

THE LINE-UP



Chris McGregor ... Piano



Dudu Pukwana ... Alto



Louis Moholo ... Drums



Nick Moyake ... Tenor



Monghesi Feza ... Trumpet



Johanny Dyani ... Bass



G.R. Naidoo ... DRUM

A BLOW ON THE BEACH

One of South Africa's top jazz combo's, Chris McGregor's Blue Notes, is making a farewell tour of the country before competing in an international jazz festival at Antibes on the French Riviera in July. While in Durban, they moved into a beach cottage and there, on the sands, they blew jazz and talked jazz hour after hour. DRUM's G.R. Naidoo listened to both — and quizzed them on jazz in South Africa today. This is how the blunt, frank and soul-searching talk went ...

G.R: How does South African jazz rate with American?

CHRIS: There's truth here dad. Not only in the States.

G.R: What do you mean by truth.

CHRIS: I mean musically speaking. Souly speaking; there's truth here too.

G.R: How good is South African jazz?

MONGHESI: How beautiful are women?

NICK: I got inspiration from other cats over there in the States. We expand from what we listen to on discs.

G.R: Do you model yourselves on jazz in America then?

NICK: I listen to only what I want to listen from the American cats.

DUDU: You know dad, another thing. We can't convince people here if we don't play things they play over there. That's why people come and ask us to play 'Summertime' and that kind.

G.R: Doesn't that cut across what Chris says. He says there's truth in South African jazz also. So why should you ape American jazz?

CHRIS: Hell, dad, it's not aping American cats. It's inspiration we draw from them. What we are saying is that we get inspired. We listen to records and sure we get inspired. We hear; we learn some ways of doing things which might have struck us before. But we are able to put our own kind of truth into

these things. We don't copy.

Now as to how good jazz is in America, I have to say this. We have never heard any of these gnys in person — only their discs. We have made discs and we know just how much truth gets on to discs. For instance, if I should die now and somebody listens to recordings I made, I don't think they will get a true picture of me, you know. I think the same thing goes for all of us.

Miles Davis

MONGHESI: We dig you, daddy.

CHRIS: And so, when we hear a Miles Davis disc, there's something like musical truth going on there. I can imagine there's a hell of a lot more when he is around.

G.R: What exactly do you mean by musical truth?

CHRIS: Musical truth means truth. If a man tells the truth, he says how he feels and how he is musically. You feel it too, if you listen.

DUDU: Could be lies too.

CHRIS: Of course, Because lies are a part of the truth also, aren't they?

LOUIS: Yes, sir, you don't have to tell a lie.

DUDU: It happens sometimes you know. Somebody gets the impression we are telling lies. I wonder if there's anybody who

wants to tell a lie while playing music.

NICK: If you are goofin' while playing, you know you are goofin'. You feel it.

DUDU: Hell, dad, I don't know how to explain it. Let me put it like this. Sombdy comes along and asks you to play a tune for them. Maybe you don't feel like playing that tune, but you just play it.

NICK: Or maybe you don't know it.

CHRIS: You will be telling musical lies man. Telling lies





all the way. Somebody comes up to you and asks for a request. A bell rings somewhere and you get inspired. You play the tune, but play it the way you want to. Like 'Summertime' could be played in many, many ways. And what happens? The cat who asked you for the request comes back and says: 'Play the tune I asked you.' You see, dad, he does not know it the way we play it. He does not like to hear our truth in the tune.

NICK: The people we play for are aware of the fact that we are musicians. Okay, but they

don't believe in us only. So a person comes to you and requests a tune he hears on a record. He expects you to play that tune the same way as he heard it. If you don't do it, he doesn't know you.

G.R: Okay how lousy is South African jazz?

CHRIS: Let's say it will be a lot better if there were more good promoters, so that the truth would have the chance of coming out.

OTHERS: Yeah, dad, Yeah.

CHRIS: Most of the lousiness in this country is because people

don't let it out you know, the truth. They don't have the privileges.

G.R: What privileges are jazzmen entitled to?

DUDU: Everything, everything dad.

CHRIS: We should be treated like human beings, man.

NICK: Accepted as musicians.

G.R: Aren't you accepted as musicians at the moment.

ALL: No! No!

NICK: I can't promote myself.

DUDU: Since we formed this group, plenty is going to happen.

Plenty.

CHRIS: I agree with Dudu. Plenty is going to happen. One of the first things is that people who are now playing for tiny audiences anywhere they can find the place, just playing, truth where they can squee with no encouragement what will find themselves su-free and go places. Th break loose sometime, yo From other groups and round. Preach. There's of movement around.

G.R: Do you think jazz he

'You sacrifice like hell when you tell the truth'

good future here?

CHRIS: Yes, yes. That's what I am trying to tell you, dad. There's a hell of a potential. But no guy is going to go on the road with a chancer. He rather just sit in one place and play and if there's money coming, okay. If not, he will go on anyway - all we are looking for is that truth.

G.R: What can be done to allow jazzmen in - South Africa to express more freely and in greater numbers that truth you talk about?

CHRIS: Jobs. And an intelligent and understanding management.

G.R: But don't you think that a demand for jazz has to be built up first?

CHRIS: I am not sure. Remember that 'Downbeat' - interview with Dollar Brand. You seen that? He makes that point. He says: 'Jobs we didn't find many. It usually depended on convincing some club owner that he should hire a jazz group, you know. He says that was what a job meant, but he says: I have never played in a jazz concert which was not packed.'

The wrong gospel?

G.R: Do you think they are spreading the wrong gospel of jazz?

CHRIS: It's not that. People are unwilling to see where things really are.

DUDU: You know what, most of them are really looking for kicks.

CHRIS: To tell us the demand is not there is nonsense. Bull. Half the time people come to us. People we know. It is happening on the street. I don't know how to say it. It happens all the time. People are dying to hear us and come to us and ask how they can come to hear us and half the time we find ourselves in the position of saying: 'Hell, we don't know.'

NICK: Like you see in Johannesburg. In Johannesburg it's happening. When I got Dudu, you know, I told him about Johannesburg. He did not want to move from P.E., you know. But

when he got to Johannesburg, even he did not like it until he got to see what was happening. Dad, if I was playing mbaquanga instead of jazz, I will have made myself thousands.

G.R: So why are you playing jazz when there's so little money in it?

NICK: You see, in the commercial world you are paid for what you are asked to play. That's no good musically. It worried me. That's why I cannot be all by myself - lonesome. I had to do a job in Cape Town. And that's where I met you cats there - I was lucky you know. Otherwise I would have gone back to my mbaquanga; back to my commercial junk.

LOUIS: You know what commercial is, dad? Have you read Captain Marvel comics? People flying in the air and all that. Well that's commercial. A world of make believe.

NICK: To me the whole thing is wrong. Playing commercial music.

NICK: There's something I wanna say. Something, dad. You are forgetting this is South Africa. You know how I is, what colour I is, okay. Lots of musicians in Johannesburg, lots and lots of them, man, just want boodle. You sacrifice like hell, man, when you want to speak the truth. Like me, I sacrificed like hell. But I felt what I am doing was not right, just playing that mbaquanga. I was down and out. I even cried. My conscience was telling me I was wasting my time. That's when I made up my mind, you see.

CHRIS: Yeah. You even said to me when I first met you in Cape Town with 'Paljas'. I will never forget that. You said I want to be there. That's all you had to say to me: 'I want to be there too.'

CHRIS: I want to talk about promoters again. This idea is going on in my mind. When I say they are at fault, I have seen this happen, so let nobody say I am wrong and telling a lie. When a bunch of enthusiastic musicians are playing good music, the doors are not open all over, so they go somewhere and play.



CHRIS MCGREGOR ... 'People are dying to hear us. They come to us and ask how they can come to hear us'

It happens that some people follow, fans and all that. They find out where these cats are blowing and they get there and it grows and grows. More and more.

The boss is making a hell of a lot of boodle and is still paying the guys the lousy quid each he paid them at the beginning. He says that his place is getting popular, NOT, we are making his place popular.

Some kind of explosion

Then what? It usually results in an explosion of some kind. The real pity about it is that those explosions mean that the group breaks up too. Because one cat just wants to go on, regardless of any fuss. There's another cat who has a wife and kid to support and he says: 'Look, we are playing here all this time and if weren't here this place will flop.'

Usually the boss is in the game to make a fast buck, and if he thinks that the musicians play on just for enthusiasm, he will let it go on forever. He won't feed their enthusiasm. He

doesn't care a damn.

DUDU: Jazz musicians are always complaining that they are frustrated. What frustrates them dad? I'll tell you - exploitation.

CHRIS: You want to know how I feel about commercialism? I take myself as being a musician. Now there's another art called acting. If somebody says to me I will pay you so much money and you make like Errol Garner. You see, that will be an acting job, not a musical job, you dig. If you want to be a musician, you must be true to yourself.

JOHNNY: What jazzmen require is understanding.

CHRIS: In spite of all this, there's plenty of kicks for me to keep playing. Hell, that's not lost at all.

NICK: You see lots of promoters know we love to blow, so they take advantage over us, you know. All we want to do is blow dad and still be able to live.

DUDU: But listen, dad, in spite of all our moans, we gonna stop here. We are goin' man, goin' all the way up.

OTHERS: Yeah, we ain't quitters.

CHRIS: Ek gan nie stop nie man!