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RDM

22/1/64

Now—a jazz form distinctively South African

THE "South African sound" is beginning to emerge in jazz. It hasn't made a real impact abroad yet, but the jazz world at large is beginning to recognise that something different is happening in South Africa.

And spearheading the development is a dedicated young jazzman, Chris McGregor, who spends his waking hours guiding, nurturing, encouraging the African musicians who are creating this new "South African sound."

"More is happening in the South African jazz scene," Chris told me over a cup of tea yesterday, "than anywhere in the world outside the United States."



"Our African jazzmen are developing new and more sincere lines. They have natural advantages denied to musicians in Europe.

"Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Scandinavians—they have first to teach themselves to play like Americans. Whereas the musical tradition of the African leads spontaneously and directly into something immediately recognisable as jazz."

Chris, a pianist himself, has been coaching and coaxing and helping to create the new "sound," often (they tell me) quietly going hungry so that the music will grow and the music-makers develop with it.



I saw his method of "scoring" for the non-reading musicians of his group—a modification of the tonic sol-fa that enables them to read the note, though not the time-value. "But they are instinctive musicians when it comes to the beat, the rhythmic patterns and the phrasing," says Chris.

Will all this ever become apparent abroad? "Well, Dollar Brand has been



Jazzman Chris McGregor

making them aware of it in Switzerland," says Chris. "Three discs he made with Ellington have engaged the attention of 'Downbeat' magazine. And its full impact will be felt one day if we keep on developing."

Jazz aficionados will be able to judge for themselves what form the "South African sound" is taking at the concert on Friday and Saturday at the University Great Hall, in which Chris McGregor and the Blue Notes—his current group—will appear.

This is the same variety show in which the cast of "Sponono," due to appear on Broadway, will give farewell excerpts of songs and dances from the show. It all takes up the void left by the Claremont Quartet when they could not come to South Africa from the United States.