

Toasting women of the 50s



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

*Daily
Dispatch,
June 1, 2001*

EARLIER this year the mama of African song, Miriam Makeba, was nominated for a Grammy in the "world music" category for her *Homeland* album. It was the enduring appeal of the 1950s tune *Pata Pata* — reinterpreted and sung with granddaughter Zenzi Lee as *Pata Pata 2000* — which gave her the nod. Makeba did not win the Grammy but her nomination had reintroduced the composer of *Pata Pata*, Dorothy Masuka to the world.

Shortly, Makeba will be joined by Dorothy Masuka in a series of concerts constituting a tribute to the women of the 1950s — Tandie Klaasen, Abigail Khubeka, Mummy Girl Nketele, Letta Mbulu, and so on.

Sponsored by Surf, they will be called the Miriam Makeba Tribute Concerts, and will be co-directed by Makeba and master pianist Don Laka.

Although Dorothy Masuka hails from Zimbabwe, she has been one of South Africa's best loved jazz singers since the 1950s.

She penned *Pata Pata*, which launched Makeba's career and also composed Hugh Masekela's chart-topping *Kauleza*.

With her vocal range embracing mbaqanga, kwela, township jive and American jazz through ballads to gospel, Masuka will add Afro-international zest to the tribute concerts.

The Makeba-Masuka twosome will be joined by renowned Mozambican singer Mingas.

Mingas' career began 25 years ago in the Sheik Nightclub in Maputo. In the 1980s she embraced the cause of child development and safety, capping her efforts with a solo concert at an international child development symposium in Harare in 1988. She scooped the Best Female Singer of the Year award in her country in 1993. As of 1996 demand for her singing took her on a four-year sojourn through Europe.

With Makeba and Masuka, Mingas will pay tribute to the pioneering women of the 1950s — in particular to Dolly Rathebe.

In a world of newly embraced American machismo — the triumphant male sort — Rathebe sang, won beauty pageants, scratched a living. She ran with the *klevahs* (smart guys) on the knife-edge of danger, and they called her Kitty Collins for she was catlike, demure and sharp.

Rathebe weathered the persisting poverty and the violent vicissitudes of slum life. Her grit, and her will to survive and succeed epitomised the Sophiatown women of the 1950s.

In this regard Surf spokesperson Ethne Whitley said



DOLLY RATHEBE

the company was proud to recognise "women's achievements and to celebrate the contribution they have made in every facet of life" and to be "associated with the tribute to Dolly Rathebe" in particular.

Come August 9 (Women's Day) to 11, the three women — Makeba, Masuka, and Mingas — will toast the women of the 1950s with world class jazz singing in the Johannesburg Civic Centre.

● The most exciting news for the city, meanwhile, is that the era of Sonny Kops' shows in 1970s — Tavares, Lovelace Watkins, the Invaders — is returning here with the Rockets set to blast the roof off City Hall in a music extravaganza on Friday, June 8.

Raising the profile of local jazz

AN initiative to promote local jazz and uncover township talent is being spearheaded by feisty Berlin businesswoman and owner of the Emzini African Restaurant, Roundy Nini.

The first in what is hoped will become a regular gig takes place at Emzini this Saturday with Cliffie Freeman and well-known local

band *Another Level* providing the vibe, while Roundy dishes up an appetising ethnic three-course meal for patrons of jazz.

With sponsorship provided by Coca-Cola, guests can expect a few refreshing freebies, not to mention an evening of great food and entertainment in aid of a worthwhile cause.

Doors open at 6.30pm and secure parking is available.

Tickets cost R95 per couple (including dinner) and are available from Jazz Inn in the Union Arcade, Union Street, or at the door of the restaurant.

Contact Roundy on 043-685 2316 or 072-124-7845 for more information.