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Nock/Stuart/Wilson/Zwartz

THIS WORLD (Lionsharecords)

★★★★

This album's existence was written in the stars. Having made music together in myriad groups across three decades, tenor saxophonist Julien Wilson, pianist Mike Nock, bassist Jonathan Zwartz and drummer Hamish Stuart have finally formed a quartet.

All four contribute compositions to this debut, lending it such range that the fraught, euphoric, challenging, rewarding business of being human really seems to have been condensed into music. The intensity of collaboration makes the pleasure that they share in each other's playing palpable, giving the results a singular glow (amplified by impeccable production).

This radiance, most obvious in Wilson's sound, is just as evident in Nock's open-hearted lyricism, and in the way Zwartz and Stuart, as complete a rhythm section as Australia has produced, narrow and expand the statement of the grooves. While Nock's *Old's Cool* sounds rather like a rope-in from another project, the rest coheres superbly, with Zwartz's limpid *And in the Night Comes Rain* leading to the bluesy lope of Wilson's *Riverside*, and Stuart's haunting *Any Heart* leading to Nock's simultaneously sad and playful *Aftermath*. They launch it at the Australian Institute of Music, February 8.

JOHN SHAND