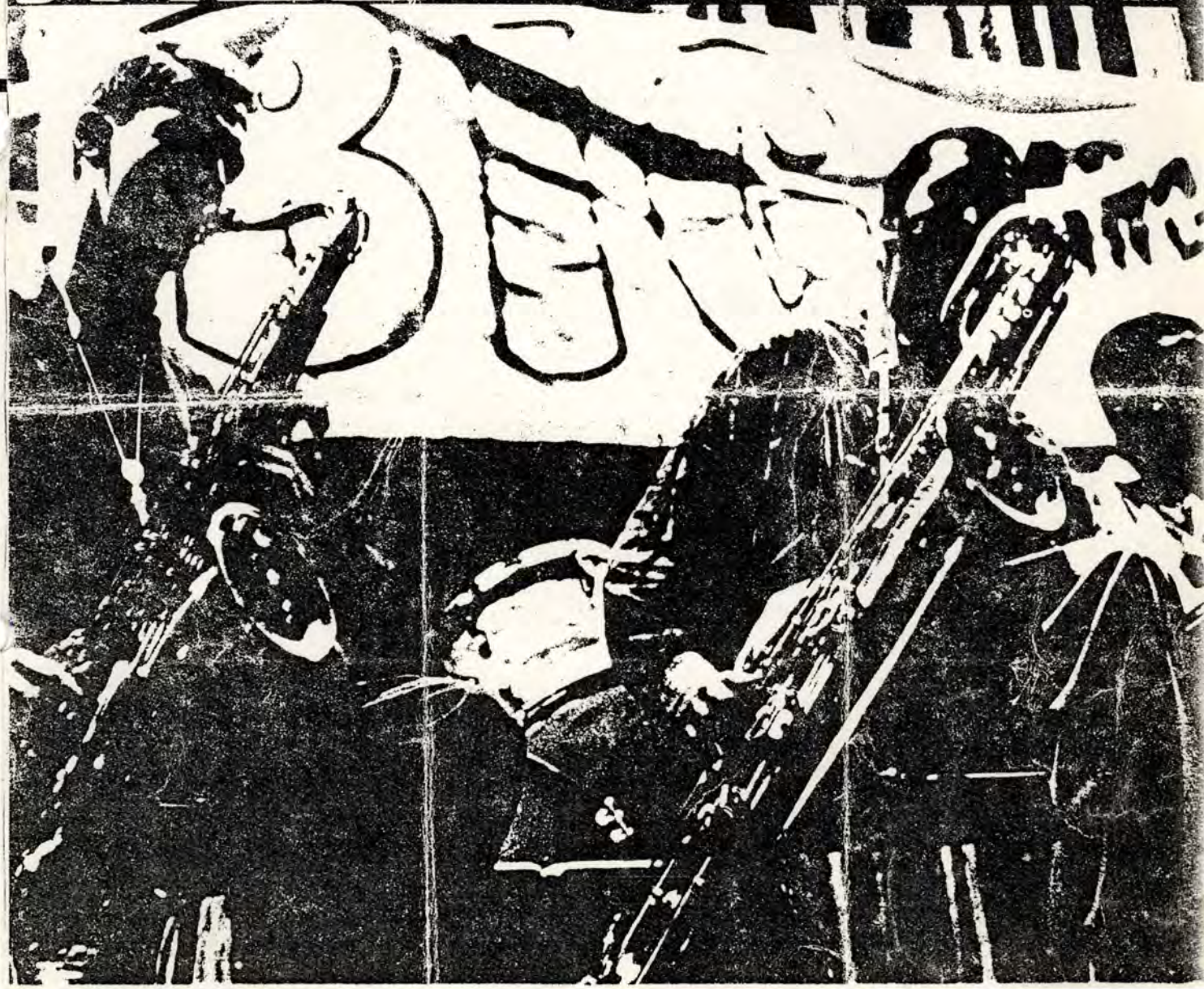


JAZZ/THE AFRICAN SOUND

CHRIS MCGREGOR & THE CASTLE LAGER BIG BAND

NEW SOUND

NSL 1011



JAZZ / THE AFRICAN SOUND

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Side 1

1 SWITCH	Moeketsi	6.05	M.P.A.
2 KIPPIE	Brand	5.10	M.P.A.
3 ECLIPSE AT DAWN	Brand	5.04	M.P.A.

Side 2

1 EARLY BIRD	McGregor	3.30	M.P.A.
2 I REMEMBER BILLY	Moeketsi	5.03	M.P.A.
3 NOW	McGregor	5.25	M.P.A.

SAXES:

Dudu Pukwana (Lead Alto)
Barney Rabachane (2nd Alto)
Nick Moyake (tenor)
Ronnie Beer (tenor)
Christopher Columbus Ngcukane (baritone)
Kippie Moeketsi (alto and clarinet)

TROMBONES:

Bob Tizzard (Lead)
Blyth Mbitanya
Willie Nettle

TRUMPETS:

Dennis Mpali (Lead)
Ebbie Creswell
Mongesi Feza
Noel Jones

BASS: Sammy Maritz

DRUMS: Early Mabusa
PIANO: Chris McGregor

I have wanted for years to bring a big band composed of the brightest stars in South African jazz and my note-books are full of projected personnel and worthwhile compositions for such a venture, the fruits of about five years of listening to and being involved with this lovely thing, jazz music in South Africa.

So I can hardly claim to have been taken by surprise by the immediate possibility of such a band becoming a fact, but I must admit that it still seems a dream to me, and one in which I played my own part very badly, considering the possibilities. I can only plead that the real task of arranging came about in practice, with all members present, and that I could not possibly, in the two weeks of economic life granted us by the kindness of South African Breweries (through Union Artists) as a result of the 1963 Cold Castle National Festival, exploit possibilities and potentialities as fast as they became clear to me. I am satisfied at least that the possibilities are tremendous, because I have heard them. I hope that at least a few of them come across on this record.

We could hardly have been luckier in the musicians available. I have worked with all the musicians on this record in small groups with the exception of the trumpeters Noel Jones and Ebbie Creswell, so that I had, to begin with, a working knowledge of each musician's tastes and capabilities, and Noel and Ebbie soon made their qualities evident and got down to work with an enthusiasm and willingness to enter the spirit of the music that surprised me. Dudu, whose unbelievable solo work is one of the wonderful possibilities not used on this record, concentrated on leading the reeds into a sound and blend and relaxation I knew was possible but have never heard in reality. Dennis made full use of his big, warm sound to lead the trumpets and the trombone section under Bob's leadership took no time at all to achieve an understanding with one another. Sammy and Early had never worked together before, but a real appreciation of one another's talents helped them to blend into a beautifully relaxed rhythm section.

And then, what abundance of solo talent. Nick Moyake by himself would be sufficient to build a big band around with his wonderful soulful sound, starting technical command and the depth of his musical thinking. Kippie, astonishingly full of musical life after years of almost single-handed fighting for the cause of modern jazz in this country, worked like an enthusiastic teenager, setting an example for us all. Mongesi Feza, brilliant 18-year-old trumpeter, kept experienced musicians grinning and nodding their heads in approval and the other "young boy", Barney Rabachane, also caused many surprises. I didn't even use the solo work of Dudu, Dennis (except on one track), Columbus, Ronnie Beer, Blyth, Bob (except for some "fours" on Early Bird) and all of these are soloists I admire and love.

I have had a hard time choosing compositions from the many beautiful things that jazzmen have written in this country. Dollar's compositions are a repertoire in themselves and I love them all. And the patient way that he explained them to me and told me their stories gave them a new dimension for me which I tried to express in these arrangements of them.

Kippie doesn't regard himself primarily as a composer but has a very original and personal approach to writing which knocks me out - his things are full of possibilities. I didn't have a chance to work on other extremely good numbers by Thethe Mbambisa, Ronnie Beer, Gideon Nxumalo, Mackay Devashe and Chris Columbus.

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SWITCH is one of Kippie's most original ideas and we arranged it to showcase his alto playing. It is built on an interesting chord structure which has no real key but has a feeling of departure and return through the riff used as introduction and coda.

KIPPIE was composed by Dollar to express the way he feels about Kippie and I have arranged it to express the way I feel about both of them. It is a beautiful melody which needs no tampering with, dedicated to one of the truly great originals of the South African jazz scene. Is there anyone in the world who plays alto or clarinet anything like the way Kippie does? I play the main melody after the brass introduction. The beautiful reed sound on the bridge is a unison of Ronnie, Dudu and Nick who play it just the way I feel it. In the second chorus Kippie plays the line a little more freely on clarinet with Dudu, Nick and Columbus backing, then after a climax in the bridge involving all the brass, Kippie signs and seals it.

I chose *ECLIPSE AT DAWN* before other gems by Dollar because it seemed just slightly easier on the soloists than my other favourites, *MATING CALL*, *SOUTH EASTER*, *WATER'S EDGE*, etc. and under the pressure of time we had necessarily to concentrate more on ensembles than solos. The curious front-line sound you may wonder about is a unison of Kippie's clarinet, Dudu's alto, and Mongesi's muted trumpet. The bridge is taken by the trombones in unison. "Man, what a kick those trombones gave us!" Dudu said afterwards. The clarinet solo is by Kippie and the tenor is Nick.

EARLY BIRD is the name for Early Mabusa and features his exciting drumming in exchanges with the band and with Bob and Nick with room also for solos for Barney Rabachane and myself.

I REMEMBER BILLY is started first by Kippie's clarinet and then the full band takes it over. The reed section just knocked me out.

NOW came to me when I was sitting at the piano thinking about Nick, so in a way I guess it's his composition. Anyway, it is dedicated to him and that tenor solo is his all the way. The trumpet solo is by Mongesi Feza.

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All that remains to be said is that I love this band and we had a ball making this record.

CHRIS MCGREGOR



Chris



Dudu

Kippie



Bob



Dennis



Nick



Mongesi