



The Last Question - Nugara

Jazz has always thrived on imagination—the ability to create entire worlds in sound, to suggest vast landscapes, to invite listeners into journeys that reach beyond the visible. With *The Last Question*, their second album, the Nugara presents a work that embodies this spirit of exploration. Conceived as a concept album, it draws inspiration from science fiction, literature, cinema, and the contemporary realities we inhabit. The result is a musical voyage through space, time, consciousness, and transcendence.

A Concept Rooted in Storytelling

The title of the album is borrowed from Isaac Asimov's celebrated short story *The Last Question*, a sweeping narrative about entropy and the ultimate fate of the universe. In the story, humanity and its ever-evolving artificial intelligence, Multivac, confront the final mystery: can the heat death of the universe be reversed? Spanning billions of years, the tale culminates in an answer as mysterious as it is hopeful: "Let there be light!"

For the Nugara, this framework offers more than a literary homage. It becomes the symbolic architecture that unites the album's nine compositions. Each track stands as a chapter in this sonic novel, a station on a cosmic journey where music functions as both language and vessel. What emerges is not just a collection of pieces, but a narrative arc—a meditation on the destiny of humanity, the expansion of knowledge, and the beauty of uncertainty.

From Point of Convergency to The Last Question - Influences and Evolution

The Nugara's voice is shaped by diverse traditions. One hears the lyricism of Bill Evans, the searching intensity of Keith Jarrett, the harmonic daring of Brad Mehldau, alongside the impressionistic hues of Debussy and Ravel, the atmospheric weight of cinematic scores, and the rhythmic elasticity of contemporary improvisers like Tigran Hamasyan. These influences are not borrowed as references but transformed into a language uniquely their own: lyrical yet angular, intimate yet cosmic.

Compared with their debut, *Point of Convergency*, which charted the ensemble's first mapping of a shared identity, *The Last Question* expands outward. If the first album asked, *Who are we together?*, this second asks, *What worlds can we imagine together?* The result is music that is at once more adventurous and more cohesive, with a stronger sense of narrative architecture and expressive depth. The trio's sound has grown bolder, and more conceptually unified. What was once convergence has now become divergence and exploration: a sonic odyssey that stretches beyond the self into questions of time, knowledge, and transcendence.

The Tracks: A Journey in Nine Movements

1. Echoes Before the Dawn (F. Parsi / V. Spassov)

The album opens with a prologue both ethereal and mysterious. A hushed entryway into the voyage ahead, it evokes the breath of the universe before creation—an echo preceding the arrival of light. The trio's restrained textures draw listeners into an atmosphere of expectancy, as if waiting for the first spark of existence. A fluid arabesque played by the piano and the colors of the sparkling cymbals highlight a twilight and impressionistic melody of the double bass played with the bow. It is the breath of the universe before the first spark of light.

2. Three Laws (F. Negri)

This energetic and structurally intricate piece takes inspiration from Asimov's *Three Laws of Robotics* and the evolving consciousness of Multivac. The music suggests both the precision of machine logic and the transcendence of spirit. Complex rhythms and shifting meters mirror the tension between order and freedom. The bass sets angular motifs, the piano alternates between mechanical repetitions and lyrical outbursts, while the drums fracture the pulse with polyrhythms. Inspired by Asimov's *Laws of Robotics*, the piece dramatizes the machine's evolution into spirit. Improvisations converge into a collective climax, suggesting transformation at the edge of logic and soul.

3. String Theory (F. Parsi / V. Spassov)

A musical weaving of filaments, this track reflects on the scientific theory that imagines hidden dimensions and parallel universes. Interlacing melodic lines resemble vibrating strings, suggesting infinite realities beyond our three-dimensional perception. Here the trio, along with the Italian trumpeter Giovanni Falzone, engages contrapuntally: intertwining melodic lines create the sensation of multiple voices vibrating simultaneously, much like the imagined strings of physics. After the piano solo on a swing drive, a section begins with a strong broken rhythm in which the trumpet improvises, deconstructing the initial atmosphere.

4. Flame of Discovery (F. Negri)

Inspired by Flatland, Edwin A. Abbott's allegory of dimensional awakening, this piece embodies the moment of revelation when consciousness leaps into a new realm. The music glows with brightness and wonder, capturing the awe of sudden understanding. Structured as a gradual crescendo, this track embodies the thrill of revelation. The trumpet and piano set the mood with rhythmic motifs, and then gradually expand into luminous harmonies. The bass thickens the texture, while the drums expand the sound spectrum.

5. Here We Are (F. Parsi)

The emotional heart of the album. A ballad that affirms presence: humanity's quiet declaration in the immensity of space. Slow tempo, wide harmonic spacing, and lyrical phrasing create a mood of reflective hope. Rubato passages bend time, the bass weaves melodic counter-lines, the drums color with brushes. Vulnerable and resilient, it is the trio at its most human.

6. Nebula (F. Negri)

Explosive, chaotic, and bordering on free jazz. Fractured piano clusters, arco bass textures, and eruptive cymbals conjure the turbulence of star birth. Motifs appear like fleeting constellations, only



Ph: Giampaolo Scognamiglio

to collapse into turbulence. The piece resists linear form, orbiting instead around energy centers. It is cosmic genesis rendered as sound.

7. Eyes Do More Than See (F. Parsi / V. Spassov)

Delicate and contemplative, this track suggests transcendence beyond the physical. Built on a repeating harmonic cycle, it layers gentle piano variations, singing arco bass, and brushwork that blurs into silence. Improvisations favor tone and space over display. It is a meditation on unseen truths: love and beauty as forces that survive entropy.

8. The Time Traveler (V. Spassov)

A playful homage to early jazz refracted through modern sensibility. A bass line anchors the groove, but the harmony stretches beyond diatonic conventions, incorporating chromatic shifts and modal detours. The piano invokes New Orleans while subverting harmonic expectations. The drums swing yet insert subtle metric displacements, reminding us that this is not pastiche but reinvention. The track is witty, rhythmic, and ironic: the jazz musician as traveler across eras, reinterpreting past and future in the present.

9. Let There Be Light... (V. Spassov)

The closing track is cyclical and hypnotic. Built around a repeating ostinato, it accumulates layers: first a minimalist piano figure, then the first melody on bass, then cymbals that shimmer like distant galaxies and finally the long and lyrical notes of the trumpet. The dynamic swells and recedes, creating waves rather than a single climax. Harmonically static but texturally evolving, the music enacts a ritual of dissolution and rebirth. Its ending—sparse, luminous, suspended—feels less like closure than like a new beginning. A sonic echo of Asimov's final words: creation out of darkness.

A Broader Reflection

At its heart, *The Last Question* is not only about cosmology or science fiction. It is about the human need to question, to seek, to dream. From primordial silence to final illumination, the album embodies the arc of existence: knowledge, chaos, memory, imagination. It is a work less interested in offering answers than in prompting reflection—each track a mirror for our own questions about life, time, and meaning.

In the Nugara's hands, the piano trio format—so central to the history of modern jazz—becomes a vessel for storytelling at once intimate and cosmic. The piano sketches worlds, the bass anchors and comments, the drums open dimensions of rhythm and texture. Their interplay is dynamic and fearless, constantly redefining roles and blurring the line between composition and improvisation. This is music built not only on technical mastery, but on trust, listening, and the courage to imagine. Giovanni Falzone integrates effortlessly into the trio's poetics, emerging as a natural extension of their voice. His remarkable eclecticism and fearless timbral explorations expand the music's horizons, unveiling unexpected vistas that resonate with the group's artistic vision.

The Last Question invites us to listen as travelers—to suspend certainty and to embrace wonder. Like Asimov's tale, it reminds us that every ending contains the seed of a beginning, and that every question carries within it the possibility of light.

The Nugara offers not a destination, but a journey—one that begins and ends in silence, yet along the way illuminates the endless expanse of possibility.

Spencer Travis

