

Another chapter closes

Daily Dispatch, Nov. 3, 2000

EAST LONDON'S home of jazz, CD's Jazz Fusion Café, closed its doors this past weekend, ending a chapter of of jazz excellence in the city.

Everybody wanted to know "Why?"

Answer: "Insufficient support!"

Speaking to the audience at the club last Saturday, proprietor Clifflie Freeman reckoned: "We brought world class jazz to the city. But somehow it was not enough."

But, said Freeman, "the jazz family will grow. In a few years CD's will be back".

Playing out with Abdullah Ibrahim's *Chisa*, resident band Another Level closed a chapter which started when the café opened in Vincent last May.

Patrons will remember sounds spanning from jazz to ragtime through fusion.

The first "big name" to play there was pianist Pat Matshikiza, then a regular at Kippies Jazz International in Johannesburg. With his trademark *Tshona* he transported music lovers here to the Sophiatown and the golden era of South African jazz, and he brought them home with the East Cape anthem, *Lakut-*



Back-
with Cornelius Thomas



HAPPIER TIMES: Clifflie Freeman and Hugh Masekela performing at CD's in July this year.

shon iLanga.

Next came Hotep Galeta, straight from Catalina's Bar in Los Angeles. He had then, as a member of the Jackie McLean Quintet, just co-created *Dynasty*, one of the top ten jazz CDs of the 1990s.

Said Hotep of CD's: "The ambience here is international. You could be in New York, Paris, or London." The composer of *King Tut's Strut* knew what he was talking about.

With the café on the map, it soon served as the watering hole for music lovers, culture vultures, businesspeople, politicians, artists and tourists.

Simultaneously resident band Another Level — Clifflie Freeman (vocals), Gavin Bantom (keyboard), Anton Wynkwardt and later Abe Maqhula (lead guitar), drummer Ayande Sikade — will be remembered for their crisp jazz, especially their own composition, *Township Groove*.

Last September the bad boy of Cape music, saxophonist Robbie Jansen, blew the winds of spring into the city. He merged Khoisan and Cape sounds, telling an audience aghast at his versatility: "Julie ka vi my ma loer."

In April Boeta Robbie brought his album, *The Cape Doctor* — carrying cures unheard to the Eastern Cape.

The beat continued with international stars Andy Narell and Siphokumbi Gumede promoting their CDs at the café. And Veliswa Komani, Retsi Pule, Stompie Mavi, Errol Cudumbey, Errol Dyers, and Hugh Masekela all performed there.

But that's all gone now. Until the next chapter.