

Jazzman McGregor dies from cancer

Summary Times By KURT SWART

A JAZZ musician who disguised himself as a black to play in South African clubs from which he was barred by the Group Areas Act, died in a hospital in France this week after a short illness.

Jazz pianist Chris McGregor, 54, was hospitalised after doctors discovered symptoms of lung cancer two weeks ago.

A pioneer in fusing indigenous South African music and European jazz, McGregor left home in 1964 in disgust with South Africa's racial laws.

Once described as the only white jazz performer "who has actually crossed over and become truly South Africanised", he frequently had to disguise himself as "coloured" by blacking his face with boot polish so that he could perform in the townships without falling foul of the Group Areas Act. He was last seen by jazz fans at the Carling Festival on Cape Town's Greenmarket Square in 1987. At the time of his death he was considering returning home.

He achieved international fame in the '60s with his band The Blue Notes, which included gifted musicians Dudu Pukwana, Nick Moyake, Louis Moholo, Johnny Dyanl and Mongezi Feza. Pukwana and Moholo are the band's only survivors and are still respected by international jazz musicians.