

McJAZZ



CHRIS MCGREGOR is huge, burly, bearded and is wearing a woolly cap he's lifted, conned or borrowed off one of his 'tribe' — or maybe he was given it by Archie Shepp. Britain's only psychic-jazz man is probably wandering round town right at this moment looking for a piano, somewhere to practice, somewhere to get that music out of his head.

More than likely he's talking about it, searching and discovering new sounds or energies within himself — and giving love warmth and all those good communications to anyone who happens to be about.

He's one person, one jazz group, who's going to be hurt when Ronnie Scott's Old Place closes down on Saturday May 25. Yes it's closing down because the landlord is said to have refused to renew the lease. Chris McGregor and his group have had a regular spot there on and off for most of the three years they've been in London.

Their performances happen like this. Chris is usually installed at the piano before the other members arrive. The music struggles, they struggle, and wander off now and again to a secret room. Slowly the energy builds. The audience is now filling the club — or wherever they're playing.

Something clicks. The audience grow tense: the atmosphere is total. Music. Listening. Musical ball-games. A conversation that's been lying underground for too long is screaming: kicked into limbo.

They've found the music — or was it something in the cosmos? The energy is rippling and shaking them in the efforts to come out.

The audience have woken up. They're ready — straining with the group to get that energy out. It's screaming, echoing, bouncing back from the audience to the group. There's nothing left in that club except that music.

It gets too much for the Zulus. The platform is left with drums, Ronnie Beer, the tenor, and Chris.

In the audience the Zulus are doing the Gumbboot Dance. Everyone is going wild. And the Music is still there. Then there's a fight. The Zulus are at it again.

Their manager is telephoned: 'Get those animals out of here!'

McGregor has a record coming out May 18, and is performing with his Zulus at the Festival Hall.