Beyond Memory

Mojapelo, Max

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE CAPE CONNECTION

Down in Cape Town Richard Jon Smith cooked a storm with his monster hits Candle Light and That’s Why I Love You. The latter was produced by Robert J Lange and the former by Clive Calder, owner of Zomba Productions. His career flourished to a point where he had to follow his fame abroad. But his legacy lingered on and gave rise to a new generation of musicians.

Robin Levetan’s Bright Blue is another band that dominated the music scene with a uniquely South African sound in the eighties. More about them later under the chapter on crossover music.

Robin Auld who was backed by the band Z-Astaire around 1984 is another fine musician from the Mother City. His hits like Fine Day endeared him to thousands of music lovers across the country.

Sweet Chocolate had a massive hit, This Ain’t America, fronted by soulman Al Etto who later launched his own solo career. One of his hits, She’s Hot, was produced by Attie van Wyk and engineered by Richard “Mr Magic” Mitchell on Dephon’s Roy B label during the time of promoter Peter Khowana.

After Cape Flats son, Neville Nash, and his band The Miracles parted ways he went solo. By 1985 he had a big hit, One Of Those Nights, which was later included in the Concert In The Park double album. What’s Your Name, What’s Your Number? was produced by Tom Mkhise on the CTV label, Solid. In 1986 he followed up with the album Why?, which featured the hit Feel It produced by Tom Mkhise, Solly Letwaba and Neville himself. He also co-wrote the music of African Image with Tom Mkhise on CTV-Music Team’s Spinna label.

Another success story from Cape Town is that of The Rockets, a band fronted by Bones and Ronnie Joyce who’d later go solo. Their stable was MFM. This
band had a number of hits like *Surrender, Situations, Ooh La La La* and *Gimme A Break* (Dance). They were produced by the great Greg Cutler, assisted by Hotliners Alistair Coakley and Bones Brettell (ex-Clout). Later they released *We Are All African People*, an album produced by Rick Wolff, Molly Barron and Al Etto on Dephon’s Roy B label. Ronnie Joyce embarked on a solo career and released hits like *What Went Wrong With Us?* as well as *I’m Crying*. He also teamed up with Jonathan Butler on two Peter Vee productions *Star On The TV Show* and *It Takes Two*. He released *Merry Christmas Dear Mother* as Little Ronnie Joyce. Most of us will always remember Ronnie as the guy who sang *It All Adds Up* with the late Brenda Fassie back in 1984.

Another son of the Mother City, Byron later changed his name to Jean-Michel and fronted the US supergroup Toto.

At the age of 13 Ricardo recorded his first song. He was born Ricardo David Groenewald on 23 July 1972 in Humansdorp. He is from a musically talented family. His father, William Groenewald, was a singer and played saxophone, guitar and piano. His aunt was Sylvia Green who had a solo career with Priority Records. Ricardo started singing at the age of four. Things started to happen when he appeared in a television programme called *1930 Breakdown* with the likes of Lionel Petersen. He impressed the producers of the show and received a standing ovation for his rendition of two spiritual songs, *Amazing Grace* and *Do Lord*. After his aunt Sylvia told Al Etto about him, he was led into the recording studio. Ricardo’s first recorded song was *Maxi Miles*. In 1985 he released the album *Ricardo* backed by seasoned musicians like Khaya Mahlangu (soprano sax), Al Etto (guitars) and Danny Lalouette (bass guitar). The album featured *Catch The Jive* as well as his duet with Jani de Lenta titled *Your Love, My Love*. His other albums include *Is There Any Justice?* produced and arranged by Attie van Wyk, as well as *Children Of The World* performed with two friends, Duran Paulsen and Keith van der Poel. Also produced by Attie, it won the Second National Song contest. His biggest hit ever was the Father’s Day classic, *I Love You Daddy*.

Jonathan Butler was born and bred in Athlone, Cape Town. His early music years were greatly influenced by The Golden City Dixies who toured South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Malawi and Zambia. Jonathan’s solo career was launched at the age of twelve in 1974. His memorable hits early in his career were *She Kept On Walking* and *Please Stay*, which reached the double gold status. In the seventies Jonathan became a Christian and went into gospel music. Talking about the period, he said he went into semi-retirement to find himself. He was not happy singing like other overseas musicians; he wanted to find his African self. At the end of the introspection window he moved into fusion, exploiting his guitar playing skills to the maximum. Sabata Lebona produced his *7th Avenue* and *Crossroads* singles. In 1985 he emigrated to London where he released his duet with Ruby Turner, *If You’re Ready (Come Go With Me)*, a 1974 hit.
of The Staple Singers from their album *Be What You Are* (Stax). His debut album was *Introducing Jonathan Butler* (1986). In 1987 he released a double-album that showed his true colours to the international music industry. Today he is all smiles as his catalogue boasts Grammy-nominated hits like *Lies* and *Going Home*. His gold album *More Than Friends* had a beautiful ballad, *Sarah, Sarah*, which was produced by Barry Eastmond as well as his duet with Vanessa Bell Armstrong, *True Love Never Fails*. In 1994, after a four year break, he came back on the Mercury Records label with the album *Head To Head* featuring the hit *I’m On My Knees*. He said the album represented a fresh start in his career because for the very first time he had the creative freedom as he co-produced it with Gerry E Brown. One track, *Jodie*, features some of the world’s best jazz musicians like Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Grady Tate and Michael Brecker. Other albums include *Do You Love Me* (1997), *The Source* (2000), *Surrender* (2002), *The Ultimate Butler* (2003), *The Worship Project* (2004), *Story Of Life* and *Jonathan Butler* (2005). The influence of his music style is evident in that of the young generation of jazz guitarists like Durban’s Ernie Smith.

The frontiers of South African hip-hop music were almost pushed to the limit by *Prophets Of The City* (POC). Its members were Ready D, Shaheen, Ishmael, Junior and Caramel. Theirs was a musical revolution defying the norms with performances dominated by rap and breakdance paces. In 1995 their album Phunk Phlow won the first FNB SAMA’s Best Rap Album category. Their other albums include *Our World*, *Jabulani*, *Age Of Truth*, *Boomstyle* and *Kickin’ Nonstop*. Ishmael left the outfit to join Skeem and later embarked on a solo career. POC won SAMA 9’s Soundtrack category for *Steps*. Ready D, born in District Six and forced to move to Mitchell’s Plain at a tender age became a professional deejay and won the South African DJ Championships four times with his mixing and scratching skills. In 2005 he released his debut solo album titled *Not For Tha Faint Hearted Vol. 1*, which features international hip-hop underground artists as well as unreleased tracks of Skwatta Kamp, Ancient Men, Tebs, Tumi, Amu and his group POC. His other projects include BVK (Brasse Vannie Kaap) where he worked with the late Mr Fat and Hamma who calls him Boeta D to record their 2000 album, *Yskoud*. Ready D produced the 13-track CD and released it through Ghetto Ruff. It was nominated for FNB SAMA 7 in the Best Producer category. Also nominated in the category was his “Bra” Shaheen Arielfdien for D’Louw’s *Cosmic Child*. Sadly, Mr Fat aka Ashley Titus passed away at Groote Schuur Hospital in December 2007.

A seven piece band, Louis and the Jive, had a big hit in 1986 with *Feels Like Friday* (RPM) co-written by Louis Ribeiro and J. Doveton-Helps featuring musicians like McCoy Mrubata, before he moved with Sipho Mabuse to Johannesburg. It was produced by Mac Mathunjwa and engineered by Philip Nel on RPM’S Right Track label.

**Melvyn Matthews** is the hitman who wrote Brenda Fassie’s *Weekend Special*
in 1983. He also wrote his own songs like Don’t Give My Love Away (1994) on Priority Records’ Reaction label, produced by Al Etto.

Songstress **Vicky Sampson** was born in Cape Town in 1969. Having won a local talent search, she left Cape Town in 1983 and appeared in a television talent search show Follow That Star. From there she worked with stars like Khaya Mahlangu, Sipho Gumede, Al Jarreau and Shakatak. Her success story will always be associated with Tusk’s director of marketing, Benjy Mudie. Her debut album was so well received in Europe that she planned to focus on the international market. Her 1992 album, *Shine*, was produced and arranged by Alan Lazar on Tusk’s One World Entertainment label. It featured the hit Love Will Shine On You. While performing in Singapore in 1994 she caught the attention of British producers SGo who invited her to spend six weeks in Britain getting the feel of international music trends. In 1995 she went back to the UK and spent two and half months fine-tuning the sound of her next album, *Zai*. Upon its release, the track African Dream became such a massive hit featuring on almost every radio station’s charts in South Africa. It was also used to market and promote the first national lottery in South Africa. It won her many awards including FNB SAMA 2’s Best Vocal Performance: Female category, Best Pop Album and Best Video. In the same 1995 she participated in the historic “Women Of The World Unite Against Drugs And War” concert sharing the stage with PJ Powers, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Lesley Rae Dowling, Jennifer Jones, Aviva Pelham and Jennifer Ferguson at Sun City. On Thursday, 11 October 2007, Vicky represented South Africa at the 12th Special Olympics in Shanghai, China and gave a solo rendition of the Alan Lazar’s composition One Tribe Under Heaven. At the end of that month she also released her CD titled License To Sing.

**Jennifer Jones** is another songstress with a dynamic voice. She has backed some of this industry’s best musos. In 1997 she recorded Slow Down with Sony Music Entertainment (SA). Selwyn Shandel produced almost the whole album with the exception of two tracks. The CD features the hit Walk With Me co-written with Selwyn Shandel as a tribute to Dee Kay. Her biggest contribution to South Africa’s democracy remains her song for the new constitution, One Law For One Nation.

There was also the group The Outlet with Working On a Good Thing. Who can forget Peter Vee’s Love Is All I Have? Both hits were produced by Clive Calder.

The great **David Kramer** who is one of the earliest leaders of the Alternative Afrikaans music trend had hits like Die Royal Hotel and A Matchbox Full Of Diamonds. He inspired a whole new generation of Afrikaner musicians like Koos Kombuis and the late Johannes Kerkorrel. They were supported by bands like the Gereformeerde Blues Band and Kommissie Van Ondersoek. This movement agitated for changes in South Africa, using the Afrikaans language as a medium. Johannes Kerkorrel aka Rolf Rabie won the first FNB SAMA’s Best Rock
Album category with his 1995 album *Cyanide In The Beefcake*. Unfortunately the progressive Johannes died a mysterious tragic death, which was followed by a television documentary *Who Killed Johannes Kerkorrel?* Cape Town is mainly known for its jazz connection, a genre to be discussed later in other sections of this work. This is partly due to tradition and UCT’s College of Music, which presented South Africa with most of today’s young lions of jazz. It is interesting to note that the winners of the 1994 Southern Comfort Jazz Scholarship were both drummers from UCT in the names of Frank Paco and Clement Benny. The scholarship was worth R17 000 for a full year study at an institution that offers jazz music as a full-time course. Frank later joined Sakhile and also travelled this continent as Miriam Makeba’s drummer.