



The beat by trumpeter and drummer

These are photographer Nat Mkhize's "eye-view" of Chris McGregor's Blue Notes on the Durban City Hall stage on Wednesday, May 6. Top pic shows (near the camera) Nick Moyake, the slacks and trumpet of Mongezi Feza (18) and almost hidden by his giant bass is Johnny Dyani. Bottom: Sitting on someone else's instrument case is the solid beat man from the Mother City, Louis Moholo. Trying to hide again is the little man, Johnny Dyani.

JAZZ AS BROUGHT BY BLUE NOTES

THE large crowd of jazz fans were held spellbound by the hot blue flames (jus' like a blue lamp man) of Chris McGregor's Blue Notes at the Durban City Hall on Wednesday, May 6.

The jazz concert started on the up beat jazz virtuosity displayed by Chris Joseph's Trio. Forming the trio were Chris Joseph (piano), John Joustra (bass), and John Purkis (drums).

This trio's last number, whose theme was a well known nursery rhyme, "A Song of Sixpence" was a gasser. Chris Joseph's piano told the story of the "Song of Sixpence" as we all knew it and then the group went on to improvise on the theme, telling the story in their different versions. Man, that wuz jus' great.

This kind of playing is the best for educating the audience in jazz appreciation.

After interval the Blue Notes took the stage in their time-to-shine slacks and blue denim jackets. In addition to their original tunes (themes) they played Duke Ellington's "ANGELICA" and Frank Losser's "If I Were a Bell".

Their own original themes were: "Messengers," "School Boy", "Sincerely Yours", "Dorkay House" by Dudu Pukwana: "Vortex Special" and "Now" by Chris McGregor.

The concert showed what results can be achieved when a group is built on the individual ability and natural gift of each musician.

Dudu Pukwana proved to be the dramatist of the group; his saxophone was aggressive and startling as he attacked and solved his complex improvisations.

It wasn't until Mongezi Feza, the eighteen-year-old trumpeter, led the combo in "If I Were A Bell" that I realised that he plays an important part in the outfit.

At times his trumpet instigated a saxophone duel, at others resolved their conflict. Sometimes it was a voice on its own, sometimes part of a controlled trio sound.

The rhythm section has the swing to maintain these

soloists, providing a base from which they can confidently explore. Some people expressed regret at McGregor's rather cautious right hand.

If only they could appreciate the fact is that in his type of unique "south stream" jazz as distinct from the so-called "mainstream" and "third-stream" movements in American jazz, he maintains the control and leads the direction, his own piano solos are a vital part of the group's improvisation strategy.

The presence of the Blue Notes in Natal will definitely inspire jazz awareness and it is going to be necessary to educate the masses in jazz appreciation to let them into the writing of a new chapter in South Africa's history of jazz.

As I am writing this, the Blue Notes are doing the night clubs, and night club bosses are clamouring for them.

