

# Local jazz scene in recovery

 BackBeat  
with Cornelius Thomas



## VOICES of LEGACY:

Herbie Tsoaeli,  
Andile Yenana,  
Sydney Mnisi,  
Marcus Wyatt and  
Lulu Gontsana.

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**T**HE JAZZ scene in East London has recently shown signs of recovery with a number of shows at a local restaurant, the Soweto String Quartet playing in the Guild Theatre and four bands — Friends, Ikhwazi, Another Level and Gawulana Quintet — coming together and playing a benefit concert for the late singer, Veliswa Komani.

Elsewhere too, locally nurtured jazz excellence continues in the accomplishments of the East Cape's Andile Yenana and Zim Ngqawana.

King William's Town's jazz pianist extraordinaire Yenana and his outfit Voice last month brought out their debut album, *Quintet Legacy*.

The quintet consists of Yenana, Herbie Tsoaeli on bass, Marcus Wyatt on trumpet, Lulu Gontsana on drums and Sydney Mnisi on guitar.

With Khumbul' iKhaya and Lakatshon iLanga Yenana emphasises the rich body of South African compositions that's available to young musicians today.

In a recent interview with the *Sowetan*, Yenana urges that the

compositions of Todd Matshikiza and Zakes Nkosi among others be mastered, asking "Why should we as young musicians behave as if there is no consistent body of jazz legacy left behind by jazz pioneers over many decades?"

Meanwhile, New Brighton-born saxophonist Zim Ngqawana is blowing on. He recently won the Sama award for Best Traditional Jazz Album for his *Ingoma*. *Ingoma*, *San Song* and *Zimology* Zim's together constitute a Renaissance trilogy.

In his work Zim mixes traditional and classical music with mainstream jazz, adding new technical methods and emotive concepts.

First there is harmolody, an Ornette Colemanian fusion of harmony of melody. Then follows jazz instructor Butch Morris's induction method — which Zim uses vigorously to induce band members to bring out what's in their soul.

When people criticised Zim's vigour towards band members in a concert last year, he explained: "I did not force them to improvise; I induced them to find their best and to share it with the audience."

Finally, there is the "free spirit" of Sun Ra.

About the improvisational and classical aspects of his work and the need for jazz lovers in particular to accept new forms of jazz, Zim said: "We must overcome our fear of change, get rid of the old habits. We have to drag it out of ourselves otherwise it will destroy us. We have to accept each other (and) what we bring. This kind of courage is cleansing in a spiritual way."

Zim added: "We need to develop our culture properly. Refine it. Put it in its proper place (within world culture)," Zim finally said.

Andile hearkens to a proper mastery (first) of the existing body of compositions; Zim emphasises experimentation and a bold plunge into progressive eclecticism. It does not matter, the two positions are not mutually exclusive. In fact, such interaction is required by jazz. And this has been proven by the many collaborations (including on *Ingoma*) between Andile Yenana and Zim Ngqawana.

● This Sunday, be sure to catch saxophonist Rick van Heerden at Smokey Swallows in Vincent.