

# The spirit of Dludlu

Daily  
Aspen  
June 27,  
2001



## BackBeat

with Cornelius Thomas

**T**HE BANNER holding two buildings on Oxford Street together says it all: the jazz resurgence in the city is on track, and guitarist Jimmy Dludlu is coming to town.

Dludlu will be swaying the crowd in a world class concert in the Orient Theatre on Saturday, June 30 — an event organised by the Dyani Pukwana Jazz Foundation and sponsored by the Eastern Cape Provincial Arts and Culture Council.

The Council is funding the event as part of Youth Month.

Dludlu, the ordinary boy who first strummed a home-made guitar at the age of 13, has come a long way.

In the 1980s he did mostly session work. But starting in 1990 with the Guinness Jazz Festival, accolades, awards and academic opportunities came his way, until he won three Samas last year.

However, Dludlu is more serious about music than awards. He understands that music cannot be divorced from culture, and that South African music, especially jazz, is African music.

Thus last year the guitar maestro

utilised a Ford Foundation grant to research West African rhythms. The effect of his research in Accra, Ghana, and his exposure to the music scene there, spilled from his guitar with telling effect — mainstream chords laced with a rhythmic African undercurrent flowing from Cameroon to Senegal — at the North Sea Jazz Festival Cape Town in April this year.

Dludlu loves to entertain, but also to educate, to give back. Last year at Chicago's Northwestern University, he not only performed, but also lectured on *Sounds in Southern Africa*, *Finding a Voice in African Music*, and *Developing African Musical Industries*.

In addition he ran a seminar on *Crossing Boundaries in Africa*, this being a foray into the musical influences of Miriam Makeba from Zambia to Benin.

On the recording front Dludlu has, since the introduction of his hit *Point of View* (featured on Heads Up's *Smooth Africa* album) in the United States and the subsequent release of his *Echoes from the Past*, *Essence of Rhythm* and *Winds of Change*, become an international star on par with Jonathan

Butler.

Like Butler, Dludlu has realised that "at home the market is small".

Does that mean we could lose him? Dludlu told the *Mail & Guardian* in a recent interview: "You need some kind of balance, (but) as doors open, do not forget where you come from."

With Dludlu now having cutting edge albums, awards, a degree from UCT and a diploma from Northwestern to his credit, the New York City-based Verve label is vigorously promoting him in Europe. And as doors open, this erudite young man will enter.

For local music lovers a door is opening next Saturday, and at R40 (about \$5) this world class jazz concert will be a steal.

- On Sunday July 1 Jimmy Dludlu will give even more when he presents a workshop on guitar techniques and African rhythms at Satchmo's in the Mdantsane Sun — an opportunity created by the provincial arts and culture council for aspiring young musicians.

Guitarists in particular will benefit from the ideas, inspiration, and spirit of Dludlu.