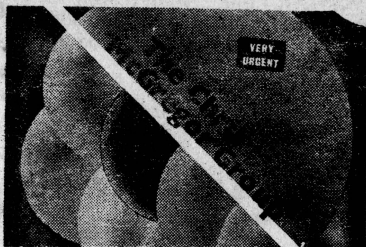


m/m Jewel 68

THE MCGREGOR LEGEND ON RECORD AT LAST



CHRIS MCGREGOR GROUP:
"Very Urgent". Marie My Dear;
Travelling Somewhere; Hearts
Vibrations; The Sounds Begin
Again; White Lies; Don't Stir
The Beehive. (Polydor 184137).
McGregor (pno), Dudu Puk-
wana (alto), Ronnie Beer (tnr),
Mongezi Feza (pocket tpt),
Johnny Dyani (bass), Louis
Moholo (drs).

THE sextet and the occasional big band led by South African pianist Chris McGregor have become something of a legend in the British jazz underground since they started operating regularly in Ronnie Scott's Old Place.

Now that the legend is on record, it can be seen that these idols certainly don't have feet of clay, although the type of uncompromising intensity which McGregor's sextet reaches at its peak is a much more satisfying experience in the flesh.

This is a communal music, although McGregor's traffic policing from the piano is very similar to Cecil Taylor. But these men have been playing—and, for some time, living — together enough to ensure that the incoherent moments are few and far between. Those ears unused to this approach will doubtless still find it incomprehensible but McGregor has achieved a level of performance here which is comparable with the best in its field.

His own piano playing is percussive and often discursive, but it functions as a kind of Pied Piper for the other musicians. Altoist Pukwana is the most impressive soloist, a fierce virtually savage sound and an irresistible swing running through his every phrase. Feza and Beer are sound, but it's Pukwana who stands out.

It's taken some time to get McGregor on record, but this almost makes the wait worthwhile. Congratulations to producer Joe Boyd and Polydor for making it, although with a first LP of this sort more information on the musicians would have been a great help.

But this is a minor blemish on a set which emphasises that, in our midst, is one of the most potent groups in contemporary jazz anywhere in the world. — BOB HOUSTON