

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.