

SPIRITS

This music is dedicated to the memory of
my brothers and sister -

**NICK MOYAKE, MONGEZI FEZA,
HARRY MILLER, JOHNNY DYANI,
CHRIS MCGREGOR, DUDU PUKWANA,
DUMILE FENI, and
PRINCESS PATIENCE (GCWABE)
who all died too early.**

I am proud to have known you guys.

**Their arrival in Europe and especially
London was most significant as their departure
from the Worlds Stage a great loss,
but their legend of music and art lives on.
This music was recorded by some of the
best jazz musicians and musicologists in
Britain, and I am proud to have participated
in this exciting recording.**

**My appreciation and gratitude go to all the
musicians who have contributed their
supreme talents to the making of this CD.
My special thanks and respect to Hazel
Miller and John Jack, who have been with
us (THE BLUE NOTES) through the good
and the bad times.**

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN ..

Louis Moholo

REJOICE



Ogun



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From left to right
Dudu Pukwana
Mongezi Feza
Harry Miller

Johnny Dyani
Chris McGregor



**THE
BLUE
NOTES**

the perfect combination of jazz's sophisticated techniques with the unstoppable rhythmic drive of the music of the townships. At a time when jazz the leading edge was becoming increasingly cerebral, the Brotherhood restored visceral excitement. The saxophonists Evan Parker and Alan Skidmore could play solos as abstract as anything they might produce in the context of a free-improvisation workshop; here they enjoyed the benefit of a beat that made listeners want to move their bodies, too.

The Brotherhood remained a working unit, with many changes of personnel, throughout McGregor's life, even after he and his wife Maxine had moved to France, to a farmhouse in Aquitaine, in 1974. The other Blue Notes pursued their own projects: Feza on records with the former Soft Machine drummer/singer Robert Wyatt, the others in various collaborative projects and with their own groups, each of which carried a title clearly evoking the musicians' origins—Pukwana's Assegai and Zila, Dyan's Witchdoctor's Son, Moholo's Viva La Black, Miller's Isipingo.

But then the sad toll began. Mongezi Feza, born in Queenstown, Natal on 12 May 1945, whose trumpet spurted quicksilver, was the first of the Blue Notes to die, on 14 December 1975; his friend Robert Wyatt remarked that he didn't see how he could make another record without Mongezi around to provide inspiration. Harry Miller, born in Johannesburg on 25 April 1941, whose gifts as a composer and leader were beginning to emerge, died on 16 December 1983; his fellow bassist, Johnny Dyan, born on 30 November 1947 in Duncan Village, East London, a complete original, passed away on 24 October 1986. And

in 1990, the two great composers died only a few weeks apart: Chris McGregor, born on 24 December 1936 at Umtata in the Transkei, a pianist whose spare, athletic solos had so often pierced the enveloping turbulence, went on 26 May; Dudu Pukwana, born on 18 July 1938 in Port Elizabeth, Natal, one of the greatest heirs to the legacy of Charlie Parker, a player of unquenchable fire and enthusiasm, of thrilling raucousness and touching delicacy, followed him on 30 June. Of them all, of this brilliant collective which set out from an inhospitable home to find a true destiny, only Louis Moholo, born in Cape Town on 3 March 1940, whose cymbal beat shines like sunlit silver and whose snare-drum cracks like rifle fire, remains active on the European music scene, the proud embodiment of their musical virtues.

'What will survive of us', wrote the poet Philip Larkin, who liked a bit of jazz himself, 'is love'. Love is what the Blue Notes played, in all their guises. What survives of them is that love, preserved both in their own work and in the playing of the many significant figures with whom they came into contact. And it is in every note of this music.

Richard Williams

We set up five days for this project, bridging the old year and the new. The last two days of '91 were for rehearsals and the start of a recording balance at Gateway studio—a beautiful place with good acoustics and big enough to hold the band without squashing its sound.

TINY HI-HAT BIG BAND

Everyone had different ideas on how to lay out the band. Steve and Mick the engineers knew that certain placements wouldn't work and that we should avoid putting the drums in the centre of the octagonal space. We ended up with a sort of oval configuration that reminded me of the way they set up the band for the Miles Davis and Gil Evans 1959 TV show.

The moment when I knew the band was going to be special was on the first run through of Kenny Wheeler's arrangement of Dudu's ballad 'B My Dear'. Even with people still finding their way, it felt very good. From the mood in the studio it was obvious that the musicians were moved by this arrangement which, while being completely true to Kenny's style, also brought back fond memories of Dudu.

Lunch time meant Ivan's very serious soups—the band always felt hotter after lunch. Louis had an uncanny ability to remember the arrangements after the first time through, perform all the functions of a big band drummer (I thought of Sonny Payne) and constantly surprise me with his unfathomable fills. His tiny hi-hat was always drawing my ear—it sounds like a different sound source on each tune.

SPIRITS REJOICE



Louis had an uncanny ability to remember the arrangements after the first time through

Jazz evolves through the friendship of strangers: the 'Spanish tinge' in Jelly Roll Morton's New Orleans, Dizzy Gillespie's involvement with Afro-Cuban rhythms in the Forties, John Coltrane's interest in Indian scales, Cecil Taylor's assimilation of Bartok's piano music,

SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE SINCE BIRTH

the impact of reggae on the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Each of these had its particular importance, but none had a more organic, beneficial and stimulating effect than the arrival in Europe

of a small group of South African musicians in the middle 1960's.

The nucleus of this movement was a quintet called the Blue Notes, formed in 1962 by the trumpeter Mongezi Feza, the alto saxophonist Dudu Pukwana, the pianist Chris McGregor, the tenor saxophonist Nick Moyake, the bassist Johnny Dyani and the drummer Louis Moholo. McGregor was white, the rest were black—which made work in the apartheid state impossible to find, with the exception of illegal after-hours jam sessions. So when, in 1964, they accepted an invitation to appear at the Antibes Jazz Festival, the Blue Notes realised that here was the cue to their place in a more welcoming environment.

Others had preceded them. Harry Miller, a talented young bassist, had left Johannesburg, his home town, for London in 1961 in company with his schoolfriend Michael Lubowitz, a pianist who found fame three years later as the bearded pop star Manfred Mann. Miller worked on the transatlantic liners with the band known as

Geraldo's Navy before finding a niche for himself among London's young jazz community, eventually joining Mike Westbrook's first big band. The great South African pianist Dollar Brand, later known as Abdullah Ibrahim, had arrived in Europe a year before the Blue Notes; after the Antibes gig, it was on his advice that they moved first to Switzerland. But ties of language had their effect, and in 1965 they joined Miller in London.

In the midst of the Swinging Sixties, the city did not pretend to offer the most welcoming environment for a cadre of modern jazz musicians; as far as the general public was concerned, jazz in Britain had generally meant either polite swing bands or the bolsterous revivalists of the trad boom, although many fine musicians—men such as Tubby Hayes, Stan Tracey and Joe Harriott—struggled to make a living playing the music of their choice. So the Blue Notes had to struggle to make a space and get a hearing for themselves at venues like the Duke of York in Rathbone Place, appropriately situated opposite the African National Congress headquarters, and Ronnie Scott's Old Place, the club's original location in a Gerrard Street basement, temporarily turned over to young musicians when Scott moved the centre of his operations to the other side of Shaftesbury Avenue. For 18 months between 1966 and 1968, while Scott's lease gradually expired, the Old Place provided a workshop and a crucible for the emerging generation of British-based jazz musicians: Surman, Westbrook, Graham Collier, John McLaughlin, Tony Oxley, Harry Beckett and many others. But the spark which ignited the Old Place, and which keeps it burning in the memories of those who were there,

was provided by the Blue Notes.

What the quintet had, individually and collectively, was a complete understanding of the vocabulary of jazz and an utterly uninhibited attitude to the way they expressed it. They sounded as though they'd been speaking the language since birth. Even better, growing up amidst the music of South Africa had given them an accent of their own. In turn, the British musicians who worked alongside them were inspired to a more direct manner of expression than they might otherwise have achieved.

Chris McGregor had briefly led a big band in South Africa; in London in 1968 he formed another, mingling Blue Notes with Brits, which blazed briefly in the Gerrard Street basement. That same year, the small group, with another South African, the tenor saxophonist Ronnie Beer, added to expand the line-up into a sextet, made its European recording debut with an incendiary album called 'Very Urgent'. But work opportunities were scarce now, and the group dispersed—Dyani and Moholo to an ill-fated tour of South America with the American soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, Dudu to a quartet led by the pianist Bob Stuckey. Beer relocated in Paris (and thence, eventually, to Ibiza, where he now builds boats).

Two years later, though, McGregor reunited most of them—with Miller now on bass—when he recruited another large ensemble, this time under the title of the Brotherhood of Breath. The Brotherhood's early London concerts, at the Notre Dame Hall just off Leicester Square and the Country Club on Haverstock Hill, were among the most enthralling events of the Seventies: the writing, mostly by McGregor and Pukwana, achieved

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Zurich 1964