Beyond Memory

Mojapelo, Max

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EDITOR’S NOTE

*Beyond Memory* is a collection of Max Mojapelo’s diaries, written in a very personalised style. Critical details lie in the deep meanders of the history, moments, and memories that Mojapelo has about the world of music in South Africa. Mojapelo’s style blurs the lines across styles of many literary genres. It is personalised, conversational, reportorial, analytical and poetic – styles that assume a kind of an African, free authorial narrative.

*Beyond Memory* describes, engages in direct speech and makes reference to a myriad episodes of Mojapelo’s memories, and still tells the same story that touches on the collective history, moments, and memory of the South African music industry. As former deejay, powerful festival compère, former station manager, writer of learning material for schools and a passionate music development leader, Mojapelo has captured the details about everybody and anybody that he has met and interviewed, as well as of those that he followed on the airwaves during and beyond his years as an active radio personality.

Mojapelo’s keen eye on every turn of development in the South African music industry and on those whose contribution has impacted directly or indirectly on its development, shape and character, is commendable. It is both a longitudinal and transversal record of the development of South African music and its parallel links with the sounds of the diaspora. The biggest strength of *Beyond Memory*, is on the one hand, Mojapelo’s sterling chronological classification of different epochs of the development of music in South Africa, and, on the other hand, the themes alongside the rudimentary historical time line. The book therefore, does not take the dry and trite historical nomenclature route of exegesis of historical data. Rather, history ensues from the memory of the stories told in time.

For Mojapelo, it is a daunting ask to go beyond memory. He believes that we often get trapped in shackles of ‘tabloidisation’, and never go beyond memory of unfortunate events in the lives of artists. In *Beyond Memory* Mojapelo evidences that it is critical to go beyond such memory to the human spirits that the artists essentially are. It is interesting to note that Mojapelo has chosen, throughout his encounter with these artists, to search for humanistic elements of their characters and careers, and move beyond a perception that views artists as mere media objects that spur on wanton ecstasy and adrenaline in the world of ‘who is who’. Mojapelo takes the readers through meaningful small bites of histories, moments and memories in a manner that informs and avoids gossip. Mojapelo takes the reader to a moment in time, so that once we have taken stock of our
history as South Africans, we then meaningfully traverse new heights of the human spirit, and thereby go beyond mere memory.

The use of the African narrative style could be mistaken for inconsequential name dropping. These brief references to some artists in a story told about the other, is Mojapelo’s conscious refrain from merely presenting curriculum vitae of different South African artists. Quite simply, those whom he has encountered more, receive more coverage. It should be kept in mind that this is not a study but a glimpse into Mojapelo’s diaries kept over the years. The story of South African music life that he has experienced personally is up-to-date and covers information that can usually only be covered by daily publications and daily news bulletins. The tiny bits of information that Mojapelo’s diaries offer, are therefore informative and invaluable.

In these diaries, Mojapelo records real names of musicians, dates of events that link with their achievements and, in some cases, their dates of birth. The information in his diaries has been so carefully captured and systematically recorded, so that they become a useful record that, when read with the other publications that are out there, adds in a meaningful way to the jigsaw-puzzle of the national quilt of the South African music landscape.

_Beyond Memory_ is evidence not only of a life dedicated to keeping records but of a rare cadre and deejay. Mojapelo, is to the world of radio what Philip Tabane is to the world of music innovation. He is to the world of radio what Pele is to the world of soccer. Thank you for this wealth. Dear readers, let us drink from the well of memory which, from the time of its release to you, will begin to go beyond memory for every generation that is born.

Enjoy reading.

Sello Galane