

Satchmo and 20th century jazz

AT THE recent Standard Bank Jazz Festival in Grahamstown, blues singer Don Tshomela dedicated his programme to evergreen jazz musician Louis Armstrong and two weeks ago Natalie Cole opened Italy's Umbria Jazz Festival "to mark the 100th anniversary" of the great man's birth.

Although a tad premature, these celebrations are apt because Armstrong embodied 20th century jazz.

In a 1955 interview, Melody Maker asked Armstrong: "What is jazz?"

He answered plainly: "We just always tried to play good. The public named it. It was ragtime, Dixieland, gutbucket, jazz, swing."

Armstrong's response harbours the history of jazz in America.

True, enslaved Africans carried the musical traditions of polyrhythms, syncopation, and call and response to the Americas and so provided the bases of jazz.

However, in the 1890s Scott Joplin, ragged the ex-slaves' music out of its traditional rhythms and created ragtime. New Orleans musicians early this century fused African-based music with classical music. So emerged Dixieland — the music of the South.

Armstrong, born in New Orleans on August 4, 1901 (not July 4, 1900), grew up within that musical revolution.



BackBeat

with

Cornelius Thomas

He sang for his supper on street corners — where he developed an ear for harmony. At age thirteen, while doing a stint in the Coloured Waifs Home, he mastered the cornet. Thereafter his career took off with jazz progenitors King Oliver and Kid Ory.

In the late teens, Armstrong plied his art on riverboats. These sojourns took him north of New Orleans to the Delta area where he picked up gutbucket — which required of singers to reach to the gut, scoop a bucket full of vocals, and spill it all. There he learned to abandon himself to song. And the satchel mouth singer — Satchmo — took over.

The decimation of cotton crops by the boll-weevil, as well as the closure of New Orleans's Storyville redlight district, which saw 85 jazz clubs and 200 bordellos close, pushed musicians North.

Armstrong coaxed all into dancing the

jazzbo glide. By the time he hit the Chicago in 1919, jazzbo had turned into jazz.

Later in New York City, he, along with his Hot Fives, Duke Ellington and jazz poet Langston Hughes, contributed to the African American 1920s Harlem Renaissance. In 1926, while doing the song Heebie Jeebie, Satchmo forgot the words and fell into an impromptu scat. Jazz changed forever.

In the 1930s he pioneered swing.

But all Armstrong wanted to do was "to play good". He recorded the enduring standards Blueberry Hill and Mack the Knife. In 1964 he knocked the Beatles' I Want to Hold Your Hand out of the number one spot on Billboard's pop charts with Hello Dolly.

All the while he helped universalise jazz, transcending even religion. Quipped he: "I'm a Baptist and a good friend of the Pope's, and I always wear a Jewish star for luck."

The man who sang with a satchel mouth died with a smile on his in New York City on July 6, 1971. And his music lives on.

Those who heard Tshomela's rendition of Hello Dolly will agree: Satchmo made moments in our century grand and reminded us of what a wonderful world we have.

So it's going to be a long centenary celebration, and all along Satchmo's fans will be pardoned for the smiles on their faces.



SATCHMO: Louis Armstrong

Picture by HAYWOOD MAGEE

Daily Bopatch
August 18, 2000

Brothers go solo on piano

AT THE North Sea Jazz Festival in Cape Town earlier this year, a jazz expert said that: as far as the South African contingent was concerned, the event smacked of being "an affirmative action gesture".

He explained that some of the finest talents on the local jazz circuit had not been invited.

Two brothers – Tony Schilder and Ebrahim Kalil Shihab – both of whom recently released solo jazz albums, vindicate the expert's assertion with their latest works.

Playing to a selected audience in the Hout Bay home of producer Jack von Poll, Tony Schilder coaxed a masterpiece from the grand piano – *The Tempest Live Volume 3* – bringing together the sounds of several decades. The album comprises standards, Brazilian grooves and Cape jazz surprises.

His rendition of *A House is not a Home* falls like lovely autumn leaves, while *Surrey* resembles the human spirit. On these tunes the pianist skillfully syncopates melody and harmony. Others, like *The Very Thought of You*, concentrate on melody – and the result is something that's a perennial joy.

Schilder also features his own composition, *Mr Cool*, representing the essence of Tony. Further,



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THE PHILOSOPHER: Ebrahim Kalil Shihab in a pensive mood.

his complex pieces – *Windmills* and *My Funny Valentine* – are challenging, but masterpieces nevertheless.

Having worked a stint in Brazil, Schilder also plays a Brazilian Medley. Here he shows what can be accomplished on the bass keys. And with semi-

tones flowing smoothly, the listener gets a funky fusion of sound that is as characteristic of Schilder as it is Brazilian.

Tony had been denied by the white-owned music industry during the apartheid era, and was often detained for his activism, but on this

album not one angry note flows.

Shihab, born Tony's younger brother Chris, brings a different world on *The Tempest Live Volume 2*.

Playing Von Poll's grand, he produced three longer pieces – Irving Berlin's *How Deep is the Ocean*, George Gershwin's *Someone to Watch Over Me* and his own *My Destiny*.

"I love standards," Shihab always says, "but I have to play them my way." Giving Berlin's work an ominous feel through his emphasis on bass, and taking improvisational liberties (as is required by jazz), one hears that Shihab adores the classics, but he delivers them in his own inimitable style. The result befits any occasion – from cocktail chat to philosophers' debate.

International music critic Don Albert judged Shihab's CD "one of the finest piano albums ever to come out of South Africa". I concur.

Both albums should be collectors' items, especially for jazz and classical music lovers.

But, moreover, as it is renaissance time, everyone should own a Schilder.

The *Tempest Live* series is distributed by Jassics. The albums are available at local music outlets.

Flourishing in Texas

Daily Dispatch, Sept 15, 2000

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TEXAS jazz? Joe McBride? Yes. There's a jazzy trajectory that runs through the Lone Star state — from the Crusaders to Illinois Jacket, David Newman, Kenny Dorham and Ornette Coleman — which ends with Texas jazzman Joe McBride.

It's hardly surprising that jazz flourishes in Texas. Ragtime, zydeco and blues spilled into this vast land from New Orleans, Shreveport and Texarkana. And as itinerant musicians trekked to the West Coast, many remained or left their music influences in Texas towns.

For the past 12 years, a latter-day Stevie Wonder, St Louis native Joe McBride, has become a part of Texas jazz. From the age of 13 he performed in his native city, then out West in San Diego, before he finished his music studies at North Texas State University.

Settling in Dallas, where he allowed different music genres to take him, McBride headed four Heads Up productions — Grace, A Gift for Tomorrow, Keys to Your Heart and Double Take.

This history now culminates in the rhythm and bluesy jazz on his fourth album, *Texas Rhythm Club*.

McBride's been influenced, he says, by "pop, jazz, gospel, blues, old Motown, Herbie Hancock, Ramsey Lewis".

He recognises the influence of Southern funk and gospel also. On *Texas Rhythm Club* he pushes the edges of these styles, producing jazz that's almost fully representative of Southern-Delta-over-to-the-West-up-to-Chicago-and-down-to-Dallas American music.

But with West and East Coast jazz dominating, it

seems Texas jazz had been marginalised.

Alas, if that perception is taken as truth, then there's a whole lot of missing going on.

On his latest album McBride starts with the funky title track, on which he brings out the best from the "baddest" band, featuring friends Wayne Delano, saxophones; Martin Walters, bass and others. Mainstream tunes like *White Rock*, *Howzit in Dallas* follow.

On *Everything Remains the Same*, McBride offers a jazzy rhythm and blues tune, which retains strains of Motown. *Lone Star Boogie* is dance hall style jazz, but with beat enough to get down to.

Texas equals big country with vast travel distances dotted by clubs and pull-over joints. In the darker toned and funky *Texas Twister* McBride captures the rough life of the road, while the band swings in, creating a unique sound.

Texas Blues Cruise captures the many influences on Texas jazz. This

bluesy narrative is carried by McBride happily honky-tonking and inducting "Come on, help me out y'all", and the band responding with a blast of polyrhythms and syncopations.

Says McBride in a recent interview with *Jazziz* magazine:

"The whole objective with this album was to let people see good things about 'The Big D'. We're special because we're not really West Coast or East Coast, but what can only be described as Third Coast."

If you have not been to the third coast, take a ride there with McBride. He may be blind, but he knows the territory.



JOE McBRIDE



CHARLIE PARKER



DIZZY GILLESPIE

Pictures by WILLIAM CLAXTON

The invisible made visible

Daily Dispatch
September 29, 2000

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RALPH Ellison in his novel *Invisible Man* laments the condition of the African-American man in the United States — that he is considered to be of no consequence. The novel hones in on what happens to him in the wake of the flowering of literature, arts, and music by African-Americans during the Harlem Renaissance, 1920-29. He virtually disappears from public life.

But the main character in *Invisible Man* realises that he had to break free from the definitions others had imposed on him, and he learns to define himself.

So too was the experience of African American jazz musicians during the depression of the 1930s. Swing as jazz style took over from 1920s jazz after 1929. Swing exuded glamour. It was well sponsored, catered to dance needs, and deferred to capitalist imperatives.

Furthermore, swing veered from freer jazz styles, and lost blues elements, as well as the emphasis on improvisation and call and response. In African-American ranks, except for a handful in swing, jazz musicians became virtually invisible. And many were frustrated with swing, which they said had become sterile.

A bunch of young African-American jazz rebels, "outcasts", dared to be different.

They were fed-up with the tedium of swing. They further wanted to give presence to the African-American man who was discriminated against and perceived as being incapable of progress.

Also they wanted to rescue jazz from being a medium of mass culture (dance) and lift it to the level of art.

This group, most notably Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Thelonius Monk, Coleman Hawkins — all except Hawkins in their early 20s — started playing bebop jazz.

Starting about 1940, the musical change soon gathered momentum.

Beboppers replaced the rehearsal with the jam session (experimentation, pushing boundaries, and challenging each other). As renaissance men, they reached back to the "classics" (of the 1920s) and at the same time pushed ahead with experimentation.

They deliberately hit wrong notes and built on them, manipulated harmonic progression, inverted chords — all with bewildering effect. All the while these musicians, especially Parker and Gillespie, were integrating into

their work whatever they picked up en route to New York City, the seedbed of bebop's birth.

In this process they created jazz not intended for dance (one cannot dance to Gillespie's *Dizzy Atmosphere* or to Parker's *Moose the Mooche* even if one tried). The music had to be listened to as art.

In the breaks and riffs, they departed from the holism of swing.

Bebop thus constituted a rebellion. As such, it was met with hostility. The industry rejected the stridency bebop struck, and West Coast clubs expelled beboppers with the disdain reserved for radicals.

By 1945, however, these artists had forged a distinctly new jazz style. Bebop formed the watershed between traditional and modern jazz. This jazz quickening thrilled Ellison, who deemed it "a momentous modulation into a new key of musical sensibility; in brief, a revolution in culture".

By 1950 bebop found universal acclaim, and its progenitors were no longer invisible men.

● The voice of African song, Stompie Mavi, will be performing at Emzini African Restaurant tonight and at CD's Jazz Café tomorrow night.

Daily Dispatch
Oct. 6, 2000

Bringing Jefta home

PARIS, 1989, rivalled New York for jazz energy as these cities drew the best jazz artists. Late in 1989 world-renowned itinerant trumpet-player Bill Hardman, then doing the rounds of Paris clubs, stumbled into the live alto saxophonist sounds of Charlie Parker. But Parker had been dead 30-odd years. Yet, there before him sat a genius, resurrecting and recording the essence of Bird.

Hardman forthwith called his friend and Bird connoisseur Walter Bishop Jr in New York and told him that he had discovered an unpublished tape of Parker. He wanted to send the tape over to the Big Apple for Bishop to check out its authenticity.

Bishop, who had played and recorded with Parker, was astonished that he did not know this particular recording.

Hardman then told him it was not Bird playing, but a virtually unknown South African, Harold Jefta, who was based in Sweden at the time.

Like the US connoisseur, most South Africans outside Cape Town do not know of the genius of Harold Jefta, who was born in Cape Town on October 5, 1933.

At the age of 14 he took up playing the clarinet. Dubbed a "wonderboy", he played with the Mother City's famous Senators of Swing the next year.

Soon after, he picked up the saxophone — first the tenor, then the alto — and imbibed the musical influences of Lester Young, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie.

Harold and his brother Kenny, on guitar, soon became the hottest items on the Cape Town jazz scene. In the mid-1950s, long before they achieved fame, saxophonist Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim) and bassist

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Johnny Gertze played in Harold's band.

After Sharpeville, Jefta toured Europe and settled down in Sweden. For six years he studied music, mastering the clarinet, the bassoon and saxophones. There he

fell in love anew with the music of Charlie Parker.

In this regard the German flugelhorn player and jazz producer Klaus Werner Pusch wrote: "At that time (in the late 1960s) Jefta decided to devote all his time to Bird's music, even scoring it with strings and doing several concerts with symphony orchestras."

In the mid 1990s, with Hardman now dead, Pusch contacted Jefta. Their conversations led to an agreement to do an album on Charlie Parker's music.

The two teamed up in Cape Town and gathered drummer Maurice Gawronsky, South Africa's best bassist Basil Moses and pianist Nhla Nhla Magagula into their Quintet. In February 1997, they recorded a piece of SA musical history *Charlie Parker meets Cape Town*.

The album showcases Jefta at his best — enlivening Bird.

Listen to Jefta playing complex Bird pieces like *Marmaduke*, *Confirmation* and *My Little Suede Shoes* to perfection. Relax to the romantic tunes — *My Old Flame* and *Embraceable You*. And enjoy Moses touching heart strings with the bass.

The album, although not "original", shows our affinity with the larger music world and the omnipresence of Bird, and it brings home Harold Jefta.

Meanwhile jazz lovers can enjoy Another Level at CD's Jazz Café; Kerry Hiles with the Stirling Jazz band tonight and the Rhodes Jazz Band on Sunday night, both at Stirling High hall.

Daily Dispatch
Oct. 13, 2000

Blanchard is back

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EVER WONDER what happened to New Orleans-based trumpeter, bandleader and composer Terence Blanchard after his seminal *Jazz in Film* CD. Well, he went reflecting – on life, love, family, work – and he's still doing it.

Explained Blanchard: "I'm at a point of my life where I'm over the fascination of being a jazz musician. A life is complex, and involves many different equally important components. I thought that this was a great time to see as much as the whole picture of my life through music – like an album of pictures set to music."

The result of the reflection has been the release this year of Blanchard's first straight-ahead album since 1995.

The new album, *Wandering Moon*, carries eight Terence Blanchard originals plus two additional tracks. For this jazz party he brought together Eric Harland on drums, Brice Winston tenor sax, Edward Simon with keys, Dave Holland on bass, Branford Marsalis tenor sax, and new kid Aaron Fletcher, 20, on alto sax, as an exquisite septet to back him up.

On *Wandering Moon* Blanchard surpasses trumpet guru Sonny Rollins, whom he holds in great esteem. So over-awed was he the first time he had to play with Rollins that, he said, "it was the first time I sweated profusely before I even got to the stage".

With *Wandering Moon* there is no sweat. The album evokes the cool of Chet Baker and flows at the pace of a Sunday afternoon at home.

Blanchard dedicated the album to the first love of his life, Robin Burgess Blanchard. The title track



TERENCE BLANCHARD

Luna Viajera (Wandering Moon) was inspired by Robin and written just for her, Blanchard said.

"(It) speaks to the feeling I get when I'm on the road and missing her. I look at the moon and realise it's the same moon that will pass or has already passed her way, and that brings me closer to her."

The love that pervades *Wandering Moon* was surely influenced by two of Blanchard's all-time favourite albums, John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* and Miles Davis' *My Funny Valentine*.

The track *Sidney* is dedicated to his daughter whom he named for New Orleans jazz legend Sidney Bechet.

Sidney is the answer to what you say to your daughter when you cannot find words. He dedicates another

track, *Sweet's Dream*, to his friend Harry "Sweet" Edison who died last year. And *My Only Thought of You* speaks mostly of quiet thoughts and feelings with or about his wife Robin when the work day is done. The effect, then, is indeed a family and friends sounding album. You can think and feel to it.

Blanchard is back. And he is currently flowing with creative softness and nostalgia. His *Wandering Moon* offers the balances required in life. His forthcoming works are equally contemplative. Listen up for his soulful sounds on the forthcoming soundtrack to the film *Things You Can Tell by Looking at Her*, as well as on Grover Washington, Jr.'s posthumous *Aria* CD.

Daily Dispatch, Oct. 26, 2008

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A rich jazz heritage

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LOCAL TALENT:
Pinise Saul (left) and
Nick Moyake (right)
outside Dorkay
House in 1963.

*(Photo from Beyond the
Blues: Township jazz in
the 1960s and 1970s,
David Philip, 1997.)*

THE 1920s jazz revolution exploded in a part of a New York City burrough — Manhattan above 125th Street — but its impact was felt even in South Africa. Swing followed in the 1930s and bebop in the 1940s, both impressing our maturing black urban population.

By the 1950s the Eastern Cape was the epicentre of township jazz. The African Jazz Quavers, Nick Moyake and Eric Nomvete, had East London toe-tapping, Soul Jazzmen had Port Elizabeth on fire, the Matshikiza brothers held Queenstown captive and the Diamond Blacks Swing Band and Gaiety Brothers had Grahamstown swinging.

Veteran of the 1950s and one time member of the Jazz Quavers and currently with the Balfour Blue Notes, Derrick Makayaxulwa, 69, recalled that they were influenced by Dave Brubeck's post bebop sounds.

"We went for the off-beats, and created our own jazz. Those were the golden years of jazz," he said.

"But those years were difficult. The music was 'owned' by whites. We could not play in hotels. Just in the location — maybe in the Peacock Hall (East Bank), in shebeens, and so on. Our music was also not appreciated, at least not in terms of people wanting to pay for it. The boys ran away because of it," he added quickly.

The outcome was a jazz trickle up north (to Johannesburg) and out west (to Cape Town). The northern trajectory went via Queenstown, where the musicians jammed, every passing group or individual playing a "function at the junction".

By the late 1950s, Cape musicians had found their

own voice, fusing elements of ghoema, Cape street talk, Latin, and African music. It started on the streets of District Six and Langa location. These years found Basil Coetzee jamming with the Kwela Kids and saxophonist Winston Mankunku in Guguletu.

So too did musicians congregating in Sophiatown and at Dorkay House in Johannesburg find their sound, a potent mix of mbaqanga, kwela and American jazz.

Then came Sharpeville in 1960 with the subsequent crackdown of bannings and jailings.

Musicologist Chris Ballantine recalled that in 1960 the "SABC established a divisive, ethnically based radio service for blacks, with seven full-time ethnic services. Musically their bias was towards traditional, neo-traditional, and religious music; the record companies followed suit".

Except for a few notable exceptions, the top jazz musicians forthwith left the country.

In 1961 the Jazz Epistles won the Cold Castle Jazz Festival, followed by Mackay Dvashe's Jazz Dazzlers (1962) and the Blue Notes (1963). In September 1963 Chris McGregor conducted the Castle Lager Big Band for one of the seminal recordings in our music history.

Shortly thereafter McGregor and the Blue Notes — Mongezi Feza, Johnny Dyani, Dudu Pukwana, Nick Moyake, Louis Moholo, Early Mabuza — left for France.

And South African jazz fell into a deathlike sleep — until Abdullah Ibrahim returned in the early 1970s and when Louis Moholo brought home a Mongezi Feza tune, *You Think You Know Me*.

A local legend lives on



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WHILE PERFORMING at a charity jazz concert in Germany, he collapsed on stage, never to recover. He was playing jazz, doing what he loved most. But he also died in exiled unhappiness far from the East London people he loved and who loved him.

This paradox speaks of Johnny Dyani – jazzman extraordinaire on vocals, the bass and piano and for a long time black East London's favourite son.

In 1986 he was accorded a hero's funeral at the Mdantsane civic hall, attended by his families in Denmark, Sweden and South Africa and thousands others.

Dyani was born in Duncan Village in 1947. A prodigy, he started as a 14-year-old vocalist performing with the Five Slickers. This group sang the Tsolo section of Duncan Village (today's Braelyn) into dance. Soon Dyani was spotted by the acclaimed pianist Tete M'bambisa who took him into a group known as the Four Yanks. Of the Four Yanks local Dyani connoisseur Peter Skolweni writes: "The Four Yanks took the Border, Eastern Cape and Western Cape by storm."

When the Johannesburg stage troupe, *Back of Your Backyard*, played in East London, says Skolweni, "the jazz lunatic kid joined in on bass". It was the first time he played the bass. Skolweni explains: "Johnny had music in him; he just transferred it to the instrument."

Dyani left with the *Backyard* troupe. At Dorkay House he linked up with bandleader Chris McGregor and played with the



HOME-GROWN: Johnny Dyani (far right), with Blue Notes Chris McGregor, Louis Moholo, Dudu Pukwana and Mongezi Feza.

Blue Notes in the Cold Castle Jazz Festival in 1963. In 1964 he left South Africa with the Blue Notes.

He worked in France, Britain, Denmark and Sweden. Great jazzmen like Charlie Mingus and Archie Shepp played with him.

At least two Dyani albums are still around. They are *Song for Biko* (1978) and *Mbizo* (1982).

But Dyani longed for home. At a gig in Gaborone in 1982 he told producer Julius Mtsake that he wanted to "breathe the air within and near home by having a touch of the soil within Southern Africa".

When Dyani died in 1986, his South African, Swedish and Danish families knew the right thing was to bury him in Mdantsane.

There are local connoisseurs like Skolweni and Victor Matu who hold the magic of Dyani dear.

Yet, despite the recent resurgence in African jazz, the music of Dyani has not resurfaced; the shelves are void of his work.

Johnny Dyani isn't dead, but he's dying. South Africans will wake up to his genius and, just as he came home to be buried close to us, I think we will soon make sure he lives close to us.

Red-hot Hargrove

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Paula Dispart
NOV. 10, 2000



RED-HOT: Trumpeter Roy Hargrove in a mellow mood.

VICTORIA JUNCTION Hotel, Greenpoint. The early April night was turning from navy blue to deep grey. And still he was blowing hot. Really hot. Trumpeter Roy Hargrove.

Still the audience, who had at 03h00 hastened over from the North Sea Jazz Festival in Cape Town's Good Hope Centre, allowed themselves to be suspended by his notes.

The young man, now 31, had brought the magic of jazz to its aboriginal African shores and he played tunes from his then forthcoming album, *Roy Hargrove with Strings*.

On the built-in bench to his right sat Gerald Cannon, the biggest, baddest bassist from Chicago country, plucking the stand-up in a trance.

Cannon, famous for his Grant Park appearances and sessions with all the top jazz musicians in the world, had also earlier that night played with Johnny Griffin and Hargrove.

By mid-1999 Hargrove, who started out as a high school prodigy 10 years before, already had six major albums to his credit, including *Crisol Habana*, *Approaching*

Standards and Tenors of Our Time. But he got restless and struck out for the US West Coast, destination Big Sur.

He had fallen in love with that rugged coast which, jutting into the Pacific, had inspired beatnik Jack Kerouac, Beach Boy Al Jardine, Jim Morrison, and every free spirit who had travelled there to see a glimpse of forever.

In 1997 at a live outdoor performance at the Esalen Institute, the stage of which is set on a high cliff overlooking the Pacific, Hargrove observed: "What is this place. I love playing here."

October last year, with autumn settling down over Big Sur, the young man with the trumpet and flugelhorn gathered his core of backup musicians, including Cannon, and hired the 17-member Monterey Jazz Festival Chamber Orchestra.

In a rare experiment of reeds meeting strings, Hargrove then produced *Hargrove with Strings*.

Although one of the great improvisers of 1990s jazz, Hargrove loves standards and "pretty songs" also.

And so the experiment made Pat Metheny's *Always and Forever*

over into a waltz in 4/4 time; rhapsodised Henry Mancini's complex *Moment to Moment*; and improvised Jimmy Dorsey's *I'm Glad There is You* into a light dance mode with a power-ending.

Cannon's composition *Peri* also features strongly — with the big guy swooping solos with saxophonist Sherman Irby and Hargrove himself.

While only one Hargrove original features on the album, he holds the whole together, and it bears his unmistakable stamp — the reeds prevailed, and the standards were delightful.

Hargrove with Strings puts period to the 1990s revisitation of the standards but also leaves a space serving as an entrance to 21st century jazz experimentation.

When he played at the Junction that night in April he showed the mostly male listeners how to approach standards, until their hearts hung out, and until the wives and girlfriends hooted outside.

Those who had not been lucky enough to be there, however, will always have *Hargrove with Strings*.

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-*



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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 Siphon 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.

Our very own Lady Day

Daily Dispatch, Oct. 27, 2000

IN 30 years of listening to jazz, I always thought Billie Holiday was inimitable. And so she is ... sort of. But getting mellow at Satchmo's in Port Elizabeth one winter's night in 1997, listening to magic flowing from the fingers of Errol Cuddumbey and sensing Robbie Jansen on saxophone breathing through his soul, she came on stage.

Her velvet voice reminded me of Lady Day. But there was more. She soared just a little higher and sweeter, loosening whatever romanticism remained in me and my forty-something generation.

Esther Miller was her name, I learnt.

She sang jazz standards of Ella Fitzgerald, Natalie Cole and of Lady Day herself.

I was disabused of my infatuation with Billie Holiday. We in South Africa had our own talents and need not have deferred to the great American awesomeness, I thought.

Esther grew up in a middle-class coloured suburb of Port Elizabeth. She schooled at one of the friendly city's progressive (South African Council of Sports) schools, Raymond Uren's Bethelsdorp High.

Sundays she went for drives with her parents, listening to the Carpenters on Springbok Radio. She learned to love romantic ballads. There was a homeliness, a decency, and indeed a timelessness about them.

At age 16 Esther placed second nationwide in the SABC's Talent

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ESTHER MILLER

85 competition for singing the Afrikaans song *Sonder Jou*, a tune on which Zim Ngqawana (he's originally from New Brighton, Port Elizabeth) played the flute.

In 1986 she, as a precocious 17-year-old, left for the University of Cape Town to study medicine. During her second year two events changed her life. She bought her first jazz album, Billie Holiday's smooth *Lady in Satin* (1958). Esther did not imitate; she was simply inspired to become her best self — as the night at Satchmo's a decade later proved.

Also, during her second year at UCT Esther attended a jazz show of pianist Gerry Spencer and saxophonist Winston Mankunku. She decided to become a jazz singer instead of a medical doctor.

Then, starting with *Cry Me A River* in a Sea Point restaurant, Esther plunged into a jazz singing career, and she stuck to standards, satin and sweet.

Alas, the South African music industry did not respond to her talent. Undeterred, Esther left for an extended stint of club singing in the Middle East, principally the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

Zim Ngqawana's comment about South African jazz musicians' plight keeps haunting me:

"Why do we have to leave this beautiful country, go overseas for the crowds to come out and listen to us?"

With funds so raised, this enterprising young lady of South African jazz produced her own debut album, *Say Hello to Esther*.

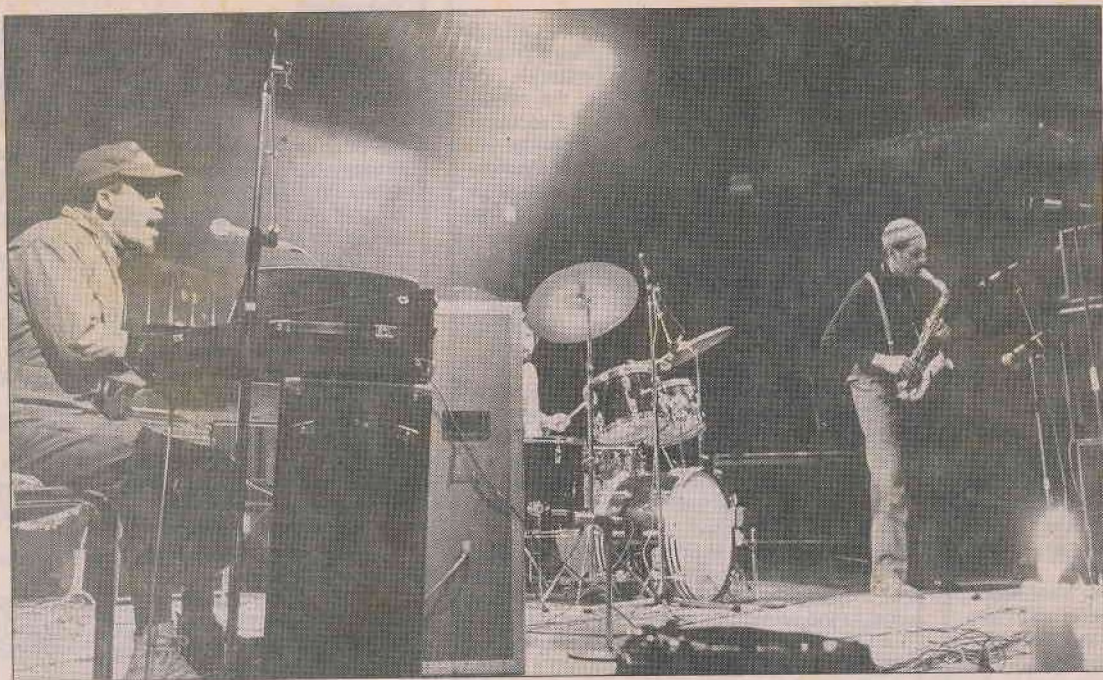
On this album she promises, from the Carpenter-like purity of her youth, that *We've Only Just Begun*. You should want to say hello to Esther and find out what she had begun.

Esther has just returned from a tour in Finland. Currently she's doing the club scene in Cape Town and working on a new studio album.

She'll be in the Eastern Cape in late February or early March. Let's support her concerts and say hello to Esther.

Daily Dispatch
November 24, 2000

Remembering Johnny Dyani



LIVE IN DENMARK, 1977: This rare picture shows Duncan Village-born vocalist, bassist and pianist Johnny Dyani (left) in a live concert in Roskilde, Denmark. The session was recorded as *The Witchdoktor's Son*, Dyani's favourite set of tunes. With him on stage are Brazilian drummer Chium (partly obscured) and Danish saxophonist John Tchicai.

LULAMA NGQISHA, 61, who sang for the East London vocal group the Bright Fives, tells me that people across the colour line absolutely adored Johnny Dyani.

Says he: "I think it was in 1959 in the Springbok bioscope, when Johnny appeared on stage in the middle of a show. He sang so beautifully. As a singer I myself couldn't believe it. Then suddenly Johnny's brother Fikile walked up the aisle and onto the stage, and grabbed Johnny. He was a school-teacher, see, and he did not want Johnny to be a singer. But the crowd manhandled him. They wanted Johnny back on stage."

Despite his brother's concern, Johnny sang wherever he could — in the Peacock Hall, Springbok bioscope, and later in the Milner Hotel.

"Johnny never played the bass in East London. He was a singer," local Dyani connoisseur and former actor Peter Skolweni tells me.

He vividly remembers Dyani playing a township boy singer in *Xapa Goes To Town*, an early 1960s stage play.

When the play *Back of Your*



BackBeat

With Cornelius Thomas

Backyard arrived in East London minus Victor Mgijima who had left the cast in Durban to return to Johannesburg, Dyani sat to fill in on bass. Says Skolweni: "He had the flair to just do it ... he just transferred it to the instrument."

Johnny the musician had an irresistible allure. Writes noted drummer Louis Moholo: "Johnny ... he was kind of like a godsend to us, he had some magic about him. And we knew from the start, when he was a young boy with a singing band ... he was a fantastic singer, singing the high notes with such ease. He put the music of the Blue Notes where it was at."

Top names in jazz joined Johnny on the choicest stages in Europe. The Danes especially remember him for a show called *The Witchdoktor's Son*, which he did with Danish saxophonist John Tchicai and Brazilian drummer Chium in Roskilde in 1977. Europeans will remember him for

his shows and recordings, and his charisma.

During his exile, Dyani married two white women, Mandie of Danish descent and Jannie of Swedish descent. Johnny lived his African-ness to the full. And he remained married to them. This points to Johnny's charisma and integrity, and constituted something remarkable in a country where bigamy is illegal.

At the time of his death, perfect amity prevailed between the wives and among the children — Hannah, Thandie and Thomas.

"Thomas," Skolweni remembers, "was astonished to find that his father's music was not available in South Africa."

The absence of Dyani's recordings rendered him, Thomas seemed to say, without a past.

Asked about Dyani's future, however, Skolweni says: "I envisage something like a documentary on Johnny. I have already talked to some people about it."

Others have talked about the formation of a Johnny Dyani foundation. East Londoners could help to make the initiatives a reality.

Daily Dispatch
December 1, 2000

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Dee Dee goes the distance

IT TOOK them a jolly long time, but jazz writers are conceding that self-exiled American jazz and showbiz artist Dee Dee Bridgewater is one of the best jazz singers of the past century.

She turned 50 the other day and recently brought out an album, *Live at Yoshi's* — just to show America her vibrancy and relevance.

Dee Dee was born Denise Garrett in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1950. She must have heard the voice of Ella Fitzgerald before she could gurgle because her mother endlessly played the records of that grand lady of jazz.

Like so many others, the Garretts migrated to the prosperous Michigan town of Flint. Despite the liberal pretensions of the North, social relations there forced Dee Dee onto the defensive, or go the extra distance to prove herself.

Despite these everyday frustrations, Dee Dee sang everywhere in Michigan during the 1960s. In 1969 she toured the Soviet Union. Then an extended stint in New York City followed. But while her career reached for the stars, her personal life descended into chaos. Racism, exploitation, and the liberties of abusive husbands Cecil Bridgewater and stage director Gilbert Moses prompted her to leave for France. But only after she had recorded her debut jazz album, *Afro Blue*, and a splash of disco and funk albums.



BackBeat

With Cornelius Thomas



DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER

In 1983 she performed live in Paris for the first time. She entered the theatre also, singing Billie Holiday in *Lady Day*. In 1986 she settled there permanently.

She enjoyed France, without being naïve about racism. But there she did not have to prove herself beyond the colour of her skin. She told the Dutch magazine *Jazz*, "Als

zangeres word ik hier gewaardeerd vanwege mijn musiek. Ik hoef geen gimmick te hebben. Ik hoef niemand's kont (backside) te kussen."

During a tour of the United States, Dee Dee achieved her finest musical moment with her tribute to Ella, simply entitled *Dear Ella* — for which she won a Grammy in 1997. But she also found racism unchanged. Instead of appreciating her authentic voice and worth, record company executives asked if she would not sound a bit more like Diana Krall — a white jazz singer. She minced no words when she told *Jazz*: "Diana Krall is het stereotiepe voorbeeld van die blanke zangeressen die ze nu lanceren. Ze doet niet veel bijzonders maar ze krijgt wel de publiciteit en de miljoenen voor marketing." She followed by accusing record companies of taking her albums out of circulation to promote Krall.

Dee Dee's not into brown nosing — not even when it comes to the moguls of music. Despite recent successes she said if she did not get a better deal, *Live at Yoshi's* would be her last album under a contract. Fortunately the *Live at Yoshi* album is already on the market, with Dee Dee at her sassiest, sexiest and humourously scatting self.

She'll tell you what a little moonlight can do on a slow boat to China.

Recommending Merle Ally

Daily
Dispatch



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

December 27,
2000

WITH the brazen courage that comes with age or urgency, I cut a line of a few hundred people at Dockside, the latest jazz club in Cape Town.

Downstairs, just out of earshot of the ethnic ritual of the ravers at the top level, Virtual Jazz Reality performed standards.

The place was packed.

The music was pumping — fusion tunes and old rhythm and blues.

But, annoyingly, the drummer, although excellent, overpowered almost everyone. The pianist could not be heard, and neither could the lead guitarist.

Flugelhornist Ian Smith tried his best to compete with the drummer, but to no avail. And he exacerbated matters when he tried to sing.

Fortunately bass guitarist Sammy Webber led the way in vintage Victor Bailey style.

And to everyone's delight, the Eastern Cape's own Merle Ally, from Port Elizabeth, sang herself into the hearts of the jam-packed

crowd.

Due to the poor support for jazz in the Eastern Cape, Merle, like Esther Miller, left for Cape Town. For the past several years she has been singing in jazz joints, general gigs and cabaret clubs in the Mother City.

Last week Merle showed why she's so in demand. From Ella Fitzgerald standards to jazzed up Janet Jackson lyrics, Merle kept them dancing, and they kept on asking for more.

She is a class act, and she brought something special to a fairly average outfit.

I observed a small kind of wonder that night. The crowd ranged from ages 16 (I guessed) to 68 (I asked).

What impressed me most was the youngsters knew all the old standards. They even sang along.

Equally, they appreciated jazzed up versions of disco-type tunes of the likes of Thelma Houston, Barry White, Lou Rawls and Janet Jackson.

And I thought that if jazz, tradi-

tionally considered the music of older folk, could transform commercial tunes so both young and old enjoyed them, then there is a kind of magic to the genre.

The evening with Merle, Sammy and the rest taught me anew that jazz comes in many guises, and that it transcends both genre and the age of its audience. It showed clearly that even today's youngsters, who are so often vilified for "their" music, do appreciate jazz.

Over it all soared the husky voice of Ally. And after a while it did not matter that the lead guitarist and the pianist could hardly be heard. It mattered only that young and old became one in appreciation.

Would I recommend Merle Ally and Virtual Jazz Reality to Eastern Capers who happen to visit Cape Town?

If you want to stand accused of dancing, sure. If you just want to enjoy the music and Dockside atmosphere, yes. And mostly I recommend Merle Ally herself.

Daily Dispatch,
January 19, 2001

Sublime Sathima for North Sea Jazz Fest



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas

JAZZ singer Sathima Bea Benjamin is back in South Africa this week. The New York-based exile is however not here to perform but to attend to family matters.

But take heart. She's also checking out the mother city scene in preparation for her performance at the recently announced North Sea Jazz Festival in the Good Hope Centre on March 30-31.

In the course of her sojourn abroad (1962-), Benjamin occasionally visited South Africa, but it had never been easy to get her here and impossible to keep her.

Her forthcoming performance at the festival is owed to the resolve of organisers Rashid Lombard and Clarence Ford to bring South Africa only the best jazz artists.

While Benjamin has been on the world stage four decades now, she is largely unsung in South Africa. Some few know of her albums *Southern Touch*, *Love Light*, and *Cape Town Love*.

However, the release in 1997 of a long lost album sparked new interest in Benjamin.

By February 1963 the Dollar Brand (later Abdullah Ibrahim) trio and their vocalist Benjamin had been performing at Zurich's Africana Club nearly a year when the Duke Ellington Orchestra breezed through.

The South Africans attended the Ellington concert, where Benjamin promptly convinced Ellington to

come listen to Brand, who was then soon to become her husband.

Impressed, Ellington invited the trio to record at Barclays studio in Paris. The product of this engagement, *Duke Ellington Presents Dollar Brand*, introduced Brand to the world.

Ellington also invited Benjamin to record. The next day the trio (and on some tunes Ellington and Billy Strayhorn) backed her. Later when Ellington presented the tape for production it was turned down as Benjamin was unknown and did not sound "commercial" enough.

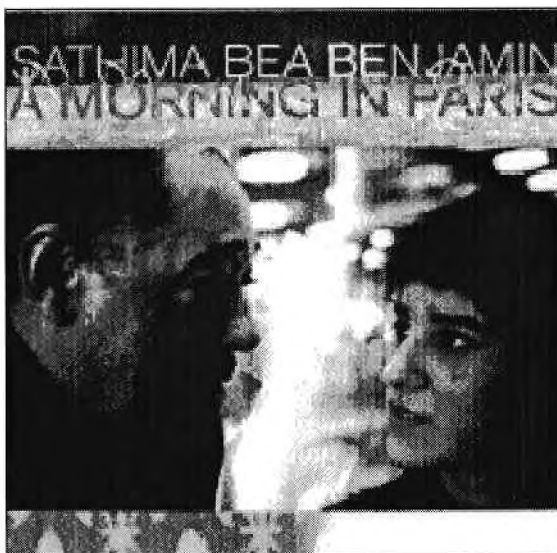
Benjamin kept asking for a copy of the tape. But apparently it had been lost. Years later it turned out that Gerhard Lehner, sound engineer at Barclays, had made an extra copy. This led to the cutting, 34 years after the recording, of *A Morning in Paris*.

This historical album presents twelve ballads in Benjamin's sublime voice.

Now she's coming to serenade South Africa at the North Sea Jazz Festival.

As a bonus Benjamin will bring along an American backing trio. It has not been confirmed yet, but a reliable source reckoned that the baddest bassist from America, Buster Williams, will be in that trio.

Tickets are available at Computicket at R235 for a day pass and R360 for two days.



Mama Afrika's worldly music

By Cornelius Thomas

SOUTH Africa's mama of song, Miriam Makeba, has been nominated for a Grammy Award in the world music category for her latest album, *Homeland*.

This is not her first nomination. In recognition of her contribution to world music, Makeba, in 1965, won her first Grammy for *An Evening with Harry Belafonte and Miriam Makeba*.

Makeba told City Press: "The first Grammy was normal, but this nomination in my homeland makes it special because I can celebrate with my people. The nomination is sweet and wonderful and I deserve it."

When she received her first Grammy she was, although an unpolitical singer, in exile. Her songs told tales of her people's experiences. She writes in her 1988 autobiography, *Makeba: My Story*: "My life, my career, every song I sing and every appearance I make, are bound up with the plight of my people."

Born in 1932 in Prospect township, Johannesburg, Miriam experienced the trials and joys of the urbanising African. In the 1950s she sang with the Cuban Brothers, Manhattan Brothers, the Skylarks,

and performed with the other divas of the day — Dolly Rathebe and Dorothy Masuka.

Sophiatown throbbed with a mix of American jazz and African sounds. Makeba was there, singing *Pata Pata*.

In 1959, she played the female lead in the jazz opera, *King Kong*, and achieved national renown.

In 1960 she left to attend the Venice premiere of the anti-apartheid movie *Come Back, Africa*. Singing stints in London and New York followed.

But when Makeba tried to return in 1960 to visit her mother's grave, she was denied re-entry. Her passport had been cancelled.

For the next thirty years she remained in exile, placing South African music on the world map and apartheid on the agenda of the United Nations.

She returned in 1991.

Re-issues of old albums, a movie and live performances followed.

Last year she released *Homeland*. It offers tribute to those who contributed to South African music and the liberation struggle.

Makeba's granddaughter, Zenzi Lee, joins her on *Pata Pata 2000*.

This version is laid back, exuding the innocent voice of Zenzi, while Mama Afrika narrates and sings reminiscences of an era gone by.

At 68 Mama Afrika says: "I'm



MIRIAM MAKEBA

happy at home, eating my pap and chakalaka", and enjoying this fresh Grammy nomination.

She will also perform at the North Sea Jazz Festival in Cape Town in March.

At this festival, music lovers will have the chance to share in the essence of a woman who is more than a musician. She is a crusader for the rights of women and children, and dignity for all.

A sleeping legacy

DUDU Pukwana at The Downbeat Club, Hillbrow. For a few months in 1964 this bohemian patch in the all-white flatscape swayed to the sounds of avant-garde jazz by alto saxophonist Dudu Pukwana.

Whites interested in the alternative edges of music attended. A few blacks also came in. But the club struggled.

Maybe Dudu's notes soared just a tad over the souls of his listeners. "It was not just entertaining stuff," said his contemporary, photographer Basil Breakey, "it was ... very expressionistic, (and) reflected the society at the time."

The record companies gave this music no attention.

In 1964 Dudu Pukwana left South Africa.

Dudu was born in Walmer township, Port Elizabeth, in 1938. He first played piano for the Broadway Yanks, later the Four Yanks. After meeting East London saxophonist Nick Moyake, Dudu switched to alto sax.

He moved to Johannesburg, and soon played with Chris McGregor, the Blue Notes, and the Castle Lager Big Band.

The record industry showed lit-



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas

tle interest. Pass laws precluded safe movement to and from Johannesburg and the SABC's policy of airing only traditional and religious music on its seven ethnic radio stations had, by 1964, begun to choke jazz.

With the genre in danger, Dudu left with the Blue Notes to play in the Antibes Jazz Festival in France. In exile, said friend Louis Moholo, "Dudu was just the pillar of the Blue Notes."

He performed at Ronnie Scott's in London. In London he anchored the many exiles, setting them up, getting them gigs.

In a 1977 gig at the Club 100 in London, Dudu blew the alto sax, playing with Chris McGregor, Johnny Dyani and Louis Moholo to create the now-classic *Blue Notes in Concert Volume 1*.

Although the Blue Notes dispersed, Dudu maintained contact with them all.

He also formed his own bands, Spear and, later, Zila.

His personnel at one time

included the exiled East London singing sensation, Pinisi Sauli. In 1978 he and Dyani helped out as part of the Louis Moholo Octet to cut *Spirits Rejoice*.

He also formed part of the Dyani Quartet which that year brought out *Song for Biko*, and, in 1982, *Mbizo*.

In 1983 Dudu Pukwana and Zila brought out *Life in Bracknell* — compiled live recordings of the Bracknell Jazz Festival (England) and the Willasau Jazz Festival (Switzerland). In 1989 the group cut its last album, *Cosmic Chapter 30*.

Dudu played in the tribute to Nelson Mandela at Wembley Stadium in London in 1989, a highlight of his career. After 26 years in exile, Dudu died in his adopted home city in 1990.

He had held together the exiles who kept South African jazz alive, and kept Europeans "zapping" about apartheid.

Still, today, despite talk of an African renaissance and the 1990s resurgence of jazz, the music of Dudu Pukwana has not resurged.

But take heart, the grapevine buzzes about the imminent formation of a Dyani-Pukwana Jazz Foundation.

DD
Jan 12
2001

Women's rhythms

*Daily
Examiner*

BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas

*January 5,
2001*

IN THE male dominated genre of jazz, there have always been a few outstanding women who held their own — Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughn, Ella Fitzgerald, Dee Dee Bridgewater. But they have been largely confined to realms of song and diva-dom. That has been the extent of women's contribution to jazz.

But Newcastle-born Hazel Leach, 44, took the gender-circumscribed world of jazz by the horns, and challenged men in their own trio-combo, big-band orchestra backyard. The result was that, eventually, with her United Women's Orchestra, she placed women on the centre stage of world jazz.

Leach cut her musical teeth in Northumberland. She studied at the Newcastle School of Music, completing a combined jazz and classical music course, which included composition and arranging. She spent some years blowing the tenor saxophone in the pubs and clubs of England.

But, with the acultural atmosphere of the gritty industrial town and football hooliganism creeping in on her, she gravitated to the Netherlands in 1979, where she studied the flute.

The cultural atmosphere on the continent treated her well. She stayed on to take a degree in education even while studying the flute and tenor saxophone and doing concerts. And since 1985, she's lectured in theory, history and arranging in the jazz department of the Arnhem Conservatorium.

In 1993, Leach responded to an advertisement and attended a big band workshop for women. Here she met women instrumentalists who were eager to learn and to work in a team context. Leach assumed leadership and gradually an organic outfit emerged — an all-women big band, the United Women's Orchestra.

For Leach, the most enriching experience of this process derived from working with a 37-year-old German, Christina Fuchs, also a tenor saxophonist.

A conductor and composer,



GENDER-FREE JAZZ: Hazel Leach and her United Women's Orchestra explode the myth that jazz is a male thing.

Fuchs plays saxophone and bass clarinet. She divides her time between playing and composing, mainly for her own ensembles. Her approach is multi-disciplinary and her style includes elements from New Music and avant-garde jazz. These complemented the folksy jazz of Leach well.

Last year, the Leach-Fuchs collaboration paid off when the United Women's Orchestra won first prize in the acclaimed Sardinian Scrivere Jazz 2000 competition, organised every two years by the Blue Note Big Band of Sardinia.

The UWO also brought out their first CD, *The Blue One*, last year. The compositions and arrangements of the Leach-Fuchs

team on this album are genderless, quintessential jazz, yet uniquely new.

In a recent interview with the Dutch magazine, *Jazz*, Leach concedes that both the name and the art of the group was, "in a certain sense", a political statement. This was necessary, she said, because she wanted to explode the treble prejudices that still existed in the industry against the phenomenon of white women playing jazz instruments big band style.

Leach and Fuchs believe in the role model value of action. In this sense, they are cutting a path for women through the male-defined jungle of the jazz industry. And, judging by *The Blue One*, the jazz world is richer for it.

Cape Town to host North Sea Jazz Festival

Dariusz Prokopowicz
29/12/00

WORD is out, and it's official. Cape Town will again host the southern leg of the North Sea Jazz Festival as promised last year.

The chief organiser of last year's festival, famed photographer Rashid Lombard, recently broke the news at a gala cocktail at the Victoria Junction Hotel in Greenpoint.

The event, which last year lured legends like Abby Lincoln, Johnny Griffin and Herbie Hancock to our shores, will take place at the Good Hope Centre on March 30 and 31.

This time evergreen vocalist Randy Crawford and versatile jazzists Marcus Miller and Dewey Redman will travel from the United States.

The Piet Noordijk All Star Quintet will come from Europe.

From the local music stables, vocalist Sibongile Khumalo and Musa Manzini have confirmed, and the itinerant singing sensation Sathima Benjamin has been invited to perform in her hometown.

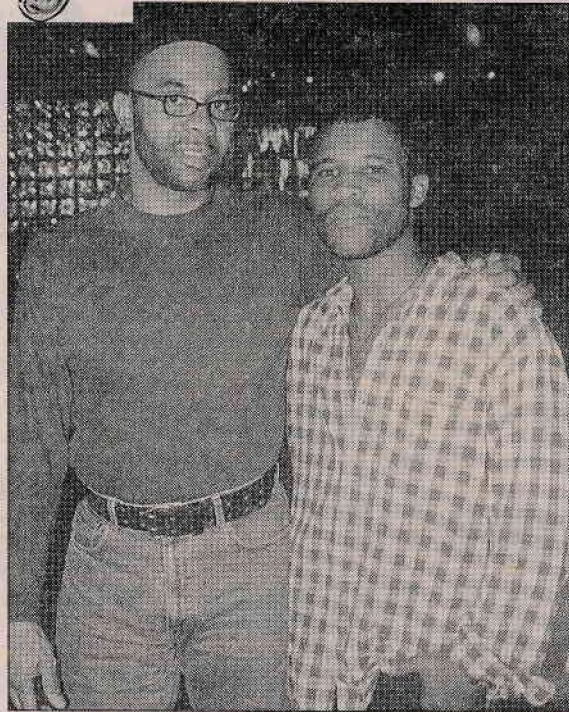
Festival directors Rashid Lombard and Clarence Ford are putting together this particular festival of jazz excellence with enhanced and additional sponsorship, most notably from the national Department of Arts and Culture, the Cape Town City Council, and P4 Radio.

The SABC will offer media sponsorship.

Financial services group African Harvest, having



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas



FUNCTION AT VICTORIA JUNCTION: Local lead guitarist Anton Wynkwardt, right, with American saxophonist Kenny Garrett at the Victoria Junction Hotel during the 2000 North Sea Jazz Festival Cape Town. Next year's festival will once again be held in Cape Town.

pledged R7 million over the next three years, becomes the principal sponsor.

Hence the festival will be known as the African Harvest North Sea Jazz Festival Cape Town.

The organisers envisage 33 acts on four stages.

Faced with a staggering wealth of jazz talent and

styles, Lombard and Ford are currently whittling their list down to manageable proportions and negotiating with some chosen artists.

Irrespective of whom they invite, the final list is sure to cater to every jazz taste.

To assist with the organisation, the Dutch jazz

fundi and brainfather of the original (The Hague) North Sea Jazz Festival, Theo van den Hoek, has already flown into the Mother City.

Van den Hoek recognises that Cape Town has the potential of becoming the jazz capital of the southern hemisphere.

"The first festival at The Hague in 1975 gathered 9 000 people, and last year 25 000; Cape Town captivated more than 16 000," he said.

An excited Van den Hoek also said: "Jazz is an international language and South Africans welcomed the festival with open hearts earlier this year."

The southern leg of this prestigious event last year turned out to be a national event, with, according to Lombard, up to 65% of festival goers coming from "the interior".

There is no reason why the 2001 festival will not be an even greater national success, and, to add flavour to the festivities, the organisers are throwing in a free gig by Cape jazz musicians on March 29.

Fans will be delighted to know that the prices remain R235 per day ticket or R360 for the two days of the festival.

Having covered the festival last year, I can assure jazz fans that the music will be worth every cent paid. As one Eastern Cape fan said last year, "I would have paid R235 for Tania Maria alone."

Rip-off recollections



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas

Daily Dispatch
Jan 26, 2001



SUNNY RAY:
Street corner
crooner
Sunny Kops
(front) with
the
Hollywood
Stars in the
early 1950s.

“I LOVED to sing the songs of Johnny Ray,” says Sunny Kops, recalling how as a teenager he led his own vocal group, the Hollywood Stars.

“We usually gathered on a street corner and sang our hearts out. For anyone passing by and just to enjoy ourselves.”

This was the 1950s when music blared from every North End home and when, sooner or later, the boys hanging out on Kaki’s Corner and Mr Lee’s Corner would break into song.

In 1953 African Jazz from Johannesburg visited East London. During their performances here, they also looked for people to join their show, then bound for Lourenço Marques — a cosmopolitan city which held an irresistible allure for South Africans.

A flamboyant and flippant Kops promptly auditioned. “I sang Johnny Ray’s *Cry*, Mario Lanza’s *Be My Love*, a Frankie Lane and a Nat King Cole for them,” he remembers. Kops made the cut. He recalls Des Ally, a local chap and a taxi driver who “sang very well”, also joined up.

The group, which included Dorothy Masuka, Miriam Makeba and Ben “Satch” Masinga, travelled to LM in a Golden Arrow bus. At the border post, owner of the show David Frost collected their pounds — to exchange for escudos later.

The first show took place in a packed stadium. Kops, performing as Sunny Ray, sang a Johnny

Ray and a Nat King Cole. Towards the end Ally and Nancy Jacobs — she later composed the anti-removals song, *Meadowlands* — sang a rivetting duet, *You May Not Be an Angel*.

Ally concluded with *On Happiness Street*. The crowd cried for more, but backstage Masuka told him, “Don’t you go back there. Starve them. Tomorrow’s another day.”

After the show, says Kops, “We were treated like celebrities; like Masuka and Makeba.” According to an LM paper, Ally “stole the limelight”.

A few days later, Ally asked for his money (given to Frost at the border).

Frost put him in a car and whisked him off. He dropped the hapless singer on a Durban street at midnight — without paying him. Ally called an East London friend to send him money for a train ticket.

Frost returned to LM. After a few more glorious shows, Kops remembers, “He and that wife of his in the leopard skin clothes disappeared, money and all.”

The group’s manager, Kops recalls, bought him a train ticket.

The two East Londoners sparkled as they related their feats in LM, but they also remembered Frost who never paid them.

Seems it’s an old thing — local musicians being taken for a ride.

But I’ve heard this is rapidly changing.

Our languishing heritage comes home



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas

DD
Feb 2,
2001



MUSICAL MEMORIES: Johnny Dyani strums away at the bass in this file photograph. With the albums of the Johnny Dyani Quartet now available at jazz outlets, a chunk of South Africa's jazz heritage has come home.

LAST year I suggested that Duncan Village-born bassist Johnny Dyani was better known in Europe than in his own country — as is the case with so many of our artists.

To wit, painter Garth Erasmus, jazz vocalist Sathima Bea Benjamin and actress Amelia Blossom Pegram.

I also said talk of the African renaissance had not resulted in the music of our lost musicians, like Dyani and Walmer Township-born saxophonist Dudu Pukwana, becoming readily available for South African enjoyment.

The other day I stumbled upon six Dyani albums. This “discovery” and subsequent listening exhilarated me. The albums are: *The Witch-doktor's Son*, by Dyani and others, circa 1977; *Parade*, by the Joe Bonner Trio, including Dyani, 1979, and featuring three previously unissued numbers: *Wild is the Wind*, *Hurry Up and Wait* and a Charlie Parker tune, *Au Privave*; *Mbizo*, by the Johnny Dyani Quartet, 1981; *Afrika*, by Johnny Dyani, 1983; *Suburban Fantasies*, by Joe Bonner and Dyani, 1983, and *Song*

for *Biko*, by the Johnny Dyani Quartet, 1978.

Song for Biko was recorded on July 18, 1978, the 40th birthday of Pukwana, and reprinted last year with the previously unissued *Flower in the Village*.

Flower in the Village will be of particular delight to jazz aficionados in East London.

The 21-minute track consists of two movements: *Flower of Peace* and *Duncan Village*. On *Flower* Dyani opens with a solo, plucking bass chords that speak of the rare lulls in the hurly burly of Duncan Village life.

Then, with the rest of the quartet kicking in, Duncan Village life opens in a musical orgasm, with Dudu at his saxophonic best. And it goes on until Dyani interprets, I think, the slow resolution of the end of the villagers' day.

Listen also to Dyani's *Song for Biko* on this album. And, whether you're from Ginsberg or Walmer Township, you'll find the sax of Pukwana connecting you with the passion of *Biko*, with bassist Dyani communicating the steadfastness of principle that characterised the

young martyr.

This is heavy stuff; it's not for the fusion-hearted.

With these albums available at your local jazz outlet, in a way, Johnny Dyani has come home.

Maybe the art of Erasmus will soon be enjoyed here in South Africa instead of being sold to the Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. And perhaps Benjamin's ten albums will be available in our country soon. Perchance Pegram will grace the stage at Gauloises Warehouse in Cape Town or the Guild Theatre, East London. Add to this Dudu. Add the trunksful of music and boxes of books languishing in exile.

“We have more renaissance material in this country than mineral wealth” says Hugh Masekela, “(but) we are the only country in the world that does not show itself enough, that does not listen to itself enough.”

I suppose the doyen of South African heritage music meant that when that happens, the African renaissance will be here.

African music in her veins

 **BackBeat**
with Cornelius Thomas

Daily Dispatch
Feb. 9, 2001



A NATURAL ACT:
Sathima Bea Benjamin with her son Tsakwe. This picture was taken in Copenhagen in 1972.

She will perform in Cape Town at the North Sea Jazz Festival at the end of March.

Picture by IB
SKOVGAARD

THE MIRACLE of *A Morning in Paris* with Duke Ellington in 1963, featured in this column a few weeks ago, prompted me to delve deeper into the life of Sathima Bea Benjamin.

I found Beattie Benjamin, a gangly kid born in Johannesburg in 1936 but who grew up in Cape Town, conquered the world stage, and eventually received the South African Women for Women Award.

Being of Afro-Eurasian descent, Beattie had the music of three continents in her veins. But Cape Town forged her.

Going to bioscope on Saturdays to watch American films and listening to Nat King Cole and Billie Holiday on the radio was standard fare for coloureds. And for Beattie. As a kid she debuted as a singer during an interval variety show at a local bioscope.

There were the luxuries of the records and swinging at *langarm* dances — and Beattie sang through it all.

As a teen Beattie participated in the resurgence of the music of the 1920s Harlem.

Alas, in 1953 she had to stand outside, listening through a window to her “first real love”, Sam Isaacs, drumming jazz to a white audience at a skating rink.

The United States at this time was stirring out of segregation while South Africa was descending into apartheid.

By the late 1950s Benjamin had toured with the African Jazz and Variety road show and gigged with jazz virtuoso Harold Jephtha and pianist Henry February, singing in whites-only facilities.

As was the case with Harlem’s Cotton Club during

the 1920s, the musicians here too had to hang out with the kitchen staff during breaks.

She sang with Dollar Brand’s Jazz Epistles in 1961. A year later, with work becoming impossible under apartheid, she left South Africa.

Duncan Villager Johnny Dyani gave her the name that stuck.

“It was Dyani who named me Sathima ... He told me it meant ‘a person with a kind heart’,” said Beattie.

In the thirty-six years after the miracle morning, Benjamin married Abdullah Ibrahim, produced nine albums, founded a record company, gave birth to Tsakwe (a son) and Tsidi (a daughter), and kept South Africa on the world agenda.

Early in 1999 she visited Cape Town and, with Henry February and others, created the studio album *Cape Town Love*.

A few months later in Toronto on August 7, SA Women for Women — a forum celebrating Women’s Day and honouring the achievements globally of South African women — conferred on her its 1999 Award.

Benjamin then said: “Doing my part for the struggle was a perfectly natural act. It’s but a drop in the ocean ... My heart yearns still to go home and sing to my people ... I hope this can become a reality soon.”

Well, because Benjamin is billed to sing in the North Sea Jazz Festival at the end of March, the yearning will soon come true, *inshallah*.

* Information for this column was found in Lars Rasmussen’s book, *Sathima Bea Benjamin: Embracing Jazz*.

A Dutchman plays Bird



BackBeat

by Cornelius Thomas

Daily Dispatch
March 16, 2001

DUTCH TREAT: Dutch saxophonist Piet Noordijk will bring his Quintet to the North Sea Jazz Festival later this month.

EUROPE has had a long affinity with both classical music and jazz. Since the infusion of jazz into this continent, starting with James Reece Europe's band during the Great War and quickening with the exodus of the African-American exiles fleeing McCarthyism (the anti-communist, anti-black madness of the 1950s) for Europe (mostly Paris at first), jazz and classical music have in a process of reciprocity edged closer to each other.

Within this osmotic process, the city of Rotterdam in 1932 saw the birth of Piet Noordijk, later to become a genius saxophonist. Unsurprisingly, the music of Charlie Parker (and Duke Ellington) helped the closer edging of jazz and classical music along.

Noordijk had lessons from his brother, tenor player Kees (1915-1987), and started working professionally as a teenager. Since the 1950s Noordijk has taken the European jazz scene increasingly to greater expressions of excellence.

Those who have wondered about the results of "process" between jazz and classical music should listen to the Noordijk albums, *Sinatra Songbook Tribute* and *Piet Plays Bird*.

Having spent hours with his *Piet Plays Bird*, I proffer that nothing could be more enjoyable than to hear the Godfather of the Dutch jazz saxophonists playing a tune called *Laura* on this outstanding album.

Noordijk is a respecter of the music of Charlie Parker. And he really knows how to play like Bird.

Piet Plays Bird, although leaning towards a "classical interpretation with strings", echoes Harold Jephtha's *Cape Town Meets Charlie Parker*.

On it, *Autumn in New York* brings a Dutch take on what used to be New Amsterdam, carrying the flow of the Hudson River on an undercurrent of strings, the alto sax picking up the rush of the river, before it fades as the river fans into the upper Hudson Bay.

For his work Noordijk has been a worthy recipient of the Bird Award. To this day Charlie Parker remains his inspiration.

Now Noordijk is bringing his Quintet to the North Sea Jazz Festival. Those who are into standards, classical music and Parker are in for a treat. Quintet members bassist Hein van de Geyn and drummer John Engels both won a Bird (Engels being the first drummer to do so).

Quintet guitarist Jesse van Ruller again has won a Thelonious Monk Award and the European press expect that pianist Rob van Bavel is also headed in the award-winning direction.

As a special treat, the Noordijk Quintet will feature itinerant guitarist Philip Catherine.

London-born Catherine, 58, who has been in the forefront of the European jazz scene since the sixties, has worked with great artists like Chet Baker, Stéphane Grappelli, and Charles Mingus.

After the Heineken Jazz Festival 1992, Het Parool said that "the greatest living jazz guitarist is Philip Catherine" and the Portuguese publication MC asserted after the 1993 Porto Festival: "Philip Catherine is a great guitarist, and a great musician."

In 1990 he too received a Bird award. Seems like the disciples of the original Bird are converging on Cape Town.

Daily Dispatch
March 9, 2001

Ibrahim revisits Cape Town



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas



**PREJUDICE
MEDICINE:**
Jazz maestro
Abdullah
Ibrahim has
produced
*Cape Town
Revisited*.

IN THE jazz world Abdullah Ibrahim towers as the foremost South African contributor to composition and practice. Over the past 40 odd years he has produced an unsurpassed body of jazz. He started as Dollar Brand, first imbibing the sounds migrants and “exiles” from all over the world brought to District Six, Cape Town. He then pioneered Cape jazz in the clubs of the mother city.

Brand started his recording corpus, when he took the Cape sounds up north where, with the help of Hugh Masekela and Jonas Gwanga, he fused it with remnants of marabi and elements of mbaqanga, kwela and American jazz. The result was an African jazz album by the Jazz Epistles (1959).

After Sharpeville (1960) and the subsequent state of emergency, musicians like Brand were seen as subversives. They brought people together irrespective of race, colour, creed or social orientation. In 1962 he left for Europe. He’s been in exile since. Meanwhile he converted to Islam and “became” Abdullah Ibrahim.

On one of his rare returns to South Africa, of course, he produced our other national anthem, the Cape Flats passion play, *Manenberg* (literally: man and mountain).

In exile Ibrahim produced a body of work, a discography of which literally fills a book — Lars Rasmussen’s *Abdullah Ibrahim: Discography* (2000).

Recently he returned to South Africa and produced *Cape Town Revisited* — a summation of his take on philosophy and history.

The Abdullah Ibrahim Trio (consisting also of bassist Marcus McLaurine and drummer George

Gray) recorded it in Cape Town in 1997.

The album consists of tunes covering themes from the Khoisan to Soweto.

Damara Blue pays tribute to Khoisan music. *Some Day Soon Sweet Samba* anticipates the ultimate freedom celebration — in a melting pot of Cape and Brazilian sounds.

Cape Town to Congo Square comes in three movements. These speak of joy at home (*District Six Carnival*), the African diaspora (*African Street Parade*), and reminiscences on history (*Too-Kah*).

Song for Sathima is a dedication to Ibrahim’s wife, Sathima Bea Benjamin.

It presents a spiritual song with piano and bass “talking”.

A beautiful piece is *Water from an Ancient Well* on which Ibrahim affirms ancestral wisdoms. It is one of his all-time favourite tunes.

Malay influences texture *Tuang Guru* — about a Muslim exile on Robben Island — and *Barakaat* (the blessing).

On *Soweto* Ibrahim conjures sounds from his Kofifi bag.

Other tunes are *Tintinyana*, *Eleventh Hour*, *Tsakwe-Royal Blue*, *The Mountain* and *The Wedding*.

This album, Ibrahim believes, is medicine — for the acquired diseases of prejudice and racism.

● The Alan Webster Quartet — featuring Webster on sax, drummer Mark Rausch, bassist Donne Dowman and pianist Matthew Boon — returns to Smokey Swallows this Sunday for an encore performance.

Daily Dispatch, Friday, March 2,

Classified advertising ☎ 743-4343

2001

Grammy-winning jazz



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

HE PLUNGES straight into the groove with *Anabis*, taking you to the heights of jazz improvisation and blending Portuguese-African influences on Cuban rhythms at the same time. This is acoustic pianist Chucho Valdes on his Grammy-winning Latin jazz album, *Live at the Village Vanguard*.

In the hurly burly of Eminem's misogyny and Elton John's gesture, it has been forgotten that jazz also featured at the prestigious Grammy Awards.

This year Diane Reeves took the honours for Jazz Vocal Album with *Live in Concert*; Bela Fleck and the Flecktones walked off with Contemporary Jazz Album for *Outbound*; Pat Metheny won the Instrumental Solo with *(Go) Get It*; Joe Lovano took Large Jazz Ensemble for *52 Street Themes*; and Branford Marsalis carried off the prize for Jazz Instrumental Album with *Contemporary Jazz-Branford Marsalis*.

But it was the Valdes Quartet's offering that captured what jazz was and is about — African traditional polyrhythms and call and response, transformed by slaves (most of whom went to Brazil and Cuba, and not to the United States), combining with American Deep South blues, migratory experience and instrumental improvisation at the Village Vanguard in New York City.

This club, its fame lately enhanced by Wynton Marsalis, has



CHUCHO VALDES

for the past 60 odd years schooled every jazz musician of note and produced umpteen "live" albums.

But there was no reason to expect anything super special to come out of it when the relatively unknown Valdes walked in for a gig one night in April, 1999.

After opening with *Anabis*, however, word spread and proprietor

Lorraine Gordon kept them for several sets — all of which sold out. Crowds gathered on Seventh Street to catch suggestions of the magic that flowed from Roberto Guillot's conga and bata drums, Francisco Pampin's acoustic bass, and Raul Roque's trap drums.

Anabis is followed by a "son" tune.

"Son," Valdes says on the album liner notes, "is an antecedent of today's salsa music, and like ragtime the son blends African and European." *Son XXI* uses those blends and takes jazz to a dimension fit for the 21st century.

Six equally excellent tunes follow, with the traditional *My Funny Valentine* holding the centre.

Throughout, percussion gone postmodern fills out the sound, giving the album a zippy edge.

Live at the Village Vanguard concludes with Lorraine's *Habanera* in which Valdes improvises by collaging eclectic structures from the three continents' music he loves.

Forget Steely Dan and Eminem a while; buy this Valdes, and allow yourself to be blown by the best sounds from the cross-streams of Cuba and Africa meeting at America's jazz mecca.

● One of the premier jazz bassists in South Africa, Donne Dowlman, who is well known in Gauteng for her lyrical improvisations, and conceptual drummer Mark Rausch will join Alan Webster and Matthew Boon at Smokey Swallows this Sunday.

Accomplished artists for North Sea

THE African Harvest North Sea Jazz Festival will feature 16 African artists, eight of whom have been nominated for SAMA awards.

They are: Miriam Makeba,

Paul Hanmer, Sipho Gumede, Sibongile Khumalo, Don Laka, Vusi Mahlasela, Sylvia Mdunyelwa and Musa Manzini, all of whom you can see at the festival on March 30 and 31.

Tickets are available at Computicket at R235 for one day and R360 for both days.

The African Harvest North Sea Jazz Festival Hotline is (021) 418-6924.

Jazzy weekend

Daily Dispatch



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas

*Feb. 23,
2001*



STILL JAZZING: Bass guitarist Lulama Gawulana, drummer and winner of one of last year's SAMRO scholarships Kesivan Naidoo, saxophonist and director Alan Webster, and pianist Janet Webster seen in this file picture are all still playing jazz.

BUFFALO City will be able to feast on a variety jazz this weekend.

First, the world-class Soweto String Quartet will be taking you to the heights of jazz and classical eclecticism at the Guild Theatre in East London tonight. Then Lulama Gawulana Quintet's gig over at the Shukushukuma Tavern in Ilitha near Berlin will feature African jazz with Latin touches.

And finally, to unwind the weekend, Alan Webster and Matthew Boon, who regularly perform in big bands and orchestras around the Eastern Cape and nationally, will be playing mellow jazz at the international restaurant, Smokey Swallows, in Vincent on Sunday.

This triple act comes after more than a quarter long drought in jazz around here.

To help out, local entrepreneur Charles Poole has entered the jazz track.

He opened Smokey Swallows on Devereux Avenue in December.

His adjunct to Smokey Swallows, Rhythm House, initially sold jazz CDs and paraphernalia.

Poole tells me that, given the dearth that had set into jazz circles recently, he has now decided to offer mellow jazz on Sunday nights for an experimental period.

"I decided to make my service and products multi-functional to serve my clients and visitors to the city better," he says.

"The concept is international, but East London deserves it," Poole reckons. Having been to jazz joints in the United States, and knowing the scene in Europe,

I know it is."

So Smokey Swallows exudes a cosmopolitan air, allowing for international cuisine, compact discs, space for jazz prints, jazz photo art, and original jazz paintings, and now live mellow jazz also.

Virtuoso sax player and big band leader Alan Webster is excited about Poole's concept as well as playing in duo format at Smokey Swallows.

According to Webster, this format in jazz affords opportunity for a lot of inspiration for the players — in this case himself on saxophones and Matthew Boon on piano.

"The two players don't have extra help," says Webster, "so sound might not come out as full."

"So you have to put in more; and more communication is needed between the two players."

But that is not a problem; call and response comes with jazz territory. Also, there's always room for improvisation, and with only two playing, an audience can pick creative tangents up more easily and therefore appreciate them even more.

Quartet, quintet or duo — this weekend, take your pick and just jazz.

Tickets for the Soweto String Quartet concert are R100 and available at the theatre box office, or you can reserve seats at (043)743 7267. Webster-Boon at Smokey Swallows will cost R50, which includes a full meal. A cover charge is applicable to the Shukushukuma gig also.

A Dane's third love

Daily Republic
March 23, 2001



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas



IN EXILE: Arriving in Copenhagen in early 1963 with their manager Jens Elers (extreme left) are South African jazz musicians (from left) Makhaya Ntshoko, Dollar Brand, Beattie Benjamin and Johnny Gertze.

“THERE are two things in life — beer and books”, Danish bookstore owner Lars Rasmussen once believed. But since encountering the music of Abdullah Ibrahim, he has added a third love to his life — South African jazz.

In the 1950s Sophiatown and District Six swung as South Africa's main jazz locations, with a mix of American jazz and kwela and some spice called Cape jazz. But after the destruction of Sophiatown (1955) and the Sharpeville massacre (1960), many jazz musicians opted for exile. By the middle 1960s, the city of Copenhagen embraced South African jazz.

In 1972 the genre had Copenhagen-based rock music lover Lars Rasmussen mesmerised.

Recently he published two books on South African jazz — *Abdullah Ibrahim: Discography and Sathima Beba Benjamin: Embracing Jazz*.

Late last year he established contact with East London jazz lovers, seeking information for his book-in-progress on Duncan villager Johnny Dyani, and last month he visited Cape Town to do research on the 1960s Cape jazz scene.

Of his visit Rasmussen says: “I

stumbled over a collection of very fine photographs taken by Hardy Stockman who was around at that time and decided to make a book of them.” For now, having secured Stockman's treasure trove, he has put the Dyani book on hold for the Cape jazz book, which will be out in May.

Intrigued, I ask him why this passion for South African jazz.

He says: “It comes from another world; it is so unlike anything else that goes under the name of jazz. Perhaps it's an underflow of tribal music, really ancient roots, hard to describe ... I'm deeply fascinated with this music and don't want to listen to anything else.”

After attending a concert of pianist Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) in 1972, Rasmussen was hooked.

“I have followed him for many years all over the world and can sit evening after evening listening to him.”

After encountering Ibrahim, Rasmussen discovered he had missed a lot of jazz in Copenhagen.

The city's appetite for jazz deepened when American jazzmen Oscar Peterson and Ben Webster took refuge there in the early 1960s.

Then the South Africans came.

In 1963 the Dollar Brand Trio (with drummer Makhaya Ntshoko and bassist Johnny Gertze) and singer Beattie Benjamin first visited Copenhagen, where they played at the Jazzhus Montmartre. Regular returns between 1963 and 1972 made them household names.

Bassist Dyani settled in the city in the early 1970s. There he recorded his jazz corpus with compatriots saxophonist Dudu Pukwana, trumpeter Mongezi Feza and drummer Louis Moholo.

And Cape singer turned New York exile Benjamin added her sublime voice to the scene.

Rasmussen says: “I was immediately struck by her (Benjamin's), natural appearance and the beauty of her voice ... To this day I have remained an admirer of her singing.”

Last year he produced a Benjamin compilation called *Embracing Jazz*.

Rasmussen has a new motto nowadays: “Books, beer and South African jazz”.

• Tickets for the North Sea Jazz Festival, March 30-31, are now available at the Jazz Inn in Union Arcade.

Youthful jazz for Smokey Swallows



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas

*Daily
Kapaun
March 30,
2001*



STEVEN PRESTON



MICHELLE KNOBEL

YOUTHFUL jazz excellence will be on offer this weekend for local jazz fans.

The Stirling Jazz Band will be playing standards and mellow jazz at Smokey Swallows on Sunday from 20h00 to 22h00.

Consisting of eight members — Steven Preston (alto sax); Bevan Lynch (baritone sax); Michelle Knobel and Cassandra E' Silva (tenor sax); Louise Smith (trombone); Karin Samuel (piano); Liesl Boon (bass); and Brendan Wanklin (drums) — the band will bring a full yet smooth sound.

The band is led and moulded by Stirling High educator and director of the National Youth Jazz Festival, Alan Webster.

Due to lack of space I shall only comment on three of the eight band members.

Michelle, 16, is in Grade 11 and a member of the national schools jazz band. For her "creative ideas and improvisational skill", Webster holds this classical pianist and jazz

saxophonist in high regard.

"She is naturally talented, and I will be surprised if she doesn't choose a career in music," he added.

Alto saxophonist, Steven, 17, has been a member of the schools' jazz band for the past three years. He also represented South Africa in the maths olympiad. In addition to playing in Stirling's first hockey and cricket teams, he emerged top of his grade last year.

Two weeks ago he made his professional debut when he performed as a guest for the Alan Webster Quartet. Webster, incidentally, considers him one of the best jazz players at the school.

Also in attendance will be Bevan Lynch who plays the baritone sax.

Bevan is also a multi-talented young man. He is Stirling High headboy and represented his "province", Border, in water polo. Musicwise he is the only learner in the Eastern Cape Big Band.

Matthew Boon, also an educator

at Stirling High, appears as a guest artist, playing the sax.

The band will play his composition, *Sundowner*, an aptly named number for a Sunday evening of smooth jazz.

The band has played at some of the premier jazz venues in the country, including the Green Dolphin (Cape Town) and Bassline (Mellville), as well as at the Grahamstown Festival.

It has also fronted for legends like Hotep Galeta and Jonas Gwanga — and last year opened for bass guitarist extraordinaire Spho Gumede in the Orient Theatre.

The band has toured South Africa, Zimbabwe and Europe.

Next week it will leave for a two-week tour of Namibia.

En route it will play gigs in Upington and Etosha, before taking the school and community halls of Swakopmund and Windhoek by storm.

Before that, though, you can catch them right here in East London.

Songbird, farewell



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas

*Daily
Dispatch
April 6,
2001*

EAST London's songbird of note is silent.

Queenstown-born jazz vocalist Veliswa Komani died of meningitis in Mdantsane last week.

Veliswa has become a household name in local jazz circles over the past several years. She is a product of Queenstown, which has produced many jazz musicians. She sang in local venues, doing gigs and set work, until she spilled the sounds of Natalie Cole and Sarah Vaughn into the public ear in 1999 when she sang at the opening of the HAEL housing project in Belgravia Crescent.

Thereafter, Veliswa became a regular at CD's jazz cafe where she was billed in her own right and fronted for the house band, Another Level, as well as for other visiting groups. She sang at other clubs and events also, most notably the Old Mutual Millennium Jazz Festival.

Always she brought the enduring anthems of the Eastern Cape, Ntyilo Ntyilo and Lakutshon iLanga, for a long time not heard before the people again, doing her bit for the African Renaissance.

Veliswa could not wait for the first opportunity to try her talents up North, to sing in the Gauteng



VELISWA KOMANI

clubs.

For the past six months the East London Jazz Society thought of securing funding for Veliswa to create an opportunity for her to sing in Cape Town or Johannesburg.

And Cape Town-based master jazz pianist Hotep Galeta told me at the North Sea Jazz Festival in the mother city, "I was waiting for word on Veliswa, about her com-

ing to Cape Town. Then I heard the shocking news."

The songbird fell ill and never made it to the big city. Never even got to sing in a function at the junction, her birthplace Queenstown.

However, she paid her dues alongside other Queenstown greats, to wit Pat Matshikiza and Stompie Mavi, to enliven the East London jazz scene again.

And those who had the privilege to listen to her will not forget her sweet voice and ready smile.

Yet, like that other Queenstown diva, Margaret Singana, Veliswa too died penniless.

To help the Komani family in their time of bereavement, a benefit concert featuring Ikhwezi, Another Level, the Gawulana Quartet and Friends will be held at Duke's in the Mdantsane Hotel this Sunday from 13h00 to 17h00. Admission will be R10.

On October 28, the last night at CD's, Veliswa sang a songbook of Nina Simone and Natalie Cole. She closed with *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes*.

The audience lamented the closure of the club, but little did they know they had been listening to the last of the songbird.

Revival needs public support



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas



**MENTOR
MAGIC:**
(right) Mentor
Alan Webster
on sax with
Matthew
Boon .

**HOMEGROWN
TALENT:**
Chris Saunders,
drummer/guitarist
of The Basics

*Darius
Dispersed
May 4,
2001*



THE JAZZ revival in East London seems to be under way indeed, with new acts the Matthew Boon Quartet and The Basics easing into the consciousness of the jazz public.

The revival reference refers to jazz talent — bands that are crisp, able and ready.

The older acts are still around but Boon and the leader of The Basics, Christopher Saunders, are adding new masala to the pot.

Friends, Ikhwezi, the Lulama Gawulana Quartet and Alan Webster Quartet bring up the more established jazz guard. However, they experience difficulty in finding regular gigs. The blame for this lies neither with the bands nor in the clubs, but rather with the public who do not support jazz as a home-grown cultural idiom but as an occasional diversion.

Even Dukes, a custom-made, state-of-the-art jazz venue, cannot provide the artists with regular gigs

because of the lack of broad-based support.

The city's top jazz band, Another Level, regularly travels to Port Elizabeth and Bisho — where there is a demand for its excellence — and to Graaff-Reinet and Transkei towns to play "bread and butter" gigs.

Meanwhile the evergreen Lulama Gawulana is still in a composing mode. He has recently added the *House of Danbury* — a polyrhythmic complexity of South African heritage music and township jazz — to his growing corpus of compositions. The next step for Gawulana has to be to record a CD.

One of the new outfits on the jazz block is The Basics, led by drummer Saunders and vocalist Cizario Roberts. These two struck their first professional chords at the former CD's Jazz Café and have been improving since. They play regular gigs, emphasising fusion standards, at the Steakhouse in Parkside.

The youthful Matthew Boon Quartet consists of Boon on saxophone, Chris Thorpe on drums, Nicholas Knott on bass and Donovan Abrey on guitar. Largely under the mentorship of Alan Webster, this Quartet has, despite lulls between gigs, developed into a tight outfit playing "clean" mainstream standards and Quartet originals.

When I last heard Boon playing the sax at the Green Bean, his saxophony was open and expansive, edging towards the generous musical spirit of John Coltrane. This Sunday at Smokey Swallows he will show the distance he has come. Trumpeter Richard Poole from Grahamstown will guest for the Quartet.

All this aside; the point is that if the current revival is to be sustained, the jazz-loving public will have to respond with enthusiasm to the Boons, Saunders and the old guard too.

An independent voice



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

Buddy Ruspater
April 27, 2001

“THERE are no accidents and no mistakes. It really just depends on the choices you choose to make,” said singer Rachelle Ferrell in a recent interview with *Soul Train* magazine.

Ferrell, a funky vocalist from the streets of Philadelphia was speaking about her latest album *Individuality (Can I Be Me)*, which was released late last year.

After her debut self-titled 1992 album, her career plunged in the tumult of recording industry politics, with the recording company not promoting her *Rachelle Ferrell* to full advantage.

Some considered the album not commercial enough, while to others it sounded either “not black enough” or “not white enough”.

Ferrell receded from the charts, but not from the limelight.

Following in the footsteps of South Africa’s New York exile Sathima Bea Benjamin, who started her own record company, and Dee Dee Bridgewater, who told the recording industry: “Ik hoef niemands kont te kussen” and then went her own way, Ferrell too declared her independence.

She financed her own band and took to the road.

Proceeding towards one of her early “independence” concerts she observed: “Boy, a lot of people are going to the Central Park Zoo today.”

But the zoo people actually came to her Central Park concert.

For the next seven years Ferrell sang in concerts, clubs and festivals.

She said of her ‘exile’: “This whole time period was about owning oneself, discovering oneself and owning that ... and in coming fully into who I am, and being courageous enough to express that.”

Visually Ferrell emerged with a kinky-haired ethnic image; and musically with her own voice — neither black nor white, nor even commercial.

That does not bother Ferrell, as the tracks *Individuality* and *Satisfied* on *Individuality* indicate.

Thematically too Ferrell dug deeper. Listen to her engaging in a call and response on her dedication to the New Mexico part of Mother Earth, *Gaia*. Keep the volume down and the fine glassware out of the way when listening to her six-octave voice reaching out primaevally to love on *Run to Me*.

South Africa’s Jonathan Butler appears on the album as guest vocalist, and Ferrell’s mentor



RACHELLE FERRELL

George Duke collaborates on several tracks.

Asked by *Soul Train* what her hopes were for the album, Ferrell reckoned:

“My hopes for this CD have already been realised (in its production). And so I take and live each moment with such a depth of gratitude that it just bubbles out everywhere.”

About her career, particularly her thematic choices, Ferrell now says

“If it does not resonate with who I am, then it doesn’t matter.

“Because my ultimate goal is not album sales, but to touch people. And in order to touch someone else, you have to be true to yourself.”

I highly recommend this album, which is now available at local jazz outlets.

● For R&B, jazz and funk, the Lighthouse Café on the Orient Beach is the place to be this weekend.

● Those who are into mainstream jazz can catch the Alan Webster Quartet at Smokey Swallows on Sunday.

Local jazz scene in recovery

 **BackBeat**
with Cornelius Thomas



VOICES of LEGACY:

Herbie Tsoaeli,
Andile Yenana,
Sydney Mnisi,
Marcus Wyatt and
Lulu Gontsana.

*Daily
Dispatch
April 20,
2001*

THE JAZZ scene in East London has recently shown signs of recovery with a number of shows at a local restaurant, the Soweto String Quartet playing in the Guild Theatre and four bands — Friends, Ikhwezi, Another Level and Gawulana Quintet — coming together and playing a benefit concert for the late singer, Veliswa Komani.

Elsewhere too, locally nurtured jazz excellence continues in the accomplishments of the East Cape's Andile Yenana and Zim Ngqawana.

King William's Town's jazz pianist extraordinaire Yenana and his outfit Voice last month brought out their debut album, *Quintet Legacy*.

The quintet consists of Yenana, Herbie Tsoaeli on bass, Marcus Wyatt on trumpet, Lulu Gontsana on drums and Sydney Mnisi on guitar.

With Khumbul' iKhaya and Lakatshon iLanga Yenana emphasises the rich body of South African compositions that's available to young musicians today.

In a recent interview with the *Sowetan*, Yenana urges that the

compositions of Todd Matshikiza and Zakes Nkosi among others be mastered, asking "Why should we as young musicians behave as if there is no consistent body of jazz legacy left behind by jazz pioneers over many decades?"

Meanwhile, New Brighton-born saxophonist Zim Ngqawana is blowing on. He recently won the Sama award for Best Traditional Jazz Album for his *Ingoma*. *Ingoma*, *San Song* and *Zimology* Zim's together constitute a Renaissance trilogy.

In his work Zim mixes traditional and classical music with mainstream jazz, adding new technical methods and emotive concepts.

First there is harmolody, an Ornette Colemanian fusion of harmony of melody. Then follows jazz instructor Butch Morris's induction method — which Zim uses vigorously to induce band members to bring out what's in their soul.

When people criticised Zim's vigour towards band members in a concert last year, he explained: "I did not force them to improvise; I induced them to find their best and to share it with the audience."

Finally, there is the "free spirit" of Sun Ra.

About the improvisational and classical aspects of his work and the need for jazz lovers in particular to accept new forms of jazz, Zim said: "We must overcome our fear of change, get rid of the old habits. We have to drag it out of ourselves otherwise it will destroy us. We have to accept each other (and) what we bring. This kind of courage is cleansing in a spiritual way."

Zim added: "We need to develop our culture properly. Refine it. Put it in its proper place (within world culture)," Zim finally said.

Andile hearkens to a proper mastery (first) of the existing body of compositions; Zim emphasises experimentation and a bold plunge into progressive eclecticism. It does not matter, the two positions are not mutually exclusive. In fact, such interaction is required by jazz. And this has been proven by the many collaborations (including on *Ingoma*) between Andile Yenana and Zim Ngqawana.

● This Sunday, be sure to catch saxophonist Rick van Heerden at Smokey Swallows in Vincent.

Midnight with Marcus Miller

Daily Dispatch

April 13, 2001

BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

THE countdown to the recent North Sea Jazz Festival, Cape Town started at the Victoria Junction Hotel on the Broadway of the good old Cape. While musicians and media people arrived, the place buzzed as a stand-up bassist jammed in the unseen background.

The excitement in the press room of the Victoria lifted to another level as Brooklyn's wonder-son bass guitarist and clarinetist, Marcus Miller, stepped up to the mike.

Responding to a question about life after Miles Davis, Miller explained that after Miles (with whom he had played for decades) had passed away, he looked around, asking himself, "Well, who am I gonna play with now?"

So he formed his current backing group, which has Roger Byam on sax, Bernard Wright and Leroy Taylor on keyboards, Charles Bell on drums, Dean Brown on lead guitar, and Michael Stewart on trumpet.

"South Africans don't know them that well," Miller continued at the press conference, "and that's why we're excited to play in the festival."

"I've been working with

a lot of the musicians who ... were always excited about what they were doing, always asking 'what can I do next' and 'what new is going on and how can I incorporate it into my music?'"

The iconoclastic son of Cato Manor, Sipho Gumede, kicked off the festival on bass mood at the outside stage, Manenberg, by strumming the guitar into *Township Jive*, and having the audience dance Africa from tune one. The throngs were also looking forward to Victor Bailey, who played a starring role in the 2000 festival.

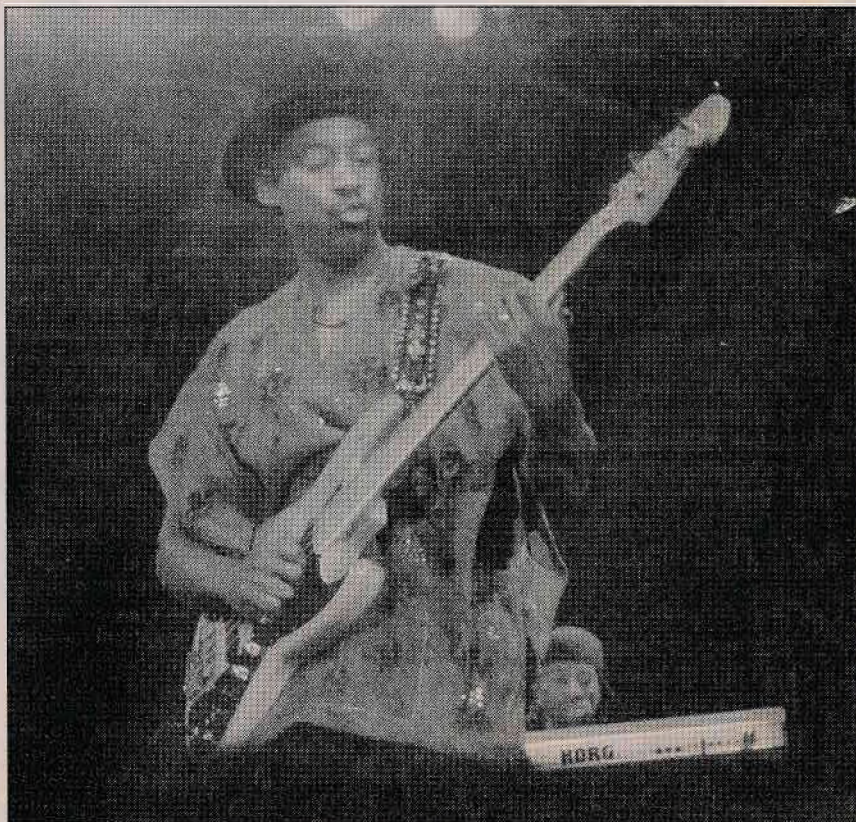
But first, just after midnight March 30, it was Marcus Miller time.

A pulse in the background, an ominous beat; and Marcus — "with the hat" — exploded onto Kippies.

In *People Make the World Go Round*, he inspired the band to intensity and fullness that left no room for personal interpretation.

Thumbing the bass guitar with lip-curling intensity, Marcus was making his own statement, far from the shadow of his mentor, Miles Davis.

Responding to his own 'what can I do next'



STRUTTING HIS STUFF: Jazzman extraordinaire Marcus Miller drives a runaway jazz train on Kippies stage at the North Sea Jazz Festival, Cape Town.

observation, Marcus changed "call and response" to "challenge and you-better-play-till-your-heart-hangs-out" on the Crusaders tune, *Maputo*.

The band responded with improvisations, each member going his own way, until Marcus commanded them back to *Maputo*, thumb-banging

the deeper strings.

"This is the very best you can get," reckoned an East London jazz connoisseur, "When I close my eyes it's like I'm truly at the North Sea Jazz Festival in Holland."

Meanwhile Marcus strutted the stage, demanding fullness of sound, making standards spill out as brand new

compositions, and banging the bass until a runaway jazz train raced ecstatically through hearts and heads.

Like it or not, Marcus Miller, like Victor Bailey, was colonising the South African jazz mind with the bass guitar.

Only this time South African jazz lovers embraced the colonisers.

Mhlongo does maskanda



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

Daily
Dispatch



URBAN ZULU:
Busi Mhlongo in
a live concert
last year.

May 11,
2001

Picture by
CORNELIUS
THOMAS

LAST March she braved a freak electric storm and took the only flight out of Johannesburg to perform her set at the North Sea Jazz Festival.

At 3am — because the programme had been delayed — Mhlongo took the stage. It was just after the populist Hugh Masekela had enthralled the Kippies crowd with mbanqanga.

But even then Busi dug to deeper roots. She sang and cajoled the audience to dance to maskanda songs, the words of which they did not know, but which they subliminally understood.

"Busi's stunning hybrid (of) Zulu-English vocals takes the distinctive flavour maskanda and creates Pan African pop with a western twist," said *Big Issue* magazine.

The magazine referred to the maskanda music of the KwaZulu-Natal midlands and KZN and South Africa's foremost practitioner of this style, Mhlongo.

Mhlongo's career started in the lovely hills of Inanda where she was born some fifty years ago. A member of a musical family, she sang at family occasions, at school and church, and traditional Zulu weddings — and the hills came alive.

She left school and joined African Jazz — a jazz and mbanqanga roadshow that had been in demand since the mid-1950s — in Johannesburg.

From there music took Busi around the world.

Starting with theatrical pieces in the 1960s with jazz and mbanqanga artists, she graduated to perform Zulu and English songs on an extended cabaret tour in Mozambique — Lourenco Marques was the place to be those years.

Angola and eventually Portugal followed.

In Europe's second African-European melting pot —

Italy having been the first — she found music lovers did not listen to words' literal meanings, but to the emotions they carry. This encouraged her to sing her Zulu songs.

In 1972 the diminutive Mhlongo took London by storm and also recorded with Port Elizabeth's most famous exile, Dudu Pukwana.

She guested on other albums, recording on three continents in the 1970s.

In the 1980s Mhlongo divided her time between the Netherlands and South Africa.

Mhlongo recorded her debut album, *Babemu*, in 1993 in Holland. Critical concert successes in the 1990s included the Grahamstown Arts Festival and the Outernational Meltdown concert at the Africa Centre in London.

But all along Mhlongo offered the music industry deference — doing session work in the shadows of Julian Bahula, Salif Keita, and the Gambian group Ifang Bondi.

Stewing while on these tours and sessions was her declaration of independence — a corpus of urban Zulu songs offering no compromise.

The result was her critically acclaimed *Urbanzulu* album. It suggests jazz and kwaito, but it pulses maskanda.

She is currently doing gigs all over South Africa. So maskanda is here to stay.

Mhlongo has the past two years followed a long line of strong women who had declared their jazz independence — Miriam Makeba, Sibongile Khumalo, Hazel Leach, Dee Dee Bridgewater, and Sathima Bea Benjamin — and the South African jazz scene is the richer for it.

Listening to pictures



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

Daily Dispatch
Friday,
May 25, 2001



Chet Baker and Russ Freeman in Hollywood, 1954.
(From William Claxton's *Jazz Photography*.)



Beale Street Jug Band, New Orleans, 1960.
(From William Claxton's *Jazz Photography*.)

THE ART of jazz photography has begun to enjoy recognition long overdue.

First visual jazz historians William Gottlieb (*The Golden Age of Jazz*) and Herman Leonard (*The Special Photographers Library*) and Basil Breakey (*Beyond the Blues*) became icons of the art of giving jazz an aesthetic aspect.

In 1997 Taschen took a plunge and published William Claxton's *Jazz Photography*. The result was a combo of delightful photographs covering the lowly street musician to the conservatory trained sophisticate in the period 1952 to 1995.

Growing up in California in the 1940s and '50s, the youthful Claxton (born circa 1933), listened to Duke Ellington, Lena Horne and Tommy Dorsey and pasted the West Coast sound pictures into his scrapbooks. He yearned to become part of that magical world.

About his fascination with jazz musicians Claxton says on the williamclaxton.com website: "First, and most important, I love their music. But I am also fascinat-

ed by the diverse qualities they possess. They have ingenuousness, a sort of open, innocent attitude. I am just as intrigued by the movements and body language of musicians while they play."

Claxton also explains his method, saying: "I study them carefully before photographing them, much as I would study a dancer, an actor (and) I note how their faces or bodies reflect or catch the light; when and at what angles they look their best. When I feel I have a visual grasp of the subject, I press the shutter release."

The results of Claxton's photographs are plays on light and shade, mood and emotion.

The key to his success, Claxton reckons, boils down to a simple belief:

"There is beauty in all kinds of human beings."

Claxton believes that photography (and jazz, of course) constitutes an international language.

Thus in his book, *Young Chet*, he states that "Photography is jazz for the eye." Flipping through William

Claxton's *Jazz Photography*, I found this observation easy to understand.

● While banners may not boast it, the undercurrent of jazz pulses strongly on the local front. And the city is continually blessed with visiting and resident jazz musicians.

Local jazz talents Stirling High's Lindelwa Dalamba and Siya Makuzeni last week won South African Music Rights Organisation bursaries; the powerhouse voice of Africa, Stompie Mavi, treated fans this week; Another Level maintains its crisp course of winelight jazz.

But there's more.

This weekend The Basics vocalist Cizario Roberts will entertain fans of jazz singing at the Steakhouse in Parkside while at Smokey Swallows in Vincent the Alan Webster Quartet will soothe the end of the week with mainstream instrumental jazz.

Heard the grapevine buzz that South Africa's own Lady Day, Esther Miller — currently on tour in the United Kingdom — may be coming to East London.

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.

Jazzman's finest delivery



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

*Daily Dispatch
circa July 6,
2001*

AFTER at least nine months of hard work and meticulous dedication, the jazzman, Albert Spaargaren (aka Sparkie), has over the past few weeks been bringing to fruition the Dyani Pukwana Jazz Foundation — a foundation dedicated to the development and appreciation of jazz.

In the process Spaargaren and fellow trustees of the Foundation are yet again declaring East London the jazz capital of the Eastern Cape (read old Eastern Province and Border), as it was in the days of Eric 'Bob Hope' Nomvete, the African Jazz Quavers, William Mbali, and saxman Willie "Kriek" Pretorius and the Cuban Stars.

Spaargaren has been close to jazz development in what is now Buffalo City — from setting up the import company Jazz for Africa and running the Jazz Inn, through being a founding member of the East London Jazz Society and helping Smokey Swallows get started to the launch tomorrow of the Foundation.

It is well known that Spaargaren earlier this year organised the benefit concert for the late Yiso swa Komani at Duke's; what is not is that the Jazzman is working tirelessly to promote and support local jazz talents, be it to get the unpaid musicians of the Old Mutual Millennium Festival paid or winning gigs for groups like Ikhwezi, Another Level and Lulama Gawulana.

Quietly, the Jazzman also brought Andy Narrell to East London last year. And tomorrow night's Jimmy Dlodlu concert in the Orient Theatre has been almost wholly the result of his work.

But Spaargaren's finest jazz delivery must be co-ordinating the foundation and launch of the Foundation, the latter of which will take place at the Windsor Cabanas tomorrow afternoon.

The foundation honours two of the finest musical sons of the Eastern Cape ever — Johnny Dyani and Dudu Pukwana.

Johnny Dyani was born in Duncan Village where now, 15 years since his passing, local jazz enthusiasts are honouring him.

Dyani started off on the piano.



ALBERT SPAARGAREN

His mentor Tete Mbambisa was an established composer, arranger and piano player in 1950s East London.

Dyani loved singing, which he nurtured throughout his life.

However, once he took up the double bass, he became a robust, booming bassist.

He has a number of albums to his credit, including *Song for Biko*.

Dudu Pukwana died eleven years ago to the day. It is therefore apt that the launch of the Foundation should take place at this time.

Like Dyani, he started on the piano — with his father at the age of 10. Tete Mbambisa took the

young Dudu under his wing, when he joined Tete's Four Yanks in the 1950s.

The saxman Nick Moyake later became his mentor.

In exile in Europe, he teamed up with Dyani and became part of the progressive jazz scene.

Later Pukwana became a member of the Brotherhood of Breath, fusing township jive, kwela, and free music. He brought out his first solo album, *In the Townships*, with his own band, Spear.

Still in his prime, Pukwana succumbed to liver failure in 1990.

Tomorrow night at the Orient Theatre Jimmy Dlodlu, I am told, will play some of Dyani and Pukwana's compositions.

The spirit of Dludlu

Daily
Aspen
June 27,
2001



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

THE BANNER holding two buildings on Oxford Street together says it all: the jazz resurgence in the city is on track, and guitarist Jimmy Dludlu is coming to town.

Dludlu will be swaying the crowd in a world class concert in the Orient Theatre on Saturday, June 30 — an event organised by the Dyani Pukwana Jazz Foundation and sponsored by the Eastern Cape Provincial Arts and Culture Council.

The Council is funding the event as part of Youth Month.

Dludlu, the ordinary boy who first strummed a home-made guitar at the age of 13, has come a long way.

In the 1980s he did mostly session work. But starting in 1990 with the Guinness Jazz Festival, accolades, awards and academic opportunities came his way, until he won three Samas last year.

However, Dludlu is more serious about music than awards. He understands that music cannot be divorced from culture, and that South African music, especially jazz, is African music.

Thus last year the guitar maestro

utilised a Ford Foundation grant to research West African African rhythms. The effect of his research in Accra, Ghana, and his exposure to the music scene there, spilled from his guitar with telling effect — mainstream chords laced with a rhythmic African undercurrent flowing from Cameroon to Senegal — at the North Sea Jazz Festival Cape Town in April this year.

Dludlu loves to entertain, but also to educate, to give back. Last year at Chicago's Northwestern University, he not only performed, but also lectured on *Sounds in Southern Africa*, *Finding a Voice in African Music*, and *Developing African Musical Industries*.

In addition he ran a seminar on *Crossing Boundaries in Africa*, this being a foray into the musical influences of Miriam Makeba from Zambia to Benin.

On the recording front Dludlu has, since the introduction of his hit *Point of View* (featured on Heads Up's *Smooth Africa* album) in the United States and the subsequent release of his *Echoes from the Past*, *Essence of Rhythm* and *Winds of Change*, become an international star on par with Jonathan

Butler.

Like Butler, Dludlu has realised that "at home the market is small".

Does that mean we could lose him? Dludlu told the *Mail & Guardian* in a recent interview: "You need some kind of balance, (but) as doors open, do not forget where you come from."

With Dludlu now having cutting edge albums, awards, a degree from UCT and a diploma from Northwestern to his credit, the New York City-based Verve label is vigorously promoting him in Europe. And as doors open, this erudite young man will enter.

For local music lovers a door is opening next Saturday, and at R40 (about \$5) this world class jazz concert will be a steal.

- On Sunday July 1 Jimmy Dludlu will give even more when he presents a workshop on guitar techniques and African rhythms at Satchmo's in the Mdantsane Sun — an opportunity created by the provincial arts and culture council for aspiring young musicians.

Guitarists in particular will benefit from the ideas, inspiration, and spirit of Dludlu.

Dyani-Pukwana alive



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas

*Daily Argus
June 22, 2001*

"JOHNNY Dyani isn't dead, but he's dying," I wrote about the legacy of the late East London jazz vocalist-pianist-bassist in this column last year. One of the greatest tragedies any community can experience is when someone who has brought joy and excellence dies forever. At the time it seemed that was what was happening to Johnny Dyani.

Fortunately for the legacy of Dyani, "the jazz lunatic kid" who put South African jazz on the European map, and for jazz lovers here, I am being proved wrong.

Jazzman Albert Spaargaren has for the past several months worked with devotion to put together a vehicle to make the legacy of two of the Eastern Cape's all-time greats, Dyani and alto saxophonist Dudu Pukwana — Dudu, originally from Port Elizabeth, who kept the exiles together, available for this generation and posterity.

The fruit of Spaargaren's labour of love comes in the form of the Dyani-Pukwana Foundation. The Foundation's board of trustees consists of state attorney Island Maqoma (incidentally, a descendant of the great warrior chief Maqoma), Fort Hare University rector Derrick Swartz, Masimanyane director Lesley Ann Foster, CEO Disabilities Employment Concerns Trust Mike du Toit, local port operations manager Nosipho Damasane, and the jazzman himself.

The Foundation's main objective, its deed of trust states, "is to promote the development and appreciation of jazz music in the ... Eastern Cape".

It hopes to give manifestation to this objective by making funds available for informal jazz education, jazz education in schools and universities, and by sponsoring events from which the public and especially "previously disadvantaged individuals and communities" will benefit.

Intentions are already being translated into action. Come the afternoon of Saturday, June 30, the Dyani-Pukwana Foundation will be launched at the Windsor Cabanas, with the local jazz elite and Buffalo City dignitaries in attendance.

A few hours later, the Foundation will feature South Africa's undisputed jazz guitar king, Jimmy Dludlu in concert at the Orient Theatre. It will be a renaissance moment in jazz history, with Dludlu playing Dyani numbers — the past being mediated through the present. In addition CDs of Dludlu, Dyani and Pukwana will be on sale. What's more, Jimmy has agreed to conduct a guitar workshop in Mdantsane the next day.

Spaargaren told me this week that the Foundation is not only about honouring the best of the past, but also about creating bursaries for future stars. With lots of local talent — most having been mentioned in this



DUDU PUKWANA

Picture by Basil Breakey

column — practicing in backyards and yearning for an opportunity, the Foundation should soon have its hands full in this department.

And so, to service jazz needs around here properly, the Foundation looks forward to public and private support (that's code for money) for its fundraisers, concerts and workshops.

● I mentioned how impressed I was with Reece Timothy last week. Heard this week that Reece was actually SA Music Rights Organisation drumming winner Kesivan Naidoo's first drum teacher. Well, for a comparison of the teacher and the student, and to encourage them of course, visit the Parkside Steakhouse on Friday to listen to Reece and Smokey Swallows on Sunday to check out Kesivan.

Back to Basics



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

*Daily Dispatch
June 8, 2001*

LAST Saturday found me driving down St John's Road and dipping through a verdant valley to Parkside. I had been told The Basics — a band of which I had heard in passing — would be playing at The Steakhouse.

Inside I found them — keyboardist Chris Saunders, lead guitarist Krishna Naidoo, guitarist Russell Henricks, bass guitarist Noel Jacobs and drummer Reece Timothy — blending the standard Mr Magic to perfection.

Next number vocalist Cizario Roberts joined in, singing Al Jarreau's *Morning*, and had the crowd jazzing around on the dance floor.

The band makes a tight combination, mixing experience and youthful fervour.

Noel Jacobs, 53, has only three fingers on his left hand — the thumb and pointer were cut off in an accident years ago. His left hand still bangs out the bass in a way that quickens the dancer's heart.

He formerly played for the Port Elizabeth-based Mama's Cream, with whom he toured the country to full-house gigs.

The versatile Chris Saunders hails from Cape Town. He plays the guitar and drums with equal facility. Chris recently took his talent down to the keys.

He has big boots to fill — what with greats like Tete Mbambisa, Pat Matshikiza and Hotep Galeta having breezed through. While Chris has overtaken the locals, and approaching the virtuoso of Nishlyn Ramana, hard work is still



CIZARIO ROBERTS

awaiting him.

Russell Henricks holds a steady beat, adding touches of rhythmic soul to the band's musical collage.

Krishna "Orange" Naidoo, is one of the foremost lead guitarists East London has ever produced.

Also known as Santana, his fame has gone before him, and wherever he plays — as was the case at The Steakhouse — the crowd clamours

for Carlos Santana numbers.

Refreshing was Reece Timothy, 26, who I think is yapping at the heels of the country's best drummers. On Saturday he showed his improvisational speed and sustained creativity when he took all on a trip with the drum roll.

Given the opportunity, Timothy is sure to make his mark in terms equal to that of Denver Furness (a nationally renowned and sought-after drummer) and local wonder Kesivan Naidoo (Samro's 2000 drumming winner).

When The Basics struck up Eric Benet's *Why You Follow Me*, the lady in red took centre stage to the velvet sound of vocalist Cizario Roberts, and all else swirled about the dancer and the singer.

Roberts is ambitious; he tells me he'd like to go to a good music school to do voice training.

As for The Basics, they have for the past six months played at The Steakhouse, becoming a crisp outfit with their danceable jazz fusion and rhythm & blues.

• **Buffalo City is in for a bumper music weekend.**

The Rockets extravaganza in the EL City Hall tonight is in aid of the North End Football Association junior football.

On Saturday, also in the city hall, the band Way Back will help you unwind from the energy explosion of the Rockets, with langarm and golden dance tunes.

On Sunday at Smokey Swallows, the Matthew Boon Quartet will wind down the weekend with smooth mainstream jazz.

Daily Dispatch, July 13, 2001

Willie Kriek remembered

2001



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas



WILLIE "KRIEK" PRETORIUS

WHEREAS local jazz musicians at times struggle, often having to play bread (no butter) gigs and constantly worrying about transport, there was a time when musicians had it tougher still.

One of the finest of North End-Parkside musicians, the late saxophonist Willie "Kriek" Pretorius (1928-1972) mostly walked to gigs.

A waiter, the Kriek started making music during the 1940s, playing often with East London's master drummer Oom Basie Pepper.

Later he formed his own band, Willie's Swing Aces, but he played with other bands as well, for example The Cuban Stars.

"He was more on the jazz side, but he played anything, anywhere," Oom Basie recently said.

Indeed the Kriek played in the City Hall, the Drill Hall, The Jungle and the Night Spot.

Often, after a gig with jazzmen Eric Nomvete and William Mbali at the Peacock Hall in East Bank, he walked home to North End (and later Parkside).

"Hey, Mr Kriek," the *tsotsis* saluted him. They knew his amble and the proud hold of his chin even in the black night.

According to his widow, Winnie Pretorius, "He walked through that location and no one ever touched him. They loved him there."

Some Fridays (in the 1950s and 60s) Kriek and his friend Toeties John took the 17h00 train to King William's Town.

There they rocked every house and hall in need of music.

Early morning, they napped at Pelham's Boarding House, and at 06h00 the Kriek was on the train back to East London — he had a family, and there was his son Tony to teach still.

The Kriek was intensely a family man. "He always took the family to Queen's Park, to the beach."

Weekdays after work he practiced his sax, and when Winnie brought him a flask of tea he responded: "Aah, nobody makes better tea than you and Five Roses."

Then he got down to disciplining Tony into becoming a musician. Today Tony plays for Rob's Combo, and the legacy of the Kriek lives on.

In 1972 Willie Kriek died in tragic circumstances. Still, he is a role model from whom musicians can learn.

The Kriek is also one of the subjects of a forthcoming book on North End.

BRUCE Cassidy, regarded as one of the top jazz trumpeters in the country, will be performing with the Alan Webster Quartet at Smokey Swallows on Sunday.

It's the first performance Cassidy is giving in East London, and an impromptu one at that.

Cassidy is in the area to join a number of professional musicians

Jazz evening

who will be in King William's Town as part of a panel discussion at the Technical College.

The discussion will take place today and tomorrow from 09h00 to 16h00 and is organised by the

Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture.

The panel will discuss how musicians can deal with recording companies and allied business concerns.

The performance at Smokey Swallows will take place on Sunday evening at 20h00.

There is no cover charge.

Spreading Oom Basie's magic

*Dani's Report
July 20, 2001*



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas

IN THE 1950s the Bamboo Room in the Quigney throbbed to the sounds of the band Arrivas.

This outfit from North End included rock and rollers Gerald Nicholls, Pannie Phillips, Willie Matroos and the man in charge of the engine room, drummer Harry Herman Peffer (1923-), fondly known as Oom Basie.

Playing in exquisite bamboo surroundings, Arrivas showed what they had learned on the corners and in the lanes, rocking the all-white audience into hip-rolling rhythms.

For the man in the engine room it all started in the 1930s when Louis Armstrong's gutbucket jazz, Benny Goodman's swing, and Coleman Hawkins' upbeat bebop blew into North End via crackling radios and the vinyl albums brought in by sailors. These hooked Peffer into an enduring love of music.

In the 1940s he tried his hand at the acoustic guitar but his fingers would not co-operate. He switched to the drums and taught himself how to master these tom-toms to the standard where, by 1947, his play blended with any music style. "I stole with my eyes, and applied what I learned with my hands," Oom Basie said.

Always he reminded himself: "Blend in; play at a medium beat; don't overwhelm the others, especially not the singer — and *moenie stokke slaan nie*."

He married the lovely Ellen Pienaar in 1949. The couple started out on Danes Lane, and Basie promptly subjected his Ellen to endless drum beats.

She didn't mind.

"I got used to it and after a while it was a pleasure," Auntie Ellen said.

First Oom Basie played with Benny van Heerden's Jazz Band. During this jazzy period, he picked up tips from Eric Nomvete's band. Said he: "The Africans have *mos* a special style, so I learned from them too."

Soon after, Oom Basie established himself as drummer in Anthony



OOM BASIE

'Gullitt' Lawrence's band.

They played bob hops and house parties in North End. These were exacting affairs. The confined space meant dancers took to the floor in alternating bunches. At the end, fatigue drove band members to some weightlifting — "one for me, one for the road". Oom Basie smiled at this; it was all part of the music and dance scene.

He also formed his own band, Arrivas. They played everywhere, including in The Jungle (Boy Scouts Hall) and in the Black Coffin in Parkside.

In 1960 Suliman Casoojee sponsored a trophy for a battle of the bands. In a highlight of his career, Oom Basie drummed Arrivas to win the trophy ahead of Lawrence's band in the City Hall.

Meanwhile Oom Basie also took the responsibility of teaching — Bobby Dass, Edmund Timothy, Tony Pretorius. His teaching continued through Edmund teaching his son Reece, and Reece teaching Kesivan Naidoo. The legacy of Oom Basie lives on.

By the early 1990s, Oom Basie had turned his music to spiritual purposes, playing in church.

He played one last grand session, though, drumming with Shanana in 1999 at the 50th anniversary of his and Auntie Ellen's wedding.

Although apartheid kicked them out of the Bamboo Room, Oom Basie smiled as he remembered he spread the magic where it enriched community — in North End, East Bank, Parkside and Buffalo Flats.

A jazzy touch from Mdantsane



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas

Daily Dispatch
July 27, 2001

WORD has it that local jazz talent is being spread around Buffalo City. This weekend a Mdantsane jazz band will bring the unicity a jazzy touch.

The new jazz outfit, iMonti, will be spilling jazz, fusion, mbaqanga, and marabi at Emzini African Restaurant and Jazz Café in Berlin.

iMonti is the newest jazz band in Buffalo City, having been formed last year January.

The band consists of Phutumile Lali on lead guitar, Vusumzi Nzwane on bass guitar, Mbulelo Mcunukwela on keyboard, while Andile Mbonelwa keeps the beat on drums.

Although a young outfit still, leader Phutumile Lali, 43, is already a veteran of the local jazz scene.

When George Benson with his *Weekend in LA* overwhelmed the South African jazz market in the 1970s, Lali found himself swept into jazz. But not off his feet, he says. He held fast to one of the local African jazz greats of the time, the late lead guitarist Cyir Magubane.

Although mesmerised by Benson, and emulating him, Lali retained his



Keyboardist Mbulelo Mcunukwela of iMonti.

African touch throughout his music career.

Lali first played for the band Ingqigo in 1974. Nzwane played bass for this group.

Shortly after, Lali formed his own band, Kasai.

In 1991, Lali, like so many Eastern Cape jazzists before him, left for Johannesburg and its allure of fame and money.

He formed the iMeko Jazz Band which, after a

stint at the Court 'n Pub at the Sandton Plaza Hotel, released the album *Bambelela* (Hold On) on the RPM label.

But some things scratched his soul.

The media popularisation of kwaito, for instance, "It's a vague music that uses vulgar language. It is not our culture," Lali ventures.

Being removed from the "original African music" of the Eastern Cape was

another irritation that prompted him to return to the source.

And to marabi.

"The raw version of the rural areas, not the modernised version of Hugh Masekela," he takes pains to point out.

"I want the young people to know where marabi comes from. I want them to learn about how music came from singing during planting and stick fights. I don't want that heritage to be lost. I want to reclaim the true African sounds."

For an African renaissance experience through jazz and marabi brought by recording artists (Lali and Nzwane), Emzini's is the place this Saturday at 19h00. Cover charge will be R20.

• Charles Poole of Smokey Swallows in Vincent is planning a series of jazz gigs for the first Sunday of every month, starting on August 5.

Under this arrangement, Poole says he hopes to bring out of town jazz personalities of the calibre of Bruce Cassidy, Robbie Jansen and Winston Mankunku to every third gig. At the same time he hopes to continue showcasing local talent.

The gift of music



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PERFECT PRESENT: Albert Spaargaren of the Dyani-Pukwana Jazz Foundation officially hands Abe "Kruger" Maqhula the guitar Jimmy Dlodlu bought.

A couple of weeks ago Jimmy Dlodlu played a gig in the Orient Theatre after he had graced the launch of the Dyani-Pukwana Jazz Foundation.

And then Jimmy went away.

Not quite.

On the Sunday after the gig he conducted a guitar workshop in Mdantsane.

Eager to learn from the maestro, Another Level lead guitarist Abe "Kruger" Maqhula attended. Kruger, who lives in CC Lloyd township, caught a one-way lift to Mdantsane. He would see how he'd get back, but he absolutely had to be at the workshop — which, in keeping with its mission of also offering jazz education, the Foundation had organised.

Kruger and other local guitarists enjoyed the workshop, joining in to try licks and riffs.

As the session came to an end, a local guitar connoisseur asked if Jimmy would come see his guitar collection. Yes, he would. Albert "Jazzman" Spaargaren, aka Sparkie, forthwith agreed to take Jimmy through to Bunker's Hill. Same time Kruger was looking for a ride to his four-room match-box home in CC Lloyd. Sparkie said, "Sure, just come along".

Jimmy Dlodlu immediately recognised Kruger Maqhula.

The Friday before the Orient Theatre gig, Dlodlu heard a few licks at Emzini Jazz Café which he had never heard before. He then asked the guitarist — it was Kruger — "Hi man. Can you show me how

you did that?"

The modest guitarman from CC Lloyd obliged, showing the maestro a few tricks on licks.

In Bunker's Hill Dlodlu checked out the collection of shining guitars. Tried a few.

Kruger picked up Jimmy's guitar and strummed away. There was that sound again.

Impressed, Jimmy thought, why not give the Dyani-Pukwana Jazz Foundation a boost. "Okay," Jimmy then said, "I'll donate a guitar to Kruger on behalf of the Dyani-Pukwana Foundation."

Excitement and apprehension mixed and travelled through the gathered jazzmen — had they heard the maestro right?

Spaargaren afterward spoke with Jimmy at the North Sea Jazz Festival in Holland. "Yes," said Dlodlu, "the guitar is already on its way."

When the state of the art electric-cum-acoustic Epiphone guitar arrived the second week of July, life lit up for Kruger. That first night after playing the guitar, he couldn't sleep. "I saw Jimmy's face on the walls — even in the dark."

Kruger's neighbours in the drab township benefit as he now strums away, practising daily. Another Level and its fans benefit, because now Kruger only plays the Epiphone.

"It was the first time in my life I received a gift like this. Jimmy Dlodlu is a great; he is a brother to me," the guitarman said.

Then Kruger added a telling touch. "This great thing would not have happened to me if I didn't go to that workshop."

Singing in the streets

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TWENTY-three streets, 5 000 people in cosmopolitan crucible, living on song. This is what I found while working on my forthcoming book, *Dust in My Coffee: Memories and Reflections of a Family Called North End*.

Every street sported a singing group. From the 1940s to the late '60s, they sang for fun and all were welcome to listen.

Lionel Boniface remembers he and his friends sang on Danes Lane. Later, as a postman, he found North End children teased in rhyming chants — "telewag, telewag ... do it in a mealie-bag" they dogged him in Clarke's Hollow.

Sonny Kops crooned *Crazy* on Mr Lee's Corner. Down St Paul's



THE BELLTONES

Road the cute Belltones — *Standing on the Corner* — kept passersby enthralled.

Khaki's Corner first held Achmat Obaray's Foreign Legion, and later the crew of Anthony Augustine, who sang into the navy of the night.

The grand old lady of North End, Khaki Naran, welcomed this.

The crooners served a social function also, keeping her shop and the street safe.

On New Street Sidney Nash and Billy Francis and later the Meintjies brothers serenaded the people.

These street singers also exported their talents.

As a boy Rhodes Fray sang on the beachfront

until it rained coins, earning his keep.

Cassie Jasson, 10, and her girl friends marched to the Esplanade, singing.

"Why are you bushies making such a noise?" the police interrupted them.

Cassie politely answered they were singing, not making a noise.

North Enders listened to themselves.

Our children today don't have to be mesmerised by the vulgarity and obscenity of hip-hop and the misogyny of Eminem.

They can look to themselves and to when the human voice was used to celebrate beauty.

We should therefore encourage our children into song, support eisteddfods and our high school vocal groups and bands.

Brilliant concert

TRIO BON ESPERANCE DU CAP, Liesl Stoltz (flute), Alison Lansdown (cello), Louis Zurnamer (piano) at the Guild Theatre

WHAT an absolute treat! We've been extremely fortunate over the last couple of years to receive visits from a number of excellent trios, and this was up there with the best of them.

Three exciting, young instrumentalists totally at one with each other, with their instruments, with their music and, as a result, with their audience. Though currently studying in Europe, all three are South African, and learnt their craft in Cape Town and Stellenbosch.

Individually outstanding on a technical level, they seem to combine with such ease and enjoyment



TRIO TREAT: Young South African musicians making up the Trio Bon Espérance du Cap perform at the Guild Theatre



TRENDY TRIO: Kathy Thomas, Jonathan Butler and jazz columnist Cornelius Thomas smile for the lens in Merrillville, Indiana, in 1992.

At the heart of Jonathan Butler

ISPOKE with "The Jazzman" Albert Spaargaren some time ago. Did he have the latest Jonathan Butler album?

"No," he answered, "Jonathan Butler just doesn't sell around here."

South Africa's jazz exile last performed in the country of his birth during the Fifth Annual Jazzathon on Robben Island, in February this year, when he played for former president Nelson Mandela, among others. At the time he also promoted his latest and ninth album, *Story of Life*.

Butler then took off for the United States to continue working with George Duke, Isaac Hayes and Stevie Wonder on his African Nights Tour concept. With this educational programme Butler hopes to bring African talent to the best jazz schools in the world — New York and Chicago.

On his last two visits here (Johannesburg 2000 and Cape Town 2001) Butler conducted extensive workshops. His African Nights Tour is to be an extension of his music teaching.

Meanwhile, he left *Story of Life* as an example of struggle and triumph for young musicians to learn from.

The township boy had come a long way since his duet with Ruby Turner, *If You're Ready (Come with Me)*, on his self-titled album propelled him to international stardom. The album gathered gold on

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the back of *Lies*, on which Butler scats in a Cape idiom, calling by guitar and responding himself by voice. The number won him his first Grammy nomination. (He also won a Grammy nomination for his 8th album, *Going Home*.)

Story of Life departs from Butler's intensely political albums, *Heal Our Land* and *Deliverance*.

Heal Our Land stands as testimony to Butler's belief in reconciliation and the possibility of racial harmony.

His *Deliverance* captured American audiences with a synthesis of African melodies, touches of township jive, and Cape jazz.

Coming out when the divestment campaign squeezed apartheid South Africa where it hurt, *Deliverance* won Butler both critical and popular acclaim in the United States.

Work with American musicians, including Nathan East, Billy Kilon and Gerald Cannon, eventually resulted in his *Story of Life*.

The album offers musical snapshots trying to interpret "the emotional turmoil Butler has experienced since leaving his motherland to seek a better life and freedom from oppression".

It shows Butler having come through the mental and emotional carnage of poverty, apartheid and exile.

Said Butler of the album: "There are more vocals than instrumentals. I wanted

the album to be like that because the record is about the story of my life."

In this regard *Story of Life* constitutes a return to his roots. Although many know him as a left-handed guitar maestro, Butler began his career as a singer.

The guitar is only an extension of him as a singer.

Story features keyboardist George Duke, bassist Abraham Laboriel and drummer Nathan East — all from American jazz elite.

"Laboriel is the most anointed and blessed bassist I have ever worked with," said Butler.

Bear in mind Butler had taken Chicago by storm in the 1990s with the bass backing of Gerald Cannon, whom many consider the baddest bassist in the United States.

Despite the American input, Butler retained thematic and tonal control, returning to his source.

This is further manifested in his current emphasis on music education.

For Butler's return in *Story of Life*, for its educational value, and for a comparison of Laboriel and Cannon (and Wayne Brathwaite if you own *Deliverance*), this album is a must purchase.

Say hello to Esther Miller

 BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas

*Daily Dispatch
August 3, 2001*

FRESH from the Birmingham Jazz Festival and an extended stint of gigs at the world-famous Ronnie Scott's in the same city, South Africa's leading mainstream jazz vocalist is coming to the Eastern Cape.

She is Esther Miller, our own Lady Day, and tomorrow she'll be performing in concert at the Port Elizabeth Opera House.

Miller has just this week returned from the United Kingdom where she promoted her recently released album, *Say Hello to Esther*.

Esther was born and raised in Port Elizabeth where, listening to Nat King Cole albums, she fell in love with jazz singing.

She sang in church choirs and through her school days at Bethelsdorp High School. But without giving a career in jazz a thought.

Initially the then undiscovered singing wonder had dreams of becoming a medical doctor. So off she went to the University of Cape Town.

However, there, in 1988, the muse of music called her through a jazz concert by Gerry Spencer's Jazz Cyclone. She found the beats and tone of jazz accorded with what was already in her soul and singing.

The rest is history.

She did some local gigs in Cape Town, but not even the "jazz city" could contain her.

Esther's first professional performance followed shortly after when she recorded a five-song session live on BBC Radio in London.

Since then she has worked with the Cape Town group Jazz Cyclone, Ezra and Duke Ngcukana, Winston Mankunku, and Johnny Fourie — all performers in the Cape jazz tradition.

In the course of the 1990s Esther performed regularly with British saxophonists Dave O'Higgins and Alan Skidmore, and with American guitarists Herb Ellis and Cal Collins.

The last few years have seen Esther captivate audi-



DARING DIVA: Esther Miller will be performing in Port Elizabeth tomorrow night.

ences throughout the country — but she is yet to regale East London.

Along with Durban pianist Chantal Sanders, she has also been a regular performer in the Middle East, principally Dubai, over the last four years and did a series of concerts in Finland.

Her most recent South African appearances have been at the Standard Bank Jazz Festival in Grahamstown, the Standard Bank Jazzathon in Cape Town, the Joy of Jazz Festival in Johannesburg, the Port Elizabeth Opera House last September, and The Gignet Theatre Café (Cape Town) last year and early this year.

Since embarking on her jazz career, Esther has studied classical singing with Cape Town's Suzi van Dijk.

After Nat King Cole, Sarah Vaughn, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Blossom Dearie and Frank Sinatra influenced her style into the velvet purity of Lady Day

first and then into her unique voice.

With Esther you don't listen to the words but how she sings them, and you understand with your heart.

One of the more exciting developments in Esther's career has been her teaming up with Errol Dyers' band which, with their Cape jazz, keeps Esther in contact with her roots.

The Dyers band will be backing Esther in Port Elizabeth tomorrow night.

Esther Miller recently told me East London is the only major South African centre where she is yet to perform. Her willingness to deliver here stands as an open offer to local producers and especially the newly formed Dyani-Pukwana Jazz Foundation to bring one of South Africa's finest jazz talents to this city.

In six weeks' time it's back to Birmingham for Esther, so the local producers will have sufficient time to organise a long-overdue Esther Miller concert for this city's jazz lovers.



COOL DUDES:
Four Fourty's
Steven Mabona,
Mvuzo Dimba
and Vuyisile
Sabongo

*Dariusz
Bispych*
*Sept. 1
2000*

A fresh new sound

FOR THOSE who are looking a bit beyond African jazz, kwai-jazz, and good old-fashioned mbaqanga, Sony Music has released a CD with a difference, namely Messages, the debut album of the township trio Four Fourty.

The album is the product of a group that seems, visually, a throwback to the 1940s and 1950s. The listener should not be deceived, though. While Messages carries some of the nostalgic sounds of Kofifi, it also incorporates the essence of the above-mentioned jazz styles, but transcends them. The outcome is a fresh sound, new ideas, spirituality, and a feeling of hope carried in a mainstream medium with African tints.

Four Fourty consists of Vuyisile Sabongo on saxophones, Mvuzo Dimba on piano and bassist Steven Mabona. They arguably form one of the tightest jazz bands on the South African circuit, playing a crisp sound.

The trajectory to the top for Four Fourty has been the usual township tale of hardship: playing gigs and doing session work for next to nothing. But since its inception in 1989, the love for jazz stuck to this trio who were influenced first by Victor Ndhlazilwane and Johnny Mekoa of the famed Jazz Ministers (the first SA band to play in Carnegie Hall).

They also imbued doses of Ezra Ncukana, Hotep Galeta and Duke Makasi, allowing also impulse jazzists like Pharoah Sanders and John Coltrane to trickle into their souls.

The album opens with a mellow straight-ahead

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piece, Tshegofatso. The saxman gets you on a flat and gradually elevates you to higher notes, while the drummer holds a different beat forcing you into a toe-tap.

And the pianist reminds you of Keith Jarrett's Southern Smiles.

Track 2, Church People, is led by a spiritual tenor piano, taking you down South or into any township church swaying to an African expression of Christianity, followed by a forceful tenor, and a back beating bass, which does not intrude and leaves a spiritual impression on your mind.

Track 5, the upbeat, fast flowing Kgetshepe, vies with horn man Khaya Mhlangu's Laka This, Laka That (on his second album, Streams) for the honours of the freshest sound on the South African jazz circuit today.

Then there are groove tracks I Love You, Smooth Survivor, and (an upbeat) Portrait of Portia.

For transcending parochial styles without becoming American, and subtly retaining African elements, Four Fourty brings a unique album with Messages that should in any music lover's collection.

● The grapevine is buzzing that a new jazz club has opened at Latimer's Landing. And as a historian I can say the grapevine is always reliable. But you should check it out.

I have also been told that that songbird of note, Veliswa Komani, who, like Margaret Singana, hails from Queenstown, will be singing at CD's this weekend.

Historical Cape jazz

Daily Dispatch

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Spt. 8, 2000

THE term Cape jazz has been bandied about a bit lately. This urban brew of the mother city exudes ghoema, coon, Latin and African sounds.

It took off in the 1990s with Robbie Jansen's *Vastrap Island* and *The Cape Doctor* and Errol Dyers' *Kou Kou Wa*.

But Cape jazz is more than music created by Coloured artists, and it has a longer history. It is a music of brotherhood and struggle; a sad music that brings happiness. It thrives on improvisation, and caters for black people's penchant for call and response.

American jazz found favour in Cape Town, and during the 1930s and 1940s big band and swing brought out the working class of the city.

By the late 1950s, however, Cape musicians started finding their own voice, fusing elements of ghoema, Cape street talk, coon, Latin, and African music. It started on the streets and stoeps of District Six and Langa. These years found Basil Coetzee jamming with the Kwela Kids and Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim) and Cecil Barnard (Hotep Galeta) tinkering on the piano. And saxophonist Winston Mankunku played in Guguletu. After Sharpeville, however, many musicians went into exile.



JAZZY: Chris Schidler, Phil Schilder and Mankunku in 1968.

Picture by BASIL BREAKEY

Still the Cape jazz feel continued to develop. Mankunku and the Ngukana clan carried the torch. In the late 1960s and early 70s the Schilder clan, Pacific Express and a young vocalist, Robbie Jansen, joined in. Under difficult circumstances, Mankunku managed to have his classic *Yakhal Inkomo* released.

In 1972, early-1960s exile and expressionist drummer Louis Moholo returned for a brief stint. He brought along a composition of a fellow exile, trumpeter Mongezi Feza — *You Think You Know Me*. The piece speaks of the oppression of black people at home and alienation abroad. It also exudes a determined defiance: but you will never know me — until both of

us are free.

Spirits Rejoice, of which the 17-year-old Ezra Ngukana was a member, popularised the piece, giving it a Cape feel.

Cape jazz took off anew. Two years after Dollar Brand produced *Manenberg*, a passionate play on the monotony of township life — *daa waar ie hyse so ienes lyk*. Jansen's reinterpretations of the piece, first with *Spirits Rejoice* and later with the *Sons of Table Mountain*, kept it fresh.

It remains the most recognisable South African jazz tune worldwide.

The 1980s belonged to Jansen, saxophonist Duke Makasi, and the Ngukana brothers, Ezra and Duke. They played clubland music of *mal-*

dans in the Luxurama and Sherwood. Cape Town lost itself in Club Montreal and in Zeekoevlei braai and brandy nights.

The tradition of Cape jazz continues today. Listen to Errol Dyers' number, *Lingerie*. The less romantic can simply enjoy the warmth of his *sopvleis* jazz. New kids Megabyte led by pianist Camillo Lombard has mixed masala on offer.

Khoisan sounds conjured by Jansen, Dyers, Pops Mohammed (*How Far Have We Come*, 1995) and even Zim Ngqawana have been thrown into the mix. The music is alive and growing — and carried by new musicians who follow the Ngukana and Schilder clans, Mankunku and Jansen.

Accomplished artists for North Sea

THE African Harvest North Sea Jazz Festival will feature 16 African artists, eight of whom have been nominated for SAMA awards.

They are: Miriam Makeba,

Paul Hanmer, Sipho Gumede, Sibongile Khumalo, Don Laka, Vusi Mahlasela, Sylvia Mdunyelwa and Musa Manzini, all of whom you can see at the festival on March 30 and 31.

Tickets are available at Computicket at R235 for one day and R360 for both days.

The African Harvest North Sea Jazz Festival Hotline is (021) 418-6924.

Jazzy weekend



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STILL JAZZING: Bass guitarist Lulama Gawulana, drummer and winner of one of last year's SAMRO scholarships Kesivan Naidoo, saxophonist and director Alan Webster, and pianist Janet Webster seen in this file picture are all still playing jazz.

BUFFALO City will be able to feast on a variety jazz this weekend.

First, the world-class Soweto String Quartet will be taking you to the heights of jazz and classical eclecticism at the Guild Theatre in East London tonight. Then Lulama Gawulana Quintet's gig over at the Shukushukuma Tavern in Ilitha near Berlin will feature African jazz with Latin touches.

And finally, to unwind the weekend, Alan Webster and Matthew Boon, who regularly perform in big bands and orchestras around the Eastern Cape and nationally, will be playing mellow jazz at the international restaurant, Smokey Swallows, in Vincent on Sunday.

This triple act comes after more than a quarter long drought in jazz around here.

To help out, local entrepreneur Charles Poole has entered the jazz track.

He opened Smokey Swallows on Devereux Avenue in December.

His adjunct to Smokey Swallows, Rhythm House, initially sold jazz CDs and paraphernalia.

Poole tells me that, given the dearth that had set into jazz circles recently, he has now decided to offer mellow jazz on Sunday nights for an experimental period.

"I decided to make my service and products multi-functional to serve my clients and visitors to the city better," he says.

"The concept is international, but East London deserves it," Poole reckons. Having been to jazz joints in the United States, and knowing the scene in Europe,

I know it is."

So Smokey Swallows exudes a cosmopolitan air, allowing for international cuisine, compact discs, space for jazz prints, jazz photo art, and original jazz paintings, and now live mellow jazz also.

Virtuoso sax player and big band leader Alan Webster is excited about Poole's concept as well as playing in duo format at Smokey Swallows.

According to Webster, this format in jazz affords opportunity for a lot of inspiration for the players — in this case himself on saxophones and Matthew Boon on piano.

"The two players don't have extra help," says Webster, "so sound might not come out as full."

"So you have to put in more; and more communication is needed between the two players."

But that is not a problem; call and response comes with jazz territory. Also, there's always room for improvisation, and with only two playing, an audience can pick creative tangents up more easily and therefore appreciate them even more.

Quartet, quintet or duo — this weekend, take your pick and just jazz.

Tickets for the Soweto String Quartet concert are R100 and available at the theatre box office, or you can reserve seats at (043)743 7267. Webster-Boon at Smokey Swallows will cost R50, which includes a full meal. A cover charge is applicable to the Shukushukuma gig also.

Gawulana gets going



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LIVE AT CD'S: Cliffie Freeman (left) enjoys Lulama Gawulana's serious offer in a call and response session at CD's Jazz Cafe in December 1999.

Picture by Cornelius Thomas

MDANTSANE-based bass guitarist Lulama Gawulana is a household name in jazz circles, and indeed his Gawulana Quartet has been one of the mainstays of jazz in East London the past decade. But things have been a tad slow lately. Still, Gawulana has been busy.

Not performing.

He went into retreat and started composing.

Gawulana emerged from his creative spell with a handful of original African and Latin-based jazz tunes, most notably the upbeat *Zahlangana* and nostalgic *Home is Home*, both of which invoke the spirit of the African renaissance, and also Latin-based tunes *East London Vibes* and a reworked take on *East London Samba*.

Since CD's Jazz Cafe closed at the end of October, support for jazz has been waning, Gawulana says.

He reckons local jazz lovers no longer get the inspiration greets like Robbie Jansen, Hugh Masekela and Hotep Galeta engendered the past two years, but neither do they support local talent.

"People keep on asking me, 'What are you doing nowadays?' I tell them, but when it comes to the night of the gig they're never there. And when I get to their homes they want me to listen to Americans like Al Jarreau and George Benson."

Gawulana feels South Africans have to wean themselves of American jazz, and find themselves in the talents of vocalists like Retsi Pule, Don Tshomela and

Pinisi Sauli.

Gigs have hardly been forthcoming for local jazz bands the past few months.

One of the few gigs the Gawulana Quartet won was for the Department of Sport, Arts, Recreation and Culture film and video seminar two weeks ago at the Fish River Sun.

The Quartet sounds crisper than ever before, and richer for the recent addition of a trumpeter, one Pex Nduluka.

Gawulana has come a long way since he attended jazz workshops conducted by "global figures" in Lahore, Pakistan, in 1997.

On that tour he also performed in the musical play *Members of Society* (directed by East Londoner Julius Mtsaka), for which he composed the theme song.

In 1999 he backed East London's famous female jazz exile, London-based Pinisi Sauli, when she visited her home city. Last year he backed saxophonist Zim Ngqawana at the Guild Theatre and opened for Hugh Masekela at Waverley Park.

He believes things will look up for jazz.

Next weekend the world famous Soweto String Quartet — billed to perform at the Guild Theatre on February 23 — won't be the only act around here. Gawulana tells me his Quartet, featuring Pex Nduluka on trumpet, will be performing at the Shukushukuma tavern in Ilitha near Berlin on Saturday, February 24.

A musical exile



BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

Daily

Dispatch

May 18, 2001

A FEW weeks ago the *Mail & Guardian* ran an article about Cape Town-bred jazz vocalist Sathima Bea Benjamin entitled "SA's Last Musical Exile Returns".

Not quite.

Jonathan Butler, born and bred on the Cape Flats, is still dividing his time in self-imposed exile between the United States and Europe.

But one of the finest left hand jazz guitarists is torn between two worlds.

I last listened live to the *hotklok* genius of the *bak* when he entertained at the Star Plaza auditorium in Merrillville, Indiana in 1992.

He had the 3000 audience, most of whom came from jazz mad Chicagoland, on their feet the entire show. And, amazingly, they sang along on all his songs — English and Xhosa — from his *Heal Our Land* and *Deliverance* albums.

Speaking to me back stage after the show he said: "I love them, and they love me".

After the trials he survived in South Africa — poverty on the Flats, apartheid, a spell with drugs — I could understand his comfort in a land that welcomed him and adored him; that he was at home there.

Last year he visited South Africa with Bob James. The two maestros combined with American drummer Billy Kilson and local bass guitarist Bakitha Khumalo, playing concerts and conducting workshops.



JONATHAN BUTLER

With regards to the workshops he told the Sowetan in a recent interview: "Music education is important. I can't express that enough. And vocal training is necessary for the development of a vocalist. As much as a saxophonist to do circular breathing exercises, singers need vocal training."

On the same tour Butler promoted his latest album, *Story of Life*.

This, his 9th solo album, carries more vocals than instrumentals.

Butler opted for a predominantly

vocal route because he wanted people to hear his story in words rather than speculate about it through interpretations of his guitar play. After all, he started out as a singer with Ronnie Joyce way back in the late 1960s.

He last visited here when he played in the fifth annual jazzathon on Robben Island in February.

The boy wonder wants to come home.

But he's torn between coming home to entertain and teach here and doing it in the States and promoting South African artists there.

Butler is currently in the States, working on his Africa Nights Tour concept.

He has been mulling over the concept at least since 1992 when he told me "I am hoping to bring South African jazz musicians here. To Chicago, and New York. These cities can offer them the best jazz education."

For this purpose he told the Sowetan: "I'm talking to lots of people to get it off the ground. These include George Duke, Stevie Wonder and Isaac Hayes."

Speaking of his *Story of Life* he said: "While making this record, I realized that despite all the pain, suffering and atrocities, I am still hopelessly in love with South Africa."

Meanwhile Butler has his Africa Nights Tour dream, and he is sizing up the US and UK concert circuits.