Beyond Memory

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CHAPTER ONE

SOWETO SOUL MUSIC

Whenever I hear Wilson Pickett’s 1965 hit *In The Midnight Hour* or Blood, Sweat and Tears’ 1969 chartbuster *And When I Die*, I remember the morning I heard an instrumental tune from the Kau homestead, a stone’s throw away from my home in the village of Matome, Zebediela. I later found out the tune was *Soweto Soul Music*. It was back in the late sixties. That is how I was introduced to the music genre that was to become known as township soul. In those dark days of white rule the word ‘township’ meant the part of a town where only black people lived. So, township soul was soul music as South African blacks in the townships liked it. This music was dominated by the organ and drums. Later in life I realised the impact Memphis-born Booker T Jones’s US band, Booker T and the MGs had on township soul. By the way, the name of that band in full was Booker T Jones and the Memphis Group. The main exponents of this black South African new brand of music were The Beaters in the south-western townships (Soweto) and The Anchors in Alexandra, north of the city of Johannesburg.

*The Beaters* was formed in Soweto by Orlando High School students in 1968 in the days of Dr Matseke’s principalship. Bass guitarist “Om” Alec Khaoli, lead guitarist Selby Ntuli, Saitana aka Monty Ndimande who played the second guitar and Sipho Mabuse who was introduced to drumming by sangoma Ntate Manuel in his neighbourhood. The four of them called their group The Beaters. Selby Fikile Ntuli became the leader of the band. Their first album with Teal Records was *Soul-A-Go-Go* in 1969 produced by the late Ray Nkwe. It was followed by *Bacon And Eggs* in 1970 and *Mumsy Hips* in 1971 under the GRC label. In 1974 two more albums were released before they decided to change the band’s name. The popularity of The Beaters saw them embarking on roadshows throughout
the length and breath of South Africa and beyond. Those were the days of monkey jive with their Soweto shows at venues like Uncle Tom’s Hall. When they toured Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1976, they were well received by the people in the township of Harare. They performed at the Mutanga Night Club, where they played a song they had composed as a dedication to the people of the township titled *Harari* (spelled with an i) and received a standing ovation. Back home in South Africa the song became the title track of their first album titled *Harari* with Gallo Records. We should remember that Gallo Record Company as we know it now is a hybrid of two companies – Gallo Record Company, founded by Eric Gallo in 1926 and Gramophone Record Company, founded by Arnold Golembo in 1939. Within no time the album went double gold in sales.

Following the success of the hit song as well as the three month tour, which was originally scheduled for three weeks, music fans started calling the group *Harari*. In Zimbabwe, Harare means “one who is so busy he has no time for sleeping”. Interestingly, after independence in Zimbabwe itself, Harare became the name of the capital city formerly known as Salisbury. This is the name that the group became known by as they released hit after hit and packed dance halls and stadiums alike across southern Africa. They had a cult following among the youth of the era as they sang, “Marabi is the music, Harari is the magic, sing a song…” The lowest point of their career occurred when four people died at a Tshwane jazz festival in a riot that was caused by impatient music lovers. These guys were very popular. They were to black South Africans what Rabbit was to our white compatriots. *Rabbit* was Ronnie Robot, Trevor Rabin, Neil Cloud and Duncan Faure. Some people called them the South African Beatles. Their predecessors, Four Jacks and a Jill of Master Jack fame and The Dream Merchants who had a big hit *The Rattler* put South African music on the international scene. Like The Beatles, showbiz pressures split Rabbit. Ronnie Robot later established his own record company, On Record, Trevor joined some members of Yes abroad in 1992 and had a hit *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* in 1984, whereas Duncan Faure became a member of the Edinburgh boys, Bay City Rollers.

In 1978 Hugh Masekela invited Harari to perform in America, but the tour failed because of the death of the leader of the band, Selby Ntuli. Sipho Mabuse took the baton and led the combo to greater heights. His business acumen later saw the band registered as a company. As such, some members were shareholders, while some were session musicians. The major shareholders were the two November men, Sipho and Alec. The friendship shared by these two men was similar to that of John Lennon and Paul McCartney. Proof of their talent and versatility was their participation in the recording of Pat Matshikiza and Kippie Moeketsi’s album, *Tshona* which featured Basil “Mannenberg” Coetzee in 1975 produced by Rashid Vally on The Sun label. They were invited by producer Rashid Vally of Kohinoor music retailer fame to assist Pat and Kippie on bass and drums. Kippie was sceptical about involving young boys in
Jazz music, but once they started recording he was silenced by their brilliance and creativity. In music improvisation draws the line between boys and men. To play what you are not told to can enrich the ultimate product.

In South Africa the band shared the stage with visiting international superstars like Percy Sledge, Timmy Thomas, Wilson Pickett as well as Brook Benton who passed away in 1988, that greedy year that began by claiming the lives of our greats like newsman Percy Qoboza. Their manager, Dianne Brooklyn, worked very hard to promote their name and groom them into professionals. In 1981 A&M Records released their albums Harari and Flying Out on its label. Of the other albums that followed, the following did very well for them: Kalaharari Rock, Heat Wave, Flying Out and Home Brew. Some of their best singles ever were Give and Party, both achieving platinum status and the latter even entering the American Disco Hot 100. Their music can still be enjoyed afresh on compilations of their hits, Greatest Hits Volume 1 (1991) and Volume 2 (1998), by Gallo Records.

Showbiz, fame and fortune usually breed friction within groups as witnessed with worldwide popular supergroup The Beatles and others. It is not always easy to pinpoint the forces that destroy the team spirit and brotherhood, but it is mostly money, power and fame itself. Sometimes it is simply the need to grow. Harari could also not escape these forces. At the end of 1982 the original Harari disbanded. By the early eighties a number of musicians had joined and left the band. Most of these members pursued solo careers. Some only had a stint with the band while others played for the band until its demise. Amongst those who have been members of the Afro-Rock band are: “Om” Alec Khaoli, Sipho “Hotstix” Mabuse, Masike “Funky” Mohapi, Monty “Saitana” Ndimande, Banza Kgasoane, Khaya Mahlangu, Condry Ziqubu, Oupa Segoai, Charlie “Babas” Ndlovu, Barnson “Branny” Ledwaba, Lionel Peterson, Eddie Manda, Thelema “ndo” Segona, Sello Twala, Robert Doc Mthalane, Louis Mhlanga, Danny Malewa, Mzwandile Kente and others. However, Sipho, whom Condry nicknamed “Hotstix” for his drum beating skills, remained the father of this band for many years. In 1986 Sipho Mabuse produced Bad Boys, an album of a Harari made up of younger members: Mzwandile Kente, Danny Malewa, Sello Montoedi, Joel Matsela and Richard Sekgobela. Later he also embarked on a solo career.

Born on 2 November 1951, Sipho Mabuse loved beating drums from his days as a drum major in his school’s cadet band. Later on he taught himself to play various musical instruments like flute, piano, saxophone and synthesiser. He ultimately became producer, composer, arranger and coordinator for the band. Outside the Harari circle he also developed other new artists and groups like The Soweto Soul Orchestra, Botsotsoto, etc.

As a solo artist, to rise to the top Sipho’s debut maxi single was aptly titled Rise. It went double gold overnight featuring the talents of Ray Phiri on guitar and Lloyd Lelosa on keyboards, both members of Stimela. September 1984 saw
the release of his evergreen monster hit *Burnout*, a song that remains stubborn and unchallenged through the years. It was included in various compilations including Shonisani Muleya’s 2002 comedy CD *Ashifa Shabba Live @ Club Arena* and covered by younger groups like Karamo on their 1991 album *Bra Music* as well as the SSQ on their CD *Old School Township Remixes* in 1998. I remember that during the festive season of its release year (1984) there was a huge “Burn Out Music Festival” on 16 December at the Mamelodi Stadium featuring: Harari, Stimela, Amampondo, Obed Ngobeni, Street Kids, Ebony, William And Young Five as well as Cecil Mitch. When I interviewed Sipho that very year at the Lebowakgomo Showgrounds, responding to my question about the hit song’s inspiration, he simply smiled and replied, “Ke koša ya badimo”, literally meaning “it is a song from the gods”. But what he really meant was that it just hit him without any effort. At the time he and ex-wife Chichi Maponya had just been blessed with a daughter, Naledi.

The album *Burnout* became a world-wide phenomenon and sold over 500 000 units. A track from the album *Jive Soweto* became a huge international video hit on television screens. The album had four stand-alone tracks, two each side. It featured other two great musicians of our time, Steve Kekana (ad lib voice on *Burnout*) and West Nkosi (saxophone on *Jive Soweto*) as well as other musicians of star quality in their own right. If I had the liberty to choose a continental signature tune for the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) sittings, it would be the powerful track, *Zanzibar*, from this album – so Pan African yet so universal. One thing is very clear: Sipho Mabuse is a respected musician. In 1986 he released the album *Afrodizia* featuring one of the most irresistible dance tracks *Let’s Get It On*. Virgin Records released the track *Shikisha* internationally in 1987. As such, he spent most of his time abroad. It was during this time that his long-cherished dream came true – he arranged Miriam Makeba’s 1989 album *Welela* and co-produced it with Roberto Melloll. *Afrodizia* was followed by *The Chant Of The Marching* in 1989, an album that also featured a moving track titled *Mama*, a duet with “Mama Africa”, Miriam Makeba. In 1991 another album, *What About Tomorrow*, hit the market. “Sips” was still nostalgic and very much in love with the patriotic *Zanzibar* from his 1984 *Burnout* album. If you want to confirm his soft spot for the track, listen to his live performance CD recorded at the Newtown Music Hall in 2005 – stunning!

By 1995 Sipho was the Executive Director of Kippies International Club in Newtown, Johannesburg. After 21 years of existence, the club, which ranks amongst the top 100 jazz clubs in the world, was closed down in April 2005 by the powers that be as it was deemed unsafe for continued use. After a loud public outcry the Gauteng MEC for Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation, Barbara Creecy re-opened it on Thursday, 2 November 2006. It is now housed in a building called Mills at 66 Carr Street, Newtown. Maybe I should just say “at the old Songwriters Club”. Kippies has been declared a heritage site.
The *Township Child* album followed in 1996, in a way promoting the spirit of the African Renaissance. It includes tracks like *Thaba Bosiu* and *Rumba Mama*, a track I used as a signature tune for an African music programme “Gowa Afrika!” in my days as a deejay at the SABC.

In 2005 his musical home, Peter Gallo’s Gallo Records released a live CD, which celebrates an illustrious career stretching across three decades. It was titled *Chant Of The Marching: Live In Johannesburg* and was recorded at the Newtown Music Hall. Tracks include Bob Marley’s classic, *Redemption Song*. Gallo has also released other compilation albums of his music through the years. Sipho continues with performances and helping develop the industry, especially as board member of the South African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO). Many young musicians regard him as a brother. Some of the NGOs he is committed to include: The Johannesburg Aids Council, the Soweto Cancer Association and the Soweto Home for the Aged. The South African Music Awards (SAMA) honoured him with a Lifetime Achievement award in the same year together with fellow legends, Dorothy Masuka, the late Margaret Singana and Brenda Fassie.

Bass guitarist “*Om*” **ALEC KHAOLI**, born 5 November 1953, is another Harari bombshell. When he went solo he took Donovan Knox to the USA to record his album *Brown Sugar* (under new name “Umoja”) in the A&M Los Angeles studios. He later shook the world of music with his maxi single, *U R The One*. It was also released in America by Emergency Records, in France through Polygram, in Italy through CDG Records, whereas Chrysalis Records released it in Europe and Australia. In 1984 he released his solo album *Use Me*. His newly-formed band, Umoja, released an album entitled *Rainbow*, which featured the sizzler, *Oneness*. Umoja is a Swahili word for unity. In fact throughout his compositions “Om” reflected his passion for the Swahili language. The new group’s line-up included “*Om*” Alec Khaoli, Donovan Knox, Don Laka, Godfrey Mgcina, Neo Maphaka and Sello Twala. Later some members of this group formed Image whose well-known line-up over time included Don Laka, Donovan Knox, Godfrey Mgcina, Sello Twala, Jimmy Mngwandi, Benjamin Dube as well as Solly Sithole. At a later stage some embarked on solo careers. However, the name of Umoja itself never died and new members continued with the sound. Alec’s album *Say You Love Me* followed in 1985. In the very same year the Afro-Funk group, Umoja released another album, *Party*. On this 1985 album as well as on the 1986 album, *All Night Party*, the lineup was consistently: “*Om*” Alec Khaoli, Philip Duiker, Stanley Deeu, Tony Dladla and Malachia Suhla. But later the lineup kept changing as new musicians joined and others left. Umoja’s biggest album was *707* (1991), which achieved double platinum status. There were also others like *Everybody Needs Somebody* (1991), *Kiss Kiss* (1996) and *Owe Owe* (1998). Among them four went gold. In 1986 Alec released a maxi, *Another Lover*, on which he played most instruments on his moog synthesiser backed by Star Mabaso, Thuli Cele and Felicia Marion. His 1989 album titled *Now* featured the hit *The Big One*. 
Alec's music as a solo artist has been released in America and Europe. Besides his solo career and his band Umoja, Alec who does not consider himself a singer has produced and developed young artists like V-Mash, whose real name is Vinolia Mashego, daughter of well-known showbiz personality, Collins Mashego of Alexandra’s Anchors fame. Another such artist was Andile Gaeleshewe. Both artists had their fair share of the limelight in the music world and as presenters in the electronic media. He also produced his Harari days brother, Masike Mohapi. Some of Alec’s songs were recorded in his Fireworks Studios in Soweto and later he worked from his Oak Studios in Kew, Johannesburg. His other big hits include Sekuru, O Nketsang and Born Free which have been released by Gallo Record Company on a compilation CD titled The Best Of “Om” Alec Khaoli & Umoja.

Another Hararian, ”Funky” Masike Mohapi, guitar maestro in his own right also went solo releasing his own albums. From these albums the most memorable tracks are Babe, Hamnana and Pimville People. In 1984 he released a maxi single featuring Standing On The Top under the Raintree label. I remember that in 1984 he was in demand all over the country. During the festive season Drakensberg Promotions billed him in a series of festivals, which started on 2 December in Newcastle, went to Standerton, Atteridgeville, Vereeniging, Umlazi and ended up in Soweto at the Jabulani Amphitheatre. That is how sought-after he was. In 1985 he released a double-side maxi of My Love is Yours and Ndoyenda. Funky later suffered some setbacks in his solo career but Alec made it his business to keep him afloat. It remains to be seen if the guitarman can make a comeback.

Condry Ziqubu who joined Harari from Alexandra’s Flaming Souls is another red-fingered lead guitarist. He was born on 28 July 1951. Some of his reminiscences include playing for Simon Twala’s Flaming Souls at the age of fifteen. He says they were not paid in money, but “the new rolling brown chicken” and porridge; he was just happy because he was so young and enjoyed strumming the guitar. One day their manager bought each one of them a Blaupunkt radiogram. They were so excited, but their families were later shocked when a truck from the furnisher shop came to collect the music systems due to arrears on the monthly instalments. It was then that they learned only a deposit was paid and the families had to continue with payments. We both laughed this off as water under the bridge. He also left the university that Harari had become to do his own thing. His hit ABC recorded under the name Muntu placed him on the highway road to success.

In 1984 with his group Lumumba, named after the great Patrice Lumumba of Congo, he released his biggest hit ever Skorokoro, which also gave him the name “Mr Skorokoro”. The song was inspired by old battered township cars. Another hit with the group was Yellow Mieliemeal, inspired by the introduction of yellow mealie meal by the government after a long drought that made it difficult to get the normal white maize meal. In fact, most of his compositions
are about issues of the time. In 1985 *Via Orlando* was released. The title was inspired by a very popular tavern in Orlando, Soweto, owned by Sis Irene. It was followed by *Gorillaman* in 1986, an album he released as Condry Ziqubu. On this album he was joined by another Hararian, Branny Ledwaba on percussion. It was during this year that he followed his popularity to America and toured with the legendary Harry Belafonte. Condry is a close associate of the worldwide famous couple, Caiphus Semenya and Letta Mbulu who spent most of their career lives exiled in America. In 1987 *Shut Your Mouth* was released and was followed by *Pick Six* (1988), an album he dedicated to his new-born baby, Phindile. On the album he once again featured a Hararian, Charlie Ndlovu. His 1989 album, *Magic Man*, includes an isiZulu version of Sam Mhangwani’s *Maria Tebbo*. In 1991 this composer, producer, arranger and instrumentalist released another hot album, *No Money, No Love*, which he dedicated to his late mother, Masithole and his late brother, “Pro”. On this album he once again featured his favourite hornman, Scorpion Madondo as he did on his other works like his 1987 *Shut Your Mouth* album. Scorpion is also known for his work with Johnny Clegg. *Jealousy* followed in 1993. In 1997 Condry Ziqubu and Jay Vee Remixes were released. These were remixes of his monster hits like *Skorokoro* and *No Woman No Party*. Whenever I spent time with Condry in the eighties he was always sure I would bring up the subject of him recording an instrumental album featuring his wizardry on the lead guitar. To my amusement, *Condry Ziqubu And Friends* was released in 2004. His years with The Anchors, Flaming Souls, Harari and Lumumba have sharpened him into a confident all-rounder and adventurous muso. In between the albums his musical home, CCP also released compilations. Besides EMI, most of his music was published by Smoko Music.

His other project is Condry Ziqubu Productions, which will assist him to develop more young talent. By 2005 Condry had discovered new gospel talent in young Galaletsang Mmutlawane. The 13-year-old Ga-Rankuwa-born girl’s debut album was titled *Gali*. He also worked with trumpeter Banza Kgasoane’s Alexander Brass Band, a band that performed at many special events in the country. The rhythm never ends for this respected Alex traditional healer. The band’s first CD, *Diphala Vol. 1* produced by “Professor Rhythm”, Thami Mdluli of Taboo fame has created a niche for them in the market. Following its success, other volumes were recorded. The band has also shot a DVD live at the Standard Bank Arena in 2004. Towards the end of 2005 Condry parted ways with Banza’s band and formed the Condry Ziqubu Brass Band, which released a ten-track debut CD titled *Galaletsang*. By 2008 he had produced Faith Kekana’s debut CD titled *A Re Yeng*.

By the way, trumpeter **BANZA KGASOANE** is the son of Alexandra’s Harry Kgasoane who had a band known as Big Harry’s Big Band which performed at weddings. After his father’s death Banza who played in the band continued from where his father had left off, but started his new younger band called
Banza’s Band. In the sixties he had a stint with Selby Ntuli’s The Beaters. After that he played for Lumumba. After some time he joined “Big Voice” Jack Lerole to start Mango Groove in the eighties. He played with the band for almost a decade. After leaving the group he played instrumental gospel tunes backed by Lumumba in 1996. At the end of the nineties they started preparing for recordings of their music. In 2001 they recorded their debut album working with Condry.

Hot guitarist Robert Doc Mthalane was born in 1953. When he grew up his brother, Enoch also played guitar and he followed suit and excelled. Enoch’s guitar strings can be heard on his albums like Uzombona, Jonas Gwangwa’s Flowers Of The Nation and Zacks Nkosi’s Our Kind Of Jazz. Due to his hot fingers Doc played with a rock group, Naked Truth, but in 1978 joined the premier band of the time, Harari. The most remarkable project that Madoda Doc Mthalane embarked upon after leaving the “university” was his group Kabasa. Some of the most memorable hits by the group are Feeling Of The Sixties, a marathon vibrant instrumental tune used by radio deejays countrywide either as a signature tune, bridge or background music. Another powerful composition on the album was Mafeteng, which was censored by the SABC for reasons known only to some. Other original members of the group included Tata ‘TNT’ Sibeko and Mabote Kelly Petlane. Mpilo Dlamini who also joined the band later, has recently released Dilika, an album co-produced with D-Rex. Kabasa disbanded after four albums. Mthalane’s other group was Songamasu. He then left the country for London and worked with various groups, but his most stable relationship was with Busi Mhlongo’s band, Twasa. In fact they formed the group together and he wrote songs for and played with the group. When Gabriel Thobejane and Madala Kunene joined him in 1996 his health was failing him, but they managed to record his last album, Respect, featuring the voices of Busi Mhlongo and Lungiswa Plaatjies on Song For Doc. On 15 May 1998 Mthalane died in Durban at the age of 45. Like Stevie Ray Vaughan he has left many of his fans with sounds of a blazing guitar in their heads.

Oupa Segoi’s projects include Buya, which released Inhlupheko, an album he co-produced/wrote with Enos Lubisi on Dave Penhale’s DPMC label. The album was dedicated to Miriam Makeba about whom the album sleeve says “kept alive the spirit and hope of South African musicians during her long exile”. He later worked as a session musician and featured in some recordings like Yvonne Chaka Chaka’s album, Sangoma, on which he played percussion.

Thelma “Ndo” Segona who cut her keyboard teeth with Jimmy Mojapeló’s The Minerals in Rockville left the “varsity” to become a member of a new group, Chess. In 1986 they released Down By The River, an album composed and produced by George van Dyk of Hotline. Other members of Chess were Jean Chellew, Irene Coetzee, Aston Jarrod of Cinema fame as well as Todd Twala, who later created Baobab, which developed into the internationally acclaimed
musical “Umoja” with Thembi Nyandeni, known for her role as King Shaka’s mother Nandi in the film *Shaka Zulu*. Born and bred in Mofolo-North, Soweto, Thembi befriended Todd at primary school and joined Ipi Tombi in 1976. The sound track of Umoja, *The Spirit Of Togetherness*, produced by Fernando Perdigao, was nominated in the Best Producer category of SAMA 8. In the very same year – 1976 – they released another album, *Make Your Move*, with Penny Rose replacing Aston Jarrod on drums. The success of Chess was shortlived and the untimely death of Thelma Segona robbed local music of a real gem.

**Lionel Petersen** was born and bred in Alexandra Township. He used to front a very dynamic band called Thunderballs. Later he moved to Cape Town where he had a stint with The Rockets. He also worked with The Invaders. Some of his early hits were *Private Number*, *I Need A Little Love* and his cover version of Joe Tex’s *That’s The Way* (Plum Records, 1976), later also translated by Mpharanyana into Sesotho as *Ke Yona Tsele*. When he returned to Johannesburg he joined Harari to take the place of the lead vocalist Masike Mohapi. From Harari he moved back into his solo career. In 1986 he released *Feel Free*, an album produced by Selwyn Shandel and backed by The Winners on the CCP label. The title track and *Wedding Day*, which featured Imilonji Kantu Choral Society set the album on fire. Another hit by this star was *Iphelil’ipetrole*. One of his most successful projects was the recording of Kaiser Chiefs’ *We Are Number One* backed by his multi-racial band, The Winners. This Selwyn Shandel product was written by Russell Kramer of The Bushman fame. The CCP production team went to Ellis Park during a Chiefs vs Pirates match to record the electrifying atmosphere including the crowd eruption when Chiefs’ ace striker Samora Khulu hit the back of the net. By 1985 Lionel had become a born-again Christian and decided to use his talents to glorify the Lord.

**Soyaphi Louis Mhlanga**, who hailed from Zimbabwe left the band to follow his dreams. Whilst a session musician, he mostly played in Joburg’s nightclubs. His other love is theatre and music scores for films. This hot-as-hell guitarist who has worked with various big names in the UK, Zimbabwe and West Africa is also a composer and arranger. In 1997 he released a solo CD, *Mukai*, in which he featured members of Musik Ye Afrika, James Indi Phiri and Jethro Shasha. In the same year as member of Musik Ye Afrika they released a self-titled CD. In 1991 together with Vusi Mahlasela they released a live CD entitled *Vusi Mahlasela & Louis Mhlanga: Live At The Bassline*. This master of improvisation followed up with other albums like *Shamwari*, *Tinganekwane*, *Song For Nomsa*, *Keeping The Dream* and *World Traveller*. His productions include Vusi Mahlasela’s CD *Miyela* (BMG, 2000) which gained him a nomination as Best Producer in SAMA 7. He is a member of Sheer All Stars whose other artists include McCoy Mrubata, Frank Paco and Wessel van Rensburg. The late Sipho Gumede was also a founding member. The group won SAMA 9’s Best Contemporary Jazz Album for *Dance With Me*. Their other albums include *Indibano*. 
Monty Ndimande went solo using the name “Saitana”. In 1984 he released a mini album titled *Love Fever* on the Black Music label. He has already joined the bigger Orchestra Up Yonder.

Mzwandile Kente, son of “The Father Of Township Theatre”, the late great Mtutuzeli Gibson Kente, was born and bred in Rockville, Soweto and played in the musical *Mama And The Load*. He also played bass guitar for the G-Kays, which was a backing group for the stage play *Hard Road*. After a stint with Harari in 1983 he went solo in 1984. On the release of his 1991 debut album, *A Boy And A Dream* under the name “Tashif”, when I interviewed him he struck me as an extraordinarily creative and intelligent individual. The album was on Tusk’s Diamond label co-starring Marc Rantseli, McCoy Mrubata, Selwyn Shandel and Jorge Arrigone. He dedicated the album to his grandmother, Nonzophi Ellen Kente.

Charlie Ndlovu who also played for Black Hawks later joined “the best band in the land”, Stimela on the keyboards.

Khaya Mahlangu also had a stint with the band. His career is discussed in the next pages under the story of another powerful group of the 1980s, Sakhile.

Sello “Chicco” Twala became one of South Africa’s finest producers. After a stint with Image the former student of Bopasenatla High School in Diepkloof went solo using the name that was popularised by a hit they recorded together as Image – Chico. This 1985 smash hit was co-written by Jimmy Mngwandi and L. Masitha, and produced by Sidwell Duda under the Transistor label. Most of us will remember Sidwell Duda as manager of the five-man band, Rufaro and trio Elegance. He also produced Dennis Monwabisi Yekani and the Movement’s 1985 maxi single, *Save Your Last Dance for Me*. Interestingly, the group Image later changed the spelling of their name to Ymage after their overseas tour as they discovered a group of the same name there. This could cause confusion on the international market. But one still finds such similarities in record libraries like the group Blondie known for their hit, *Heart of Glass* and our very own Blondie (Makhene). Though the former is a group and the latter an individual, this still creates some confusion in certain quarters. Some of Image’s hits include Hiwiye. Their albums *Time Changes* (1990) and *Human* (1991) were released under the new spelling – Ymage. Almost all the tracks were written by Don Laka, one of the most prolific musicians of our time about whom we’ll read later in this book.

For the better part of the first years as a solo artist Chicco’s musical home was Phil Hollis’ record company Dephon under the Roy B label. In true Dephon style most of his albums were preceded by maxi singles. Chicco became an instant hit with children because of tracks like *We Can Dance* and *Teacher We Love You*. Sello is one of those musicians who never turned a blind eye on the oppression of their people. As a prolific prophet he wrote controversial and somewhat ambiguous freedom songs that frustrated the merciless censorship machine of the state. This
was achieved through the album *We Miss You Manelow* at a time when the nation desperately missed its leader, Mandela. Another album, *Thina Sizwe Esimnyama*, is rich with political undertones. To pay tribute to the mother of the nation, he composed *I’m Winning (My Dear Love)* for Yvonne Chaka Chaka’s *Thank You Mr DJ* album as well as the defiant *Motherland* on her album of the same name. He paid tribute to one of Africa’s sons, President Samora Machel of Mozambique’s Frelimo Movement in a song he co-wrote with the Secunda Boys titled *Some More My Cherry* on Chimora’s album featuring Mohapi Mashego and Nomuntu Kappa. In 1990 he wrote *Black President* for Brenda Fassie’s album of the same name, which he both produced and arranged. Millions of people felt that it was a positive and desired prophecy that the majority of South Africans had long been waiting for. One of his great hits, *Give Me Money* featured on the charts of almost every radio station across the country.

The great African he is, Chicco paid tribute to the Rain Queen with General MD Shirinda’s rhythmic composition, *Modjadji*. Chicco is a crusader for peace as seen on his album *We Don’t Need War*, which features the track *Tribute To Our Heroes*, a dedication to two fallen stars: boxing champion Arthur Mayisela and Shangaan disco king Paul Ndlovu. This was illustrated again by a plea to Mandela on his 1990 album *Papa Stop The War*, which featured the eloquence of “The People’s Poet”, Mzwakhe Mbuli. On its sleeve cover he revealed that he was disillusioned with the music scene as the unique sound he had created was being copied, and considered retiring, but after his many fans asked him to reconsider he released the track and promised to continue with music. Other peace tracks are ironically *War* and *Soldier*. Most of his lyrics were spiced with his mother tongue, xitsonga or tshivenda as noticed on the same album with tracks *Xarila* and *Bola Bopedza*.

Chicco is a bold musician with a mission. In the new social order ushered in by democracy and a human rights culture he released his 1996 album *Black Man, White Wife*, which was nominated for FNB SAMA 3’s Best Township Dance category. He participated in many national campaigns including “Peace In Our Land” when the country was under siege due to political violence after the release of Dr Nelson Mandela. When the instability reached danger zone and almost triggered a civil war, church leaders and businessmen arranged a meeting of political organisations on Saturday, 14 September 1991 to commit to peace. They signed the historic National Peace Accord. It was against this background that influential musicians joined hands to record an album appealing for calm and sanity. Chicco composed the title track, *Peace In Our Land* and produced four of the eight tracks, including his testimonial hit, *Trouble In The Night Vigil* from his 1991 album, *Nomari*. A darling of the children, he conducted The Children’s Choir Of Soweto. Some of the country’s musicians who participated in the historic recording of the album were Hugh Masekela, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Brenda Fassie, Tsepo Tshola, Blondie Makhene, AYB, Vusi Shange, Nani
Bishop Stanley Mogoba and John Hall gave a nod to the effort with the words “Kuze kube nini?” (How long?). The result? The album broke all known previous record sales by a various artists project in the South African music industry. In a subsequent television interview Chicco said he was proud that the project raised more than R3 million for the “Victims of Violence Fund” of the National Peace Committee.

Chicco’s performances at festivals, some of which I had the honour to compère in the 1980s were fireworks. The crowds just loved him; his bass guitarist, Christopher Jaws Dlathu was just a marvel to watch in action. Twala composed for and produced countless artists and groups, among them Brenda Fassie, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Chimora, Nomuntu Kappa, Sabela, Mac And Monica, Winnie Khumalo, Mercy Pakela, Dorothy Masuka, New Age and Botswana’s Maxy. *Shonakhona*, an album by Coco was written, arranged and produced by him and engineered by Humphrey Mabote. Humphrey was one of the very first generation of black engineers in South Africa. He also co-produced the DJ Walker CD, *Shesa Mpama* (1999), featuring Senyaka Kekana, a project that continued to produce controversial lyrics. Some of his other solo works include the albums *MaMatilda* (1998) and *uMagubani* (1999), which amongst other tracks features one of the most emotional renditions of the freedom song *Ibambeni*, finally exposing the freedom fighter, giving away the soldier. By 2004 Chicco was a property developer and had shifted from Universal Records to release the CD *Jimama Ji* through EMI.

Chicco’s huge contribution towards gospel music will follow later in the chapter “Praying and Praising”. His music was also used in the tshiVenda television series, Muvhango. Sello Chicco Twala’s ear for talent saw him encourage his hair stylist friend Senyaka to join the music industry. His responsibility towards fellow musicians will always be remembered as he revived Brenda Nokuzola Fassie’s music career. He wrote and produced hit albums for her and “brothered” her ’til death did them part. Chicco’s hairstyle was later sold in hair saloons as a brand dubbed “Chicco hair style”. The style became hot and hip with a lot of the youth. His interest in soccer put him on the managements of Moroka Swallows and Ria Stars respectively. Twala’s publishing house is Chicco Publishing. He subsequently produced Malaika’s CD, *Sekunjalo* (2007). Sello scooped many awards both locally and continentally in his music career, but his greatest honour was the SAMA 2004: Life Time Achievement Award.

**DANNY “KAMAZU” MALEWA**’s solo career was catapulted to the top by his monster hit *Korobela*, inspired by an African love potion alleged to help women keep their men and even control them to the point of puppetry. This also earned him another nickname, “Mr Korobela”. His producer for the better part
of his career was another young ace-producer, Thapelo Khomo. His album *The African Man* (1986) included a powerful hit, *African Man*, penned by blind superstar, Steve Kekana. Jika Majika featured the hit *Kamina Ka Wena* while *Indaba Kabani* (1991) featured the title track co-written with his producer. Kamazu did some projects with friend Senyaka Kekana, including his 1993 CD *Thetha (Korobela 2)*, which they co-produced with Mandla “Spikiri” Mofokeng of kwato group, Trompies. His collaboration with friend Senyaka Kekana known as Hunger Boys has churned out a number of hits including the album *Sisebenza Ka Nzima* (2007).

Let me conclude the story of Harari by revisiting the impact of two bands that are the descendants of Harari – Umoja and Ymage (Image). To be precise, Harari gave birth to Umoja and Umoja gave birth to Image, later spelled Ymage. Besides Alec Khaoli himself, another man who played a vital role in these two bands was Don Laka. Today he is a household name in South Africa. Don is a self-made man who moved from one instrument to another, band to band, record company to record company, one book to another on a journey to self-discovery. On this journey he was always spurred on by a strong sense of destiny and ambition.

**Donald Mahwetša Laka**, the keyboard maestro from Mamelodi’s Tshwane has played for many bands including Umoja, Image and Stimela. The first in a family of five, Don was born in 1958. Being son of a preacher, he started singing in church. His first instrument was the guitar at the age of twelve. He later switched to bass guitar and then piano in 1979 after inspiration from an old music book. His first album was *I Wanna Be Myself* (Transistor Music, 1985). It was followed by *Stages Of Love* (1986), an album dedicated to his mother, Naomi, his two brothers Stanley and Abago as well as his two sisters Olga and Selomane. He composed, arranged and produced the music and was also responsible for all instrumentation and lead vocals. In 1976 he joined an Indian band, The Flood as a bass guitarist. In 1981 when the band Sakhile was formed, he was its first keyboardist. By the time he became a member of Umoja on acoustic piano, OBSX and vocoder in 1982 he was a Licentiate in Music from the Royal School Of Music in London, having covered Grade 1–8 on classical guitar. Laka is a fine musician, composer, producer and arranger. As a solo artist in the early years of his career he made a name for himself with hits like *Bana ba Sekolo* and *Tšhela Jwala Re Nwe*. Laka’s early productions include the album *The Hitman* (1988) featuring Brandy on the Sounds Of Soweto label where he teamed up with Kenny Mathaba. But it was later in Don’s music career when he turned to contemporary jazz that his true colours showed.

After the release of the CD *Destiny*, I interviewed him. I found Laka to be a self-confessed bookworm and very proud of his Laka roots. The music maestro later released the album *Supernova*, revealing his fascination with astronomy, one of the subjects he stumbled upon as he read every book he could lay his hands on.
in search of knowledge. The album was nominated in the Best Contemporary Jazz Performance category of FNB SAMA 5. On 8 May 1996 the watershed “I Am An African” speech by the then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki inspired Don’s next album, Pyramid (2000), which won him SAMA 7’s Best Male Artist category. Thabo Mbeki spoke in Cape Town on behalf of the ANC on the occasion of the adoption by the Constitutional Assembly of the Republic of South Africa’s Constitution Bill, 1996. The speech gave the public a full picture of what future relationships between South Africa and the rest of the continent would be, and hopefully nobody was shocked by the establishment of the African Union during his presidency. The album included the track Song For Mapungubwe inspired by Laka’s father who used to sing the haunting melody for Don’s baby sister. I think it could as well be a dedication to the old man who sadly passed away in 1974. The album was followed by Armageddon, a battle between good and evil at the end of the world as we know it. Makes you think. The album was SAMA 9’s Best Packaged Album nominee pitted against the likes of 101’s The Album.

Don Laka has earned the respect of his peers in the industry. In 1999 the legendary Hugh Masekela requested him to produce his CD Sixty. The 13-track CD released on the Sony Jazz label also features the hit Thanayi, and Laka also arranged some tracks and played musical instruments as well. His other productions include: African Jazz Pioneers’ album, 76 – 3rd Avenue (2004), Lungiswa’s Unonkala (2002), Herman’s Tsakane Tsakane (2002) as well as the SSQ’s CD, Four (BMG, 2001). Besides producing the CD, Laka wrote two songs and played various instruments. Laka’s hectic schedule did not prevent him from developing new talent, which is the future of the industry. In 1993 he produced Labantu, a CD featuring the raw talents of four young jazz musicians, Balobedu brothers Nathi and Moses Malatji, as well as Draphter Mashego and Nixon Mtiesantji collectively called Labantu. The group’s second CD recorded with new member Mondli Mayundla was titled Ngobani Na Labantu? Another foursome, Seboka, Letli, Kamogelo and Mmotsa of group Crowded Crew were produced by Laka on their CD Inna De’ Placa (1995). On Mercy Pakela’s album Mama (1999) he co-wrote two songs and produced five of the tracks.

In 2001 Don participated in the recording of the musical “Umoja” both as artist and producer working with Fernando Perdigao and Ian Von Memerty. His other jazz product was Challenges, an album by Ladies In Jazz Ensemble, a group consisting of Thandi Mahlangu, Lolo Chipane, Annikie Maswanganyi, Zodwa Mabena and Lesego Nkonyane. In May 2005 Laka celebrated 33 years in music by launching the album, Rebirth Of Kwai-Jazz, an event that was attended by hundreds of his fans at the South African State Theatre in Tshwane. His business acumen was realised in 1993 with the establishment of a company he co-owns with young musician Oscar Mdlongwa of Brothers Of Peace, called Kalawa Records, later adding Jazmee to the name when Trompies joined. He also owns a publishing house, Kabelo Songs, named after his son, as well as
recording studios called Lakdon, a combination of his name and surname. The success of young musicians like Boomshaka, BOP, Trompies, Alaska, Bongo Maffin, Thebe, Chakaroski, Copperhead and Mafikizolo is the flower of the tree that Laka helped plant. Who will ever forget the 1995 smash hit Local is Lekker CD he co-produced with Mduduzi “M’Du” Masilela for Hlengiwe Dlamini aka Sharon Dee? In 2005 he enrolled for a course in Advanced Sound Mixing and Marketing in Ohio, United States. Laka clinched a deal with a Canadian company to release his label, Bokone Music catalogue abroad. The catalogue includes musicians: Lungiswa, Herman Fox Manganyi, Ladies In Jazz Ensemble, Labantu Jazz Band, Loading Zone, Palesa and Tanzanian, Rayson. Pastor Abe Sibiya and Mmakgotso Seoketsa form part of the gospel music pages of the catalogue. In 2007 he invited his friends in music to record his follow-up CD aptly titled Invitation. One of Don Laka’s hobbies is photography, but he says music doesn’t leave him enough time for it.

It is interesting to note that the inspiration behind most of the musicians of the township soul era was a blind band – The All Rounders – led by their frontman, Babsy Mlangeni. In the context of the era, the saying “One-eyed amongst the blind is king” was re-written into “Two-eyed amongst the blind is a follower”. What inspired The All Rounders?

Parallels have always been drawn between South African and American music. The Motown success story of Berry Gordy in Detroit gave impetus for new hope among local black musicians. They felt that Motown could also be achieved in South Africa. While the success of the Jackson family, William Smokey Robinson, The Temptations, The Four Tops, Diana Ross and the Supremes as well as Marvin Pretz Gaye Jr inspired black artists in general, it was Stevie Wonder who was to hoist a flag for the blind.

In South Africa, young black blind boys who attended school in Athlone, Cape Town, formed a band that became nationally known as The All Rounders. The original band members were Hendrick Sabata Lebona (composer/producer), Athanas Jimmy Mojapelo (guitarist), Bernard Babsy Mlangeni (vocalist), Munich Sibiya (drummer) and Archie Kgoadi (vocalist). Other members were Simon Falatsi (vocals/guitar/sax) and John Mothopeng (piano) who would later lead a blind musicians’ association, SABMA. The name of the band was derived from the fact that the members could play any musical instrument. The success story of these blind musos who surprised the sighted and made them take a second look at disabled people can best be told by listing their big hits. After the initial 75 rpm gramophone records like Bantwana Hloniphani and
Sphokophoko, they rocked the country with hit after hit: Dimakatso, Have Faith in Me, Mama, Zwakala Mthekeni, Monica, Jacaranda Music, Kiss and Make Up, Tshwara Jwalo Kgaetsedi, Mokete Wa Thabo, Naka Themba, Nomvula, Ayithethi Ntolonto, Sala Emma, which was dedicated to Babsy's wife and many more.

Even after Babsy had gone solo The All Rounders remained his backing band for a long time, to an extent that sometimes it wasn’t easy to differentiate the songs of the band from those of Babsy the solo artist. It was almost as difficult as it is to tell the difference between Sankomota and Tsepo Tshola’s songs. The popularity of the band sent them touring the length and breadth of South Africa and beyond. Later, other band members included Miki Lebona and Peter Segwale, both of whom skipped the country in 1976 as the liberation struggle intensified, as well as Moss Tau. Simon Falatsi was later member of Marumo, a band produced by West Nkosi of Makgonatšohle Band fame. By 1983 the line-up of The All Rounders had so changed that it would be wrong to call it a band of the blind. They released an album, Ekaba ke Mang Eo?, under the name Thami and The All Rounders, produced by CCP’s Tom Vuma. Their lead vocalist was Thami Sobekwa, one of the most powerful voices in the industry at that time. Yes, he’s the voice in Cause I Love You on the group Stimela’s live album. You may also like to know that one of the band members was Faith Shadi Kekana who would later be a member of female trio, Shadiii.

Sabata Koloi Lebona was born on 2 August 1942 and grew up in Winburg in the Free State. He focused his attention on production and later embarked on a solo career becoming a life-long producer for Babsy Mlangeni. When I met him in the early seventies he was staying in Zone 1, Meadowlands. After the closure of his company Black Artist Management (BAM), this multi-instrumentalist and song-writer launched his record label, Khaya Records, in 1984. The first acts included AFUBI (Afro Funk & Blues Investigation), a group formerly known as Reborn until 1983. AFUBI had a massive hit that very year, Get Up And Party co-written by Sizwe Zako and Linda Oliphant. The band was fronted by Linda “Slim” Oliphant who was also a trumpeter and later on went solo releasing albums Sweet Mbaqanga (1985) and I Won’t Let You Go (1986) on Ctv-Music Team’s Mambo Music label under Tom “Bishop” Mkhise. Linda, son of legendary trumpeter Dennis Mpale later “skipped” to join his father in Amandla Cultural Ensemble. Sizwe Zako’s future is another long story involving musicians like Lena Khama, Girlie Mafura, Tau Bokoda, Pure Magic and gospel queen, Rebecca Malope. In 1986 he had a self-written and self-produced solo project All My Love under the name Sizwe on RPM’s Right Track label. Sizwe’s other solo albums include Shenxa, Good Times, Sizwe Zako as well as a volume titled Sizwe Zako And Friends. The late drummer Pirate “Pi” Tshabalala was also a member of AFUBI.

Another band in the stable was Bayete, a group that was later to be fronted by superstar Jabu Khanyile for many years. Their self-titled 1984 album included the hit, Shosholeza. It was co-produced by Greg Cutler and Koloi Lebona on
his Kaya label and engineered by Greg. The group’s line-up at that time was: Johnny Chonco (guitar), Arthur Shabalala (Piano), Carlton Malete (drums), Pat Mayo (bass), Mfaniseni Thuse (trombone), Mduduzi Magwaza (alto Saxophone) and Raymond Molefe (trumpet). The late Jabu Khanyile joined the group immediately after the recording of the album.

Sabata Lebona also produced *Love Fever*, an album written and performed by former Hararian, Saitana aka Monty Ndimande. “Bra Kari” as Sabata was referred to by his tsotsitaal-eloquent blind friends, produced many other artists like a female duo Ecstasy made up of Edith and Amelia Mnwela, a project he shared with his late blind brother, Japie, and Monty Leo Bogatsu. Other young artists he produced include Caroline Fassie’s debut album. Carol who also featured on various musicians’ works as a backing vocalist later became a television personality.

Also produced by Sabata was former deejay, *Special Cane Mahlelebe* from the Mountain Kingdom of Lesotho. The young man had earned the nickname “Special Cane” or “Speshu” from his flexibility in breakdancing, a craze that swept the country (originally from the slums of Bronx and Harlem in the States). Unfortunately, in 1986 a car accident on the way from Roma University cut short young Speshu’s life at the age of 24 before he reaped the benefits of his first album cut in 1985.

Koloi co-wrote three isiZulu songs with Jimmy Mojapelo for the 1984 Margaret Singana’s traditional music album, *Isiphiwo Sam* (My Gift). This multi-talented muso also produced Bakithi Khumalo’s 1990 album *On Friendly Basses* as well as a number of jazz musicians including McCoy Mrubata, Ezra Ngcukana, Jonas Gwangwa, African Jazz Pioneers and Jonathan Butler. A true father figure to many artists, Sabata also had a hand in the grooming of one of the brightest stars South Africa has ever seen – Brenda Nokuzola Fassie.

In Langa, Cape Town, Brenda’s brothers were part of Gibson Kente’s cast and little Brenda also joined them and explored her talent in stage theatre acting. At the same time, Brenda was part of her mother Sarah’s music group, The Tiny Tots. Mom Sarah played the piano for the group. It was at that time that a Cape Town musician, Al Etto, spotted the small dynamite and tipped Johannesburg producer Koloi Lebona about the jewel. Koloi arrived at the Fassie home on Christmas Day in 1979. He requested that Sarah release Brenda into his polishing hands and she agreed on condition the young girl would continue with her studies. In White City, Soweto, while grooming her for a bright musical career, he fulfilled his promise and registered her at Pheleni Secondary School. Here her teacher and mentor was a man who was also a soccer player with Moroka Swallows Football Club; a man who would one day be South Africa’s Bafana Bafana head coach – Trott Moloto. This Mohlaloga (praise name) from Moletji in Polokwane coached Brenda, especially in the Queen’s English. Linda Bernhart, manager of music group Joy requested “Bra Kari” to release Brenda to Joy for
a few weeks to replace Anneline Malebo who had to take maternity leave. Sabata agreed on condition the young girl continued with her studies. One should remember that even at the time, Joy was one of the most happening groups internationally because of their monster hit *Paradise Road*. After Joy, Brenda never looked back and Koloi’s promise to Mama Sarah suffered a bitter-sweet blow. However, Hendrick Sabata Lebona’s career is still highlighted by the many hit albums he produced and sometimes composed for his friend, Babsy Mlangeni. Lebona currently owns a new label, Get Ahead Records.

**Athanas Jimmy Mojapelo**, born sighted on 14 April 1941 at Matome village, Zebediela in the then Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo province) lost his eyesight at a young age. He also went into band management, songwriting and production. An all-rounder like Sabata, the most known group he started from scratch was *The Minerals*, a band that featured a young female pianist, Thelma Segona. Their name meant that the music they played was as valuable as precious stones. Their first self-titled album featured a track, *Pretty Pinky* dedicated to Jimmy’s wife. The leader of the band was Joe Mkhabela. Other band members were Thelma Segona, Lido Kunene, Monty Bogatsu, Ronnie Mkhonto and Pi Tshabalala, but like many bands the line-up changed here and there over time. One of their first hit singles was *Close Together*. Their debut album, *Sweet Soweto* (1976), featured a marathon track of the same name. Ironically, Soweto went sour in June that very same year. The band’s live performances were popular in the former Protectorates – Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland. They mainly played the sound of Philadelphia (TSOP), which was dominated by groups like The Three Degrees (*When Will I See You Again?*), Harold Melvyn And The Blue Notes (*Wakeup Everybody*), Billy Paul (*Me And Mrs Jones*) as well as The Ebonys (*I Believe*). Jimmy’s other compositions include *Monica* (Gallo, 1974), a song he wrote for an erstwhile star, Johnny Collini. He also co-wrote three isiZulu tracks for the late Margaret Singana with his friend, Sabata Koloi Lebona. His band *The Minerals* produced some of South Africa’s well-known musicians who later became stars in their own right.

Some of the stars include **Supa frika** aka Henry Maitin from Eldorado Park who had cut his teeth in music with a group called Revolution. Maitin became a superstar after a studio concept by Tom Vuma and Selwyn Shandel at CCP Records, but unfortunately his career was cut short by a shooting incident that left him paralysed. He’ll always be remembered for hits like *Let’s Go Shopping*, *Saturday Nite*, *Love Satisfaction* and *Love Is On Our Side*.

Baberton-born songstress **Nelcy sedibe** also joined this band and toured the country as vocalist with Kori Moraba. A former Mashadza High School student, Nelcy later joined her old band, Kakai and released albums like *Sengaliwe* (1984) and *Take A Chance* (1986) under West Nkosi at Gallo Records; both West and Nelcy have since left us. One of Nelcy’s memorable hits remains *This Time He’s Gone*.

**Peter Mokoena** and **Sisco Mokoena** also went through Jimmy’s hands. Sisco
ended up being a reputable backing vocalist but also released his own music like the 1989 album, *Victory*, produced by Stimela’s bass guitarist, Jabu Sibumbe. Peter also released his own work from which flowed a powerful ballad, *Pain In My Heart*. In 1994 Peter was the voice in the Star Point 5 studio concept that featured a powerful disco hit *Take Me To The Disco* written and arranged by Wilson Ndlovu and produced by Thokoza Memela on the Atlantic label. But most people took note of him as the lead vocalist of the dynamic group, Pure Magic, produced by “The Quiet Storm”, Sizwe Zako of Zako Music. Their red-hot albums include *Bhay’ Lam* (1989), *Umuzi Wam* (1990), *Hamba Naye* (1991) and *1988–2000: The Jazz Instrumentals*. In 2000 they were nominated in the SAMA 7 for *Sakhiwe*. Interestingly, when Peter left the group, another Mokoena took over as lead singer – Vuyo, from Duduza in Nigel, the former East Rand (now Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality). By the year 2006 Peter had shifted his focus to the gospel music genre as he released his eleventh album, *Masambeni*. He continues to assist and guide new musicians in their endeavour to record their material and spread the Gospel.

**Ali Katt** aka Ali Moroatshehla sang for The Minerals in 1979 before Godfrey Nzuza of MFM launched his professional solo career, which will always be remembered for the hit *Let The Good Times Roll* from his album *Have Mercy* (MFM, 1987). Katt’s next album, *Killer* (MFM, 1988), included a tribute to the unusual twins Mpho and Mphonyana. After a long break he made a come back in a duet called Ali Katt and Biggs with the album *Township Boy*.

Most of Jimmy Mojapelo’s creative work was done under the RPM record label. Jimmy, who was also an author and comedian produced musicians like female saxophonist Lynette Leeuw, Corrine Morgan, Moss Tladi, Sandra Senne as well as gospel groups Rehauhetswe Choir and Hosanna Ea Pele. His showbiz as well as life experiences are narrated in his book *The Unknown Hero* published by Skotaville Books. But most of us will always remember him for his association with singing sensation **Kori Moraba** and the band **Black Five**, both having ruled the airwaves in the eighties. Kori had numerous hits composed by Jimmy like *O Tla Orata*, *Tseketseke*, *Ho Boulela*, *Tshepa Thapele*, *Tswang Tswang Tswang*, *Mmamoratwa Waka and Keng Na*? The band Black Five from Sebokeng featured youngThemba Lehlakola while other members included Cokes Mokhele and Daniel Tsietsi Motijoane, who’d later be known as Coyote. Their hits included *Batho Ba Tla Reng?*, *O Tshabe Lefase*, *Teboho Ke Mang*, *Tima Lebone* and Tsepo Tshola’s evergreen composition, *Pula Ea Na*.

Upon my father’s death on 28 June 1970, Jimmy who was my mother’s younger brother became my mentor in the world of media and showbiz. During my school holidays I would go to Soweto where my routine included boarding the train to town at Merafe Station to buy new music, listen and write down the lyrics for the four o’clock band practice in a Rockville garage. I still remember going to town on here occasions hunting for Stevie Wonder’s album,
Innervision, which featured tracks like Living For The City and Mistra Know-It-All. When I finally got it, we played it so frequently that I ended up knowing the lyrics by heart. Four was the time he’d have knocked off from his day job as a switchboard operator at the Tladi offices. The journey to the rehearsals would coincide with the coming down of a smoke blanket over the township. That is when thousands of chimneys would compete in exhaling the dark wool into the urban sky. It was at this Rockville house where, for the first time, I saw one of the people who wrote stories in the newspapers – journalist Martin Mahlaba. I admired him from a distance because I always had this dream of working for mass communication media. It was here that I learned to mix and mingle with socialites that I’d only read about in my small village of Matome, Zebediela. I loved the nightlife vibe at places like the Diepkloof Hall and Mofolo Hall where shows dubbed Akulalwa (All Night) were staged by promoters like Sam Khumalo. At the end of the month it was also my call to ride the train to town where I would pay monthly instalments for musical instruments at Recordia.

Uncle Jimmy’s home was at 911 Tladi Location. His marriage was never blessed with a child and as such he somehow treated me like his adopted son. I was part of the team that read the daily newspaper to him; the team included my brother Thomo Phineas Mojapelo (Sisco). The responsibility was later carried forward by my cousins Ouma Rabaji (now Rasethaba), Moribula Kubu (now Makwetja) and Malope Mojapelo. I would also write poems with him and accompany him to places like Babsy Mlangeni’s house in Dube. It was during this time that I fell in love with poets like Wally Serote, Mbuyiseni Oswald Mtshali and the late Sipho Sepamla and learned to appreciate good lyrics, rhyme and rhythm. It was here that I learned the importance of the radio to the blind. It reads news, entertains, educates and checks time for them. In fact, in those days my uncle would tell me that without a radio next to him, his world was even darker.

When I became a radio announcer my number one listener was a blind listener; I would imagine the students at Siloe School for the Blind sitting around the radio set listening to Max the Mixerboy (my name on air). By the way my presentation style as a radio presenter was influenced by jocks like Harold West (LM Radio), Ike Dagada (Radio Venda), David Gresham (Springbok Radio), Modisane Modise (Radio Bop) the late Kansas City aka Cyril Mchunu (Radio Zulu) and Cassey Cassem (American charts). A fast and fluent reader and typist, Uncle Jimmy skilled many young prospective typists during his spare time; most of them ended up being clerks. He was a very strict and straight talking band manager to a point of perfection. He disliked truancy and excuses. I learned later in my life that this could be infectious. We agreed on many issues except my wish to join the band. He was aware that I loved playing the lead guitar with my whole heart and studied the origin of the instrument whose journey started in Egypt, Spain and the US where the electric guitar market was dominated by the Gibson and Fender manufacturers. I followed guitarists like
Marks Mankwane very close, especially his *Marks Special* series. I also loved rock bands like The Edgar Winter Group, an Albino band that stayed on the US charts for 13 weeks in 1973 with their smash hit *Free Ride*; Lynyrd Skynyrd, a group known for their 1974 hit *Sweet Home Alabama* that stayed on the US charts for eight weeks; and The Allman Brothers Band. I still love the rock guitars of Eagle Eye Cherry, Eric “Slowhand” Clapton, The Hoodoo Gurus as well the master of the string, George Benson. The acoustic strings of the Congolese rumba guitars drive me crazy. Thanks to Uncle Jimmy, I continued with my education and can today use the little I’ve learned to share this story with you.

Jimmy’s mother, Mmahlogo Sebolaish Mojapelo, passed away on 11 April 1989. A year later his wife, Aunt Pinky, passed away on 17 May 1990 and Jimmy followed her on 17 August 1990. They were all buried among their Bahlalerwa (praise name) ancestors at the foot of the Matome mountain. Rest in peace, multilingual wild dog...

*Robala ka khušo Matsetsebale’a Lebosa,*
*Malope’a Tilo mogoša Mmone wa ga Maruma’ Mahlodi.*

*Leina la gago ke tsela Malesela,*
*Ke phaphathi re ka se le fetše.*

(This verse was Jimmy’s praise poem.)

Thereafter, his long-term vocalist, Kori Moraba had several projects including his Sesotho version of Isaac Hayes’s love ballad *I Stand Accused* from the *Isaac Hayes Movement* album as well as his album titled *I Need Somebody* (Teal Sound, 1988) produced by Peter “Hitman” Moticoe. Ultimately, the former member of the TNT’s turned to God, joined the ZCC and sang gospel music.

By the way, my association with the All Rounders at an early age taught me a lot about the world of the unsighted. They support one another like a pride of lions. Their role models were musicians like Albany-born Ray Charles Robinson, Clarence Carter and Steveland Morris aka Stevie Wonder. Their passion for good lyrics also attracted them to the music of Robert Zimmerman aka Bob Dylan, as well as bands like Chicago Transit Authority.

**Bernard Babsy Mlangeni**’s music career in South Africa is almost a wonder like that of Stevie Wonder in the States. Babsy was born on 24 February 1943 in Orlando East, Soweto. His solo career was boosted by the monster hit, *Buo’a Nnete* (His Master’s Voice, 1972), a soulful ballad I used to sing with my student group, The Praise My Lord Quartet at Matladi High School. The crowds just loved it! After that hit he turned into an unstoppable hit machine. His partnership with Sabata Koloi Lebona was as hot as that of Bernie Taupin and Elton John aka Reginald Dwight. Babsy Mlangeni’s music catalogue is a thick endless document. What was interesting about his music was that he could release one album in three languages, for example, *Babsy Mlangeni Sings Xhosa, Babsy Mlangeni Sings*
Sotho and Babsy Mlangeni Sings Zulu, a trend also later followed by Steve Tebogo Kekana. His 1980s dance hits included Botsosso, Lonely Man and Umadiemhlabini. He also sang in English as on albums like Lonely Man (BAM, 1981) and Who’s The Boss, a 1988 album with an interesting note on the sleeve: “If you don’t dig African music, you’ve got a hole in your soul.”

One of the most beautiful English cover versions Babsy did was Lionel Ritchie’s composition, Going Back To Alabama. His main rival was Mpharanyana aka Jacob Radebe who for instance released the song Mary immediately after Babsy’s hit single Sala Emma. Some of the star’s many albums include Melaetsa Ya Babsy Mlangeni and Kopa O Tla Fiwa. Most of his hits were released under the series Babsy Mlangeni: Golden Hits in isiZulu and Sesotho. Babsy has also been involved in developing young talent like Linda Matanzima on Shebeleza (1991). The lady ended up marrying his producer, Sabata Lebona. Other projects were Mbali’s Ngiyamthanda Ujesu co-produced with Peter Mokoena as well as Osaka’Sambe’s Kungcono Ngim’qome. Some of those projects involved youth choirs, as well as church groups. In 1999 Zenzele Music released two compilations of his best Sesotho and isiZulu compositions. The Sesotho CD was titled Mothe Ke Eo and has ten tracks including O Rapele, Thola Makoti, Ho Na Le Batho, Sala Emma, Nna Ke a Phela and Buoa Nneta. The isiZulu title for the CD is Mina Ngiyaphila and features among other tracks Guqa Uthandase, Musa Uukhuthuza, Thula Sana, Themabisile, Hamba Tugela and Kwa Dabeka. All the tracks were produced by Hendrick Koloi Lebona, assisted by Themba Mkhise on the re-recording of Sala Emma.

The CD, Babsy 2001, was co-produced by Koloi Lebona and Alexis Faku of reggae group Oyaba fame. The idea of roping in the younger Alexis was to inject some new schoolness into the CD. It featured well-known musicians like Hugh Masekela, George Lee, Louis Mhlanga, Khanyo Maphumulo and Caroline Fassie. The CD was nominated in the Best Producer category of SAMA 8. Like Kori Moraba and Lionel Petersen, Babsy is now using his talent to glorify the name of the Lord. But, make no mistake, Babsy’s voice is still in that rare vocal class of musos like David Masondo, Steve Kekana, Blondie Makhene and the late Lucky Dube who had an excellent control of their tones. Proof of this was the recent launch of his new 16-track CD, Umsebenzi Awukho, still produced by Sabata Koloi Lebona.

During their era, musicians were not allowed to record songs in different languages on one single; A and B sides had to use the same language. The other strange feature was the tendency of record companies to indicate the publishing date in Roman numbers and figures. I always wondered whether any musician could have been permitted to title his song She Was Waiting For Her Mother At The Station In Torino And You Know I Love You Baby But It’s Getting Too Heavy To Laugh like Shawn Phillips once did. These and other rigid rules were mostly based on the fact that musicians did not know their rights. In 1978 an attempt was made to unite black musicians under the banner of Black Artist Management. The
organisation played its role, but met with a lot of challenges. Eight years later in 1985 Koloi Lebona, Jimmy Mojapelo, Sipho Mabuse and Alec Khaoli convened a meeting of more than two hundred musicians at the DOCC hall to exchange ideas on how they could stop the ongoing exploitation of musos. The historical meeting was chaired by a former radio announcer, Stanley Nkosi who at that time was a director at one of the record companies. An interim committee was elected at the end of that meeting to draft a constitution and find ways and means of addressing musicians’ challenges. The committee was made up of: Sipho Mabuse, Abigail Khubeka, Steve Kekana, Jonathan Clegg, Alec Khaoli, Khaya Mahlangu and Johnny Dimba.

A former journalist, Mr Derrick Thema founded the Musicians’ Association of South Africa, which used to be called Musicians’ Alliance. It did a lot of work, especially during the Cultural Boycott era. For instance, it was the one that would later give Paul Simon’s Born At The Right Time tour thumbs up as it was satisfied with the procedures followed by its organisation.

Blind musicians on the other hand later also realised that there was a need for an association of their own that could take care of their specific needs. That is how SABMA was born. Yes, let me answer that one. It stands for the South African Blind Musicians Association. Led by John Mothopeng, Monty Bogatsu and Sam Noge, the association’s record label was named Insight Music. In 2005 the name of the association was changed to SADMA, the South African Disabled Music Association in order to cater for all disabilities.

Later the Musicians Union Of South Africa (MUSA) was established. Under the chairmanship of Motsumi Makhene the Music Industry Development Trust (MIDI) was launched in order to train, assist and guide new producers, promoters, technicians as well as stage and road managers. By the way, Motsumi Makhene is a music teacher, composer, arranger, performer, poet and painter. When I met him in the mid-1990s at a music workshop in Johannesburg, he was at Funda Arts Centre in Soweto. It has since been transformed into a community college. There are also lawyers who specialise in the administration of the industry as well as other smaller associations that look after musicians’ interests. The major problematic areas in this industry have always been recording contracts, publishing and concert deals and seemingly there is still a lot of work to be covered. There is light at the end of the tunnel as initiatives like Zakheni Music Trust are conducting workshops to cover musicians even in the outlying rural areas. In 2005 the Musicians Union of South Africa (MUSA) and the Performing Arts Workers’ Equity (PAWE) merged to form the Creative Workers Union of South Africa (CWUSA). Its first president became Mabutho “Kid” Sithole and the Secretary General, Oupa Lebogo. CWUSA’s objectives include redressing the old challenges like the recognition of artists as workers, medical aid, funeral insurances, contracts, banking issues as well as the support of the industry by the government.
There were other organisations that helped to facilitate the music business on behalf of the musicians. First came SAFCA, a British organisation seeking to represent musicians in the collection of royalties and some such matters. Some of the first members to affiliate were musicians like Strike David Vilakazi. In 1962 SAMRO took over the responsibility of collecting royalties from public performances including broadcasting. The organisation is a member of the International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers (CISAC); and as such is able to function even beyond the borders of South Africa on behalf of its members. In other words, it is affiliated to over 120 similar societies across the world, covering more than 150 countries and territories. It is the body at the forefront of the implementation of the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa’s (ICASA) local content quota including the embarrassing South African Music Week. All broadcasters in the country have to regularly send copies of their music play lists to SAMRO to confirm that they are playing by the rules. It currently represents more than 1.4 million rights owners of all nationalities in southern Africa in respect of their performing rights. Its membership is based on direct membership by composers, authors, translators, arrangers and music publishers as well as members of its affiliated societies. The organisation also assists in the development of new talent through the SAMRO Overseas Bursary Competition. In 2007 the winners were two ladies from the University of Cape Town, Kimmy Skota (classical music category) and Monique Hellenberg (jazz category). On 1 July 2006 Nicholas Motsatse took over from Rob Hooijer as the institution’s Chief Executive Officer. Nick also chaired the National Arts Council as well as the Moshto Conference and Exhibition.

The South African Recording Rights Association Limited (SARRAL) established in 1963 focuses on dealing with publishers and record companies on behalf of the composers, that is, the rights of composers’ work wherever it’s being recorded. Composers have to register their intellectual property with this institution to be able to benefit from their music. Graham Gilfillan is director of SARRAL.

The National Organisation of Reproduction Rights in Music in Southern Africa Limited (NORM) is responsible for mechanical copyrights. It assists in the collection and distribution of royalties on copyrights that arise when music is transferred from one format to another. An example of this could be music being transferred from master tape to CD. The organisation works hand in hand with broadcasters and other users like film makers. At the time of writing this book its chairperson was Robbie Kallenbach.

The contribution of these institutions has opened the eyes of many musicians to the importance of protecting their own intellectual property. There are a number of cases that demonstrate the vulnerability of musicians, especially composers. In the past some of the songs that became popular were included by unscrupulous foreign musicians in their albums as cover versions or adaptations without any credit to the original source. This later resulted in lawsuits and
disputes involving industry experts like Professor Andrew Tracey and music copyright consultant, Graeme Gilfillan. Some of those compositions included Solomon Linda’s old composition *Mbube*, a song adapted by various groups as *Wimoweh* or *The Lion Sleeps Tonight*. In 2006 the battle for the recognition and credit to the composer was won. Most of these compositions date back to the Golden Age Of South African Jazz whose platforms were mainly Cape Town, Durban, Alexandra Township and Sophiatown, a cultural melting pot from which blacks were forcefully removed in 1955. In fact, Sophiatown in Johannesburg had much in common with District Six in Cape Town and Cato Manor in Durban.

The removals inspired songs like Strike Vilakazi’s *Meadowlands*, Robbie Jansen’s *District Six* as well as Steve Dyer’s *Umkhumbane*. In 2005, for the 50th anniversary of the Sophiatown removals, the play *Sophiatown* directed by Malcolm Purkey was staged to remind us of the era and the error. Umkhumbane-born Alfred Nokwe also staged *Uvukile Umkhumbane* (*Umkhumbane Has Risen*), showcasing the cultural melting pot that was Cato Manor. The theatre and entertainment industry as a whole was saddened by the death of Alfred Duma Nokwe on 2 June 2008 at the age of 73. A seasoned film actor, Nokwe, who was born on 1 April 1935, managed theatre productions and music groups. In 1959 he started his own group, The Rockets. As manager he was in charge of the world-acclaimed play *Umabatha* as well as Grammy Award winners Ladysmith Black Mambazo on their first trip abroad to Germany in 1981. The Kwa-Mashu cultural icon, tutor and mentor was laid to rest on Saturday, 7 June 2008.

Due to the viability and profitability of music festivals in the eighties many individuals would just stage festivals without any consultation or co-ordination with other promoters, even ignoring the South African Black Promoters Association, which was established in 1985. This led to a situation where two to three festivals would run in the same area dividing the crowd that could have made one successful festival. At the end of the day, the real professional promoters suffered so many losses and closed shop while the chancers went back to their normal businesses. Committed professional promoters like Sam Mhangwani and Peter Tladi put their heads together to bring an end to the chaotic situation. In 1997 the South African Music Promoters’ Association (SAMPA) was born. By 2005 its president was still Peter Tladi who is also director of Bula Music. By the way, some of the musicians who recorded at Bula Music were Lundi, S’fiso, Spokes H, Kholeka, Dumi Mkokstad Nzimande, S’Khathele Khoza, Malini, Bow and Arrow, and Shwi noMtekhala under Tshepo Nzimande.

I first met Peter Tladi while he was still at MFM – a music man at heart. We later did a number of projects together including the annual Standard Bank Jazz Festival, which made me realise the amount of experience he had amassed over the years. He was highly professional and connected. In 1989 he launched his own management company, T-Musicman, which subsequently managed big
names like Rebecca Malope, Mzwakhe Mbili and Jonas Gwangwa. His vice president at SAMPA was China Mpololo of CSun Promotions. Some of the well-known music promoters of the past and present are: Sabinki Senabe, Peter Khowana, Sam “JizaJiza” Mthembu, Leonard Sithole, Sam Mhangwani, Morris Roda, Solly Nkutha, Prosper Mkwaia, Chilliboy Molewa, Ralph Zikalala and Bruce Kgapanie. Let me pay tribute to the late Chilliboy Molewa who was also a successful businessman. He was laid to rest at Nina Park Cemetery, Pretoria North at the beginning of July 1966. May his soul rest in peace.

Annual music concerts include Rashid Lombard’s Cape Town International Jazz Festival, Arabi Mocheko’s Soweto Arts Festival, China Mpololo’s Cape Town Homecoming Music Festival, Drakensberg Promotions’ Tribute to SA Music Heroes Concert, Peter Tladi’s Standard Bank Joy Of Jazz, Grahamstown National Arts Festival, Mangaung Cultural Festival, Limpopo Arts Festival, MTN Durban Jazz Festival, Secunda Jazz and Cultural Festival, Oppie Koppie Music Festival, Taung Calabash, Awesome Africa Music Festival, Aardklop Festival and Khayelitsha Arts Festival. The most regular ones include Jazzman Mahlakgane’s Ekurhuleni Comes Alive.

Towards the end of the eighties these music festivals became so popular that a new trend of all-night concerts commonly known as 626 surfaced. This spirit subsided with the release of our political leaders and the unbanning of liberation movements as people rushed to political rallies to listen to the “messiahs”. The rallies were mostly accompanied by free concerts. Beyond the euphoria, the youth were drawn to street concerts dubbed “bashes”. But at the same time, a new festival culture emerged that would dominate the local music scene and bring back the Golden Age of South African Jazz. Jazz festivals grew beyond the promoter’s wildest dreams and drew both young and old to venues like Moretele Park, Chuene Resort, Lowveld Showgrounds, Mary Fitzgerald Square and others. This spirit brought together the old school musicians and the new generation to share the joy of jazz. It is this spirit that left a lasting impression on visiting US saxman David Murray at Wits music school in 2005 as he witnessed the magic of Barney Rachabane, Stompie Manana, Herbie Tsoaeli, Andile Yenana, Feya Faku, Marcus Wyatt, Bheki Khoza, Denzil Weale and Glen Mafoko doing their thing in a truly South African rainbow jam session.

For music festivals to run smoothly you need skilled and professional technicians. These are the men and women who construct the stage, connect cables and check the sound system, lighting as well as related matters. This department also experienced huge problems in the eighties as there were few skilled people. As promoters’ demands for quality concerts grew, the South African Roadies Association (SARA) was established. By 2005 its president was Freddy Nyathela. Among its priorities it had to facilitate the training of its members in technical and production skills (including sound, lighting, audio visuals and rigging).
The success of The All Rounders and especially Babsy Mlangeni gave rise to a new young regiment of blind musicians. Amongst them the most known are Steve Tebogo Kekana, Lazarus Kgagudi, Ali Mapulana, Willie and Paul, Martin And Shimane, Cokes Mokhele and Theo Phala. Unlike the older generation of the blind, the younger generation attended schools within their provinces as several special schools had already been established by missions like the Roman Catholic Church.

One of the most successful musicians of the era was **Steve Tebogo Kekana**. He was born sighted on 16 September 1958 at Bolahlakgomo, Zebediela near the town of Mokopane in Limpopo Province. He lost his eyesight at the age of five due to illness. The nearest special school to his home was Siloe School for the Blind, some 40 kilometres South of the city of Polokwane. The school was built within a small village of Thokgwaneng near Chuenespoort under Kgosõ Lesiba Mamokgalake Chuene. This is where Steve spent his early days. In the area the school was known for winning trophies in music competitions. It had its own set of musical instruments. It was in this environment that young Tebogo started playing the guitar. Most of his friends at school loved playing soccer and to be with them, he also chose the game until his teacher, Mr Chuene, discovered his immense talent in music and forced him into the school choir.

In 1976 Steve was the school’s Chief Prefect. In protecting students’ rights he clashed with the school management and he was expelled. He completed his Senior Certificate in 1977 as a part-time student at Matladi High School, Zebediela. In April 1977 he went to Itireleng Training Centre in GaRankuwa where he completed a switchboard operator course in three months. He accepted an invitation from Lazarus Kgagudi to join Abram Mojalefa’s band called Hunters in August the same year. The band was based in Driekop and besides Lazarus Kgagudi another member was Ali Mapulana. Later the group faced some difficulties due to the poor health condition of Lazarus Kgagudi. A talent scout, Tom Vuma of CCP Records spotted Steve and recruited him to recording studios in Johannesburg. In 1978 he recorded his first commercial single, *Mamsy*, backed by The Pages on the 45 rpm disc. The release of the single was so dramatic in his village of birth, Bolahlakgomo, that it almost created a school holiday. One learner heard it played at the local shebeen known as “Ga-Spokes” and ran to Madibu Secondary School to break the good news to the other students. As it was during break, they followed the messenger and danced the afternoon away! What a village launch. Kekana’s producer Tom Vuma, also acted as manager of the band until 1980 when well-known playwright, Sam Mhangwani became their manager. Tom and Steve’s partnership was much like that of Babsy and Koloi.
By 2007 Vuma was managing among others, the king of xiTsonga traditional music, Hasani Thomas Chauke. In a period of four years Steve’s success saw him receive 70 gold discs. Some of his other hits after Mamsy were Peggy, Abuti Thabiso, O Le Orele, Mokgotse Wa Hao, Iphupho, Seponono, All I Need Is Here In Africa, Kgarebe, Keledi Tsaka, Banna Ka Dijase and Masabata. The list is endless. Like his role model Babsy, Steve also released his music in Sesotho, isiZulu, xiTsonga and English. An example of this is the Sesotho hit, Masabata, which was also available in isiZulu as Ntombifuthi. There are many examples of this.

In 1983 he toured Sweden. Actually, he was one of the first musicians to take their bands with them on an overseas tour. I remember how devastated Alicia Lindiwe Fassie was when out of the six band members she was the only one to be refused a visa. She later joined a Cape town group, Bloodshed. But, she still thinks her two years with Steve Kekana were the most rewarding in her career. This tour of the Scandinavian countries boosted his popularity and his song Raising My Family became a remarkable success in Finland. In Sweden it climbed the charts up to the number one spot on their Top 10. Another all-time great is his duet with Penelope Jane Dunlop aka PJ Powers in Feel So Strong. Some of Steve Kekana’s albums early in his singing career were Ha Re Khumameng, featuring one of his early gospel hits, which is also the title track; another gospel hit was Thapelo.

Then there was Ifuqe Mntanami: Push, an album he recorded with a band called Push, which would later become Stimela. Push was made up of Mac Mathunjwa (former Jaws leader), Eddie Mathiba and Ntokozo Zungu from The Pages, Ray Phiri, Lloyd Lelosa, Jabu Sibumbe and Jantshi Pat Mayo. It was only after this that Stimela was formally launched. That’s why Mac Mathunjwa was playing keyboards when their first single I Hate Telling A Lie was recorded. Steve also released Alone In The Desert and Amandla Amasha. One of his classic hits was a 1984 composition inspired by the last of the first people – The Bushman.

Steve’s long-term backing band was The Pages, a group made up of members like Charlie Rakgoale, Ntokozo Zungu and Eddie Mathiba. Their concerts were always vibrant, with the lively Charlie presenting the superstar with a dramatic introduction. At some stage showbiz pressures separated Steve from the band. After realising what a mistake it had been to go their separate ways, they resolved their differences and went back into the studio together. The result was a powerful isiZulu album, Yihle Lento (This Thing Is Beautiful), released in July 1984. The album featured the hit, Izifa Mona, which was about their beautiful relationship that needed to be nurtured and protected against infiltrators. They agreed that all songs would be credited to the three of them as composers and the producer would be Steve himself. This was a wise reconciliatory gesture as most fights in bands result from the fact that the composer is the only member to earn royalties. That arrangement was also noticeable with one of the oldest bands in the music industry – The Soul Brothers. The solution to this kind of
problem is payment of royalties on needle time.

Here are some of the albums that followed:

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<th>YEAR</th>
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<td>1984</td>
<td><em>I Just Wanna Sing</em></td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td><em>Love Triangle</em></td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td><em>Ngiyadlisa</em></td>
<td>Steve Kekana, Charlie Rakgoale and Eddie Mathiba</td>
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<td>1987</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td><em>Ntate Boloka Sechaba</em></td>
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Most of Steve Kekana’s early work was released by Gallo Records, but later CCP Records took over. In the nineties he released gospel music CDs like *Tarashishi* (Cool Spot).

Some of Steve Kekana’s career highlights included the FOYSA award in 1984 (Four Outstanding Young South Africans) and the TOYP award in 1985 (Ten Outstanding Young People Of The World). He was invited to receive the latter in Columbia.

The lowest point in his career was a disaster in which hundreds of his fans were injured and some died in Maseru, Lesotho in a packed stadium. Although some critics say this showed his popularity, for him it was a sad episode. Steve later dedicated a song to this calamity entitled *Koduo Ya Maseru* (The Maseru Disaster) the royalties of which went towards a disaster fund established immediately thereafter. Having said that, it is still important to emphasise his popularity among the Basotho people, “Ma-aparakobo-a-Matle” as most of his songs were in Sesotho. On his 1986 *Love Triangle* album he dedicated a track to the football club that was the pride of the Basotho people at that time, *Phunya Selesele (bana ba ho shebile)!*. That is how soccer fans would sing as Bloemfontein Celtics was systematically destroying enemy strategy on the soccer pitch. Those were the days when Ntate “Whitehead” Molemela could easily predict the outcome of a weekend soccer match. Another scar in Tebogo’s career is his memories of the “Info Song”, which divided South African musicians into two ideological camps. Beyond the year 2000 he joined forces with fellow musicians Nana “The Wild Dog” Motijoane and Joe Nina aka Henry Makhosini Xaba to form the Trio, a popular dance hall band that also went on to release an album.
Steve had already in the past worked with Coyote Dan Motijoane on the track *Take Your Love* from his album *Love Triangle* (1986). Interestingly, Steve wanted Nana for his forceful and gravel voice effect in the song just as Sipho Mabuse wanted Steve for his falsetto on his hit *Burnout*. This just goes to show the truth in the saying “I am because you are”. Joe Nina who also used the name King Rap early in his career had already shown keen interest in Steve’s music when he recorded a cover version of his hit song, *Iphupho*, and produced SK’s album *African Lady*.


Steve Kekana’s achievements include being the first black visually impaired radio talkshow host in October 1992 on Thobela FM, paving the way for the likes of Rhulani Baloyi of SAFM and “Shift” fame. The programme was broadcast from the station’s Tshwane studios and it was named “On The Pretoria Line/Mogaleng wa Tshwane.” His ability to handle controversial and sensitive topics with confidence won him the name “Pilot of the Airwaves”. When the Tshwane studios were closed down, he was willing to move to Polokwane with the programme, which was renamed “On The Pietersburg Line/Mogaleng Wa Polokwane”. Steve who saw opportunity in adversity took advantage of the move to register at the University of the North (now University of Limpopo) as a law student. This was his long-cherished dream inspired by the first known blind black law student in the North, Mr Joe Malatji. In the five years from 1994 to 1998 he completed two degrees, B.Uris and LLB, and was articled to a firm in Burgersfort, south east of Polokwane. In August 1999 Steve became Legal Adviser in the Provincial Government of Gauteng. He was admitted as an advocate of the High Court of South Africa in November 2004. The law degrees also empowered him to assist his fellow musicians, especially in workshops organised by the Zakheni Music Trust. These roadshows allowed him to enlighten young and new musicians on matters such as the protection of intellectual property. He is also author of a Northern Sotho poetry book, *Hlogwana’ Tšie* (Locust Head), published in 1996. Tebogo co-wrote a Northern Sotho radio serial drama, *Kanyakanya Moelope* (Trouble on the Mine), with Aletta Matsheleqo Motimele.

In 1980 Steve, who stayed in Orlando East, had Lindi Fassie as one of his backing vocalists. When young Brenda Fassie left Gibson Kente and Koloi Lebona she joined her sister at Steve’s place. Together with the other girls she underwent an intensive vocal training. Steve realised the vocal prowess of this young girl and introduced her to producer Malcolm Watson. Among Steve’s production works is *Future Heroes*, an album by Leuba Rams aka Leuba Ramakgolo, a member...
of Limpopo’s band Healer Express. This is a band I had the honour to expose to promoters during my days as a compère. Leuba Ramakgolo later became Thobela FM’s station manager. It may also interest you to know that, among other things, Steve ran for local elections as an independent candidate in 1995. Never-say-die Steve knows no limits. He once told me about his participation in a soccer game and how easy it is to ride a bicycle. At one stage he had such a taste for fast cars that when I asked him what car he owned he replied, “The arrow of course!” I later found out he was referring to his Skyline sedan. After he joined the Gauteng government I met him cruising in a big BMW machine. When I asked him why he bought such a big machine, he answered, “Ke kgalemela lenyatšo,” which meant “I am shaming the prophets of doom.” That’s “The Bulldozer” for you!

Steve, like his role model Babsy Mlangeni, recorded at least one “African Connection” song. The artificial political boundaries imposed on this continent by its colonisers failed so dismally to affect its music. I love African music and initiatives like the Kora All Africa Music Awards give me a lot of hope. You see, my childhood village Matome is on the foot of a mountain, and my home was almost the last house towards the mountain. The radio reception was very clear and I could listen to almost any radio station I chose. I listened to “Seromamowa Sa Botswana” from Gaborone, Radio Freedom, Radio Mozambicana as well as Tshebeletso Ya Seloli targeted mostly at the Caprivi Strip and Zambia. I loved each radio station for its blend of music. Their music talked to me more than the local radio stations. They told me there were other people out there connected to me in a manner I did not yet comprehend, or perhaps in my previous life I listened to this music and enjoyed it. I loved the haunting yet melancholic freedom songs of Radio Freedom and Radio Mozambicana. I also enjoyed the cultural choirs of Botswana and the originality of the Lozi groups, especially when they brought drums into a Sunday school chorus. All these introduced me to what I was later told was “Se-Nyaza” or “Kwasa”.

At that stage there was no clarity as to what part of the continent played what kind of music. I was not yet aware of music genres like the Sahel, Highlife and Rumba. Babsy Mlangeni’s O Rapele and Steve Kekana’s Ceciliah touched me the same way the music beyond our borders to the north did. I later learned that Ceciliah from Kekana’s 1986 Ngiyadlisa album was a re-arrangement of Kinshasa-born Sam Mangwana’s hit. Sam is the Rumba region’s hot property and has earned himself the stardom name, “The Pigeon Voyager”. I love his Maria Tebbo, which was locally covered by Condry Ziqubu in isiZulu as Maria. The Movers also did an AC song, Soweto Inn, fronted by Sophy Thapedi. The Soul Brothers have Akabongi whereas Stimela released a track with that touch, Rubbing Sand In My Eyes. Listening to the music of the band Harari, one realises that it was in the main influenced by Osibisa, a top band of the seventies originally founded by Ghanaian Teddy Osei in London. Africa is one!
Another household name from the era was a man who earned himself the name “The Silver Fox” – **Lazarus Kgagudi**. Unlike most of his peers he was not born blind, but his fate was the result of a bicycle accident at an early age. He was born within the royal circle of the Bapedi ba ga Sekhukhune in Mohlaletse. Lazarus received his education at Siloe School for the Blind. That is where he first met Steve Kekana. Some of the individuals who played part in the shaping of his music career were producers Roxy “Black Cat” Buthelezi, Banzi Kubheka, Phiri Motale and his executive producer, Emil Zoghby. His backing bands were mainly Black Cat Trio, The Neighbours, and Step Ahead, a band that at one stage backed Brenda Fassie at live shows. In 1988 Step Ahead was comprised of Phiri Motale, Buick Thwala, Toto Moloantsoa, Blackie Sibisi, Veli Ramauwane and Negro Mlotshwa. Roxy Buthelezi’s work with this star will always be remembered for hits like *Bobe bja Sekgotse*, *Heyi Nina Botsotsi*, *Mandla No Billy* and *Uyophelelaphi*. Banzi Kubheka produced his self-composed ten-track Sesotho album, *Morena A Re Thuse*, under the Muziwakithi record label, on which he dedicated one track, *A Nkeke Ke Mo Lebale*, to his true friend, Mr Ntwampe.

In 1986 Phiri Motale produced another self-composed album, *Don’t Hold Her Ruf*, a four-track mini album featuring the hit that is also the title track. His other hits include *I’m Hooked On Your Love*, *This Place Is Boring*, *Sekala* and *Gauteng* from yet another Phiri Motale production, *Lazarus Kgagudi 3* (1988), *Makarapa* and his 1990 *Careless Mistakes* from the album of the same name, which also featured *SJB*, an anti-child abuse song. In the late eighties radio listeners knew that almost every year “ngwato’a ngwato” (praise name) would release a Christmas bombshell. In 1993 he recorded *Love Is A Dangerous Game*, an album he co-produced with Emil Zoghby. Lazarus also helped develop young talent by producing the following artists: Izzy Boy Masedi’s *I’m Tired Of Making Love* (1986); Willie Mohlala’s *Nobody Else But You* (1988) with Phiri Motale; Max Masuluke’s *Mitshama Himina* (1989); Eric D’s *I Love You Tshidi* as well as Sigaman’s *Makopano* (1990). His band, Step Ahead, released Sbarara (Sounds Of Soweto, 1988), an album produced by Emil Zoghby. Disease cut short the life of this down-to-earth royal star. On 31 March 2007, Lazarus was posthumously honoured with a Lifetime Achievement award by Kazo Promotions at a festival dubbed Golden Oldies Music Festival in Polokwane. I read his profile and achievements to the crowd and his people from Mohlaletse received the award accompanied by their top traditional dance group, Mafološankwethabeng.

The duo, **Willie and Paul**, is another success story of the blind in the history of South African music. Originally from Mokopane in Limpopo, they took the local music scene by storm. By 1982 they were the talk of the town. Their hits included *Umakoti ka Themba*, *Ho Bohloko Joang*, *Ho Tseba Modimo Fela*, *Ke A Ho Rata*, *Khosi*, *Khutla Mantwa*, *Nyalanang*, *Moipone* and *We Love It*. The duo was also at one stage under Steve Kekana’s producer, Tom “Big T” Vuma. Without any shadow of doubt, Tom Vuma is one of the most dynamic producers in South
Africa whose other projects include KJS’s instrumental album, *Extension 4* (Miracle, 1988), as well as Vumani’s self-titled debut.

Another duo, **Martin and Shimane**, was produced by Jimmy Mojapelo and their music was mainly recorded in Northern Sotho. Some of their songs include *Dingwetši Le Bommatswale, Disebo, Mmapelo, Ngwanaka* and *O Tshepileng*. Of the two, Martin Mabala later embarked on a solo career releasing albums like *Mahle Amabhungu Namatshitshi* (Smash Records, 1984) co-produced by Emil Zoghby and Taylor Phasha as well as *Uzosala Wedwa* (Midnight Beat) produced and arranged by Simon Ngwenya.

**Marks Mbuthuma** released his music in Zulu and Northern Sotho. I remember his 10-track 1980 album, *Mokgaetši*, which was produced by B. Mkhuwane for Annic Music Productions. **Theo Phala**’s songs include *Heart Breaker, Lelala Phaephe, Molato Ke Mmago* and *Mmago Ngwanake*.

As the soul fever swept over the country other bands also sprung up in Soweto. Just as the pride of African Americans was the Jackson family, South Africa’s answer was the Makhene family in Soweto. Papa Tebogo Peter Makhene and Mama Lilly Matsie Lekwete were both talented musicians and this was passed on to their children. This highly talented and hard-working family formed a family band the nucleus of which was Pappa, Blondie, Clifford, Pamela and Phyllis. The group’s name was simply **The Family**. They mostly concentrated on live performances. This group also helped pave the way to stardom for Brenda Fassie, who at some stage was a member. Part of this band clinched a recording deal using the name, **Spankk**. Its members were Pappa, Blondie, Phyllis and Mpho. Spankk registered some success with hits like *Mapula*, a traditional praise song about a beautiful African lady who spent most of her time washing her petite body. Later, the two brothers formed a hot duo, **Pappa and Blondie**. This hip and energy-oozing act packed dance halls and night clubs around the country. Their albums included *Tell It All Brothers* (1978) and *24 Hour Service* (1979).

The contrasting voices of the two brothers was magic. Blondie had a high-pitched penetrating voice, whereas his brother’s baritone sent ladies screaming for more. By the way, a former member of the TNTs, Blondie’s stardom name was inspired by the name of the leader of the Durban band The Flames. His biggest hit early in his career was *Hopeless Love* with The Movers. Later on, the brothers went their separate ways in search of solo success. **Blondie**, who was born Keoagile Gerald Makhene on 16 September 1955, released *Communicate* (Family, 1984), an album he co-produced with Mally Watson at CCP Records. **Pappa** released a soulful ballad, *Still In Love With You*, which became a big hit. Blondie followed up with *Overtime* (1985), a co-production with Mally Watson. Pappa released the album *Satisfy You!* (1987), which also featured *Save the Children* (Do It Now), a powerful message to parents about their role in the upbringing of their children. He co-produced the album with Thapelo Khomo on the Teal Records label.
In the same year, Blondie also released another album, *Spreading Love*, which boasted a solid ballad, *Baby I’m Missing You*, dedicated to his wife, Agnes, who has sadly since left us. The album was produced by himself, John Galanakis and Steve MacNamara on the Hit City label. Blondie who was born in White City Jabavu and grew up in Dube and Tladi, both in Soweto, teamed up with John Galanakis of Banjo fame at Hit City Records and developed young talent. His productions included African Youth Band (AYB), a mainly instrumental music band he put together with the help of his brother, Moshemanegape Makhene. The band was later renamed Amaqabane in 1989. At this point his political activism had become an open secret. The band’s debut album was *Nkosi Yami* (Leopard Records, 1987). Its line-up included Mofolo-born trumpeter/dancer, Ndumiso Nyovane who later joined Slaves and in 1998 released his debut solo album, *Mofolo Hall*. Though some of the tracks had very few lyrics, it had heavy political undertones.

AYB’s other hits include *Ntate Modise*, a track that almost became the unofficial national anthem before *Nkosi Sikelel’ i-Afrika*. This due to its prominence as a signature tune when the nation was waiting with bated breath on 11 February 1990 as the gates of Victor Verster Prison (now Drakenstein Prison) were thrown wide open for Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela to walk free. Another bold step Blondie took was to produce and arrange *Ditonkie*, a politically correct album by the band Amaqabane on the KGM Records label in 1991. The freedom songs challenged the status quo and agitated for a speedy transformation.

Vusi Shange’s debut maxi single, *Lunch Boy* (Hit City, 1985), is yet another Blondie Makhene co-production with John Galanakis. It was introduced to radio by the company’s PRO Zinzi Khulu. Later Orrack Chabangu became responsible for promoting Hit City products. Zinzi has since opened her own production house while Orrack became CCP’s boss. In the same year, Vusi’s debut album, *Room Service*, followed. It featured another Makhene, Mpho, who was a member of Spankk. This album Vusi dedicated to his mother, Dolly Shange. His dance routine on stage reminded us of “The Godfather Of Soul”, African American James Brown who shot to stardom with the hit *Please, Please, Please* backed by his band, The Famous Flames. By the way, the Apollo Theatre superstar, Mr Brown, passed away at the age of 73 in December 2006. May his soul rest in peace. This dance earned Vusi the nickname “Mr Electricman”.

In 1986 Blondie and John brought together most of the Hit City stars to feature on Vusi’s album, *Teacher We Are The Future*, backed by Spankk and featuring Shamor, Phyllis and Mpho Makhene. Also featured were The Makhene Kids viz. Moshimanegape, Karabo, Pelonomi and Pauline. Zipp was represented by Ziggy Adolph and Paul Green. Other stars included Pappa Makhene, Cyril Nkosi (Mnculwane), Steve MacNamara, Venda Kids, Pure Gold and Marc Rantseli of MarcAlex. In 1988 Blondie co-produced Vusi’s cover version of Jamaican Jimmy Cliff’s *Remake The World* with Steve MacNamara. Some of Blondie’s production
highlights include his co-production and arrangement of the great Hugh Masekela’s CD, *Time* (2002), with former Sakhile hornman, Khaya Mahlangu. He produced Busi Mhlongo’s 2003 CD, *Freedom*. Blondie also worked with Pure Gold whose gospel story will be told later in the relevant chapter. Their songs were composed by **Freddie Gwala** and Victor Bogopane. Both later embarked on solo careers, Freddie Gwala earning himself the nickname “Madamara” following his massive hit, *Amadamara*. His albums include *Amadamara* and *Shikisha Mahala* (*Amadamara #2*). One of his massive hits was *Tshidi Skhelekhele (O Dula Zola)*, a song with some prison melodies. Freddie later discovered the group, Platform 1, which recorded wedding songs fronted by Nani Ntengo. He co-produced it with Quinton Madlala featuring Vukuzenzele Mbele on keyboards. Some of Platform 1’s albums are: *Isencane*, *Ka Lenyalo*, *Ilobolo*, and *Woza Makoti Sikulandile*. Later this group moved to Cool Spot and released a ten-track album titled *Sizihlobo* under a new name, Platinum. By 2005 it had released the album *Ngiphenduke Kanjani?* under Bula Music fronted by Nelisiwe Jele. Victor Bogopane became a successful kwaito music artist known as Doc Shebeleza. He later led the kwaito Nation in a campaign against HIV/AIDS. Quinton Madlala had his solo career and released, among others, *Heartbreaker* (1986).

Blondie’s daughters Pauline, Letoya and Gontse started their own hot group, Skool Girlz. By 2008 Blondie had released the album, *Sthunywa Sam*, after a long break since the release of his album, *Buti Makoti*. The comrade had also become a traditional healer and an AIDS ambassador. Ahoy!

Another Makhene brother, **Clifford Makhene**, later formed the trio Fire and Flame and recorded a maxi single under DGR (David Gresham Records). The hit, *Whole Lot Of Love*, sold the maxi single like hot cakes on a Christmas morning. In the trio “Fire” was Cliff Makhene, “Flame” were two songbirds, Gladys Ramela and Diana Ncube. Cliff was a gifted song writer as he penned among other songs: *Touch Touch* (Brenda and the Big Dudes), *Baby I’m Torn In Two* (Pappa and Blondie/America’s MC Cray Brothers) as well as most of the tracks on The Big Dudes’ 1990 *Special Feeling* album, which featured Mandy. He co-wrote the songs with the group’s lead guitarist, Sammy Klaas. They’ve both left us for the ambitious orchestra on the other side.

Back to other Soweto groups of the township soul era: **Black Hawks** was another popular band owned by Stetson Mosia who also owned the Red Roof Tavern in Moletsane township. In those days the owner would normally be the provider of the musical instruments, transport and the rehearsal venue, which in most cases was a garage. Black Hawks was composed of Charlie “Babas” Ndlovu, David Tandzwane, Keith Ngcobo, Pirate “Pi” Tshabalala as well as Priscilla Jacobs. Kenneth Mathaba was also a member at one stage. Their biggest hits were *Love is Where Life Begins* and *Tell Me*. They were also very popular for their live performances. In the early 1970s, Pirate and Keith formed **The Young Lovers** under the ownership of Frans Khunou. As already mentioned, Charlie
Ndlovu ended up playing for Stimela. Sadly, “Pi” who also played for AFUBI died mysteriously in 1984 at a relatively young age. Keith Ngcobo travelled the length and breadth of South Africa as musical director of the talent search campaign, “Shell Road To Fame.”

The In-Laws were Peter Morake, Ben Modise, Zakes Kgasapane and Philly Gaeleshewu. This band was produced by GRC’s Hamilton “Vala” Nzimande. Some of their biggest hits included The Inner Feelings Of A Man and Modise’s Mood. Hot drummer, Peter Morake, later joined the southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO), the South African institution representing music performing rights. At the time of writing this book he had left the organisation after his huge contribution to the music fraternity.

Varikweru was mainly a live performance band led by Vusi Khumalo. Its lead vocalist was Faith Shadi Kekana who at one stage also sang for The All Rounders. Vusi later led and played drums for Thetha, whose members included bassist Bakithi “BK” Khumalo, trumpeter Nduemiso Nyovane, vocalist Wings Segale and keyboardist Bushy Seathlolo who later joined Brenda Fassie’s backing band, The Big Dudes. More about Thetha in the next chapters.

The Crocodiles was a concert band whose name was inspired by the surname of its owner, Amos Ngwenya. The first time I saw them perform was at the Diepkloof Hall. Amos’s younger brother, Moses, of The Soul Brothers fame started playing drums in this group. This was mainly a live performances band, though attempts were made to record with the assistance of Sparks Nyembe. On his solo works today Moses is known as Black Moses. One can easily trace his musical roots on Crocodile’s Rock from his M series solo albums. That particular album is titled M2. So far, the series is at M9, which tells us that he has nine solo albums featuring his keyboard magic mostly recorded in his Tripple Six Studio. He also produced promising musicians like Ronald Chauke, Whitey, Themba Ngwenya, Joseph Sambo, Teenagers, Shangaan Soul Sisters, Ntombinkulu, Johannes Manikela and Umthakathi. It is interesting to note that, like him, most of our music stars also started as drummers. Examples of this include Sipho Mabuse, David Masondo, Sox, Joe Nina and the late Jabu Khanyile locally as well as the likes of Phil Collins, Ringo Starr, Don Henley and Jim Capaldi on the international scene.

Almon Sandisa Memela’s Almon Jazz Eight had a huge hit with their cover version of Liverpool-born Paul McCartney’s Love Is Strange. The Moon Brothers released the township soul version of the hymn Mamelang (RPM, 1972) and it became a big hit. Soul band The VIPs boasted the line-up of Vusi Twala, Mapipi, Oupa and Fats Mlangeni. Fats would later join The Big Dudes, Brenda Fassie’s backing band. The Additions will always be remembered for producing one of this continent’s rooted sons, Jabu Khanyile. It was his brother’s band. It is no surprise that his brother loved music too because in his days their father Mathimula sang in iscathimiya groups.

The Drive was another powerful group of the era. It was co-founded by Mike
Makhalemele and Henry Sithole. Other members of the band included Duke Makasi and another man who contributed to the success of the band “through the throbbing thuds of the drum”, Nelson Magwaza, who was a member of the group for ten years before joining the group Pace. The Drive’s albums include Drive Live and their very popular 1976 release My Dreams. Some of their biggest hits include Bheki Mseleku’s composition I Have A Dream and Windermere’s To The End. During the bump jive craze era they had a huge hit composed by Henry Sithole titled Way Back Fifties. A compilation album of their hits was released as part of the Evergreen Hits From The Past series produced by the late David Thekwane. It is subtitled Volume Two: Featuring The Drive (Teal Records, 1990). Volume One (Teal Records, 1989) in the series features Lulu Masilela’s horn on Blessing and Cool Down, his compositions with the late Thomas Phale.

Other groups included Orlando East-based The Heroes, Ramsy’s Young Ones, The Square Souls, The Eagles, The Sounds, Impact, Exit, The Daffodils, Rasmataz, Tortoise, Black Diamonds, Elations and others. Individual stars included Black Duke known for the hit Didimalang Ke Ya Bua (1987) as well as the late Billy Mashego who later moved into theatre.

Yes, those were the days when record companies rewarded loyalty so handsomely that a messenger could easily become a talent scout; qualifications did not weigh more than loyalty and experience. There are cases in which a driver was later appointed a company representative and a sweeper became a warehouse supervisor.