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Kong jazz in 'Amsterdam'

All were held by music's beat

(By Mark Stone)

THE "Amsterdam by Day and Night" fair held by the Netherlands community in the skating rink of the Feather Market Hall was climaxed last night by a dance in the "streets" of "Amsterdam".

It was no ordinary dance! Providing the music was the "King Kong" band.

The audience loved every minute of it, and for about an hour turned the affair into an impromptu jazz concert rather than a dance.

The band set a solid, swinging dance beat — but most of the several hundred men and women present did not dance. They clustered around the improvised bandstand, swaying hypnotically as the 12-piece African band gave its exciting version of modern jazz.

Solos

The band's star pianist and arranger Salisbury "Sol" Klaaste was sick in bed.

But the King Kong musicians displayed a virtuosity and a jazz sense that astonished me and no doubt would make American jazzmen sit up and listen.

The audience cheered and clapped enthusiastically after solos by members of the band. The lead trumpeter and saxophonists Kieppie Moketsi and Mackay Dabashe (the band-leader) were particularly impressive.

Not more than a handful of those present could have been recognised jazz fans. Yet the spontaneous appreciation of the audience must have communicated itself to the players.

Incongruous ?

I hadn't expected that non-commercial, improvised jazz could be so well received by a Port Elizabeth audience.

Perhaps it was that there was something unusual about Africans playing American jazz for Whites in a replica of an old-world Dutch street.

For a while, held by the pulsating music, they forgot who or where they were.

They just became people anywhere displaying their artistry to others — and people enjoying the art of the others.

It wasn't so incongruous after all . . .

Some dancers jived, but most just listened, fascinated, to the exciting modern jazz played by the "King Kong" band at the closing session of the "Amsterdam by Day and Night" fair in Port Elizabeth last night.

