringing more of his compositions to a wider audience.

Labels: [MNMP](#), [Paul Nash](#)