

postpone or ease the very pressure which is needed to pave the way for meaningful negotiations.

We say to the whole world that now is not the time to open up to the Pretoria regime. Those who do so are, whatever their intentions might be, postponing the day when Botha will be forced to speak to the real leaders of our people on a real negotiating process towards a democratic South Africa. Until he is prepared to do so he deserves to be treated like an outcast by those who are revolted by the apartheid tyranny.

At the moment the shortest route to peace with the least bloodletting in our country is to

step up the internal struggle and to encourage greater external pressure. A contrary course is a signal of legitimacy and respectability to the regime and one of discouragement to our struggling peoples.

We call upon the whole world and more specially our brothers on the African continent to slam their doors in Botha's face and to intensify all measures for the isolation of Pretoria and everything it stands for. We know that the prime task of defeating this evil system rests with our people led by the ANC. But those in the world who wish us success can play a part in shortening this process by even more resolute actions of solidarity. *

fully hear in a post-apartheid situation. A few years back no one would have dared to be as diverse as they are today — it's a total contradiction of the way things usually operate in the apartheid system. Of course, some of the concessions the government allows are made in the hopes of taking some of the bite out of the cultural struggle. To say, "See, we do listen to other people's ideas."

Clegg explained that the SABC (South African Broadcasting Co.) still runs everything and until these "reforms," which were almost forced on them by the recent unrest, the English stations didn't play Afrikaner music and Zulu stations were "unofficially" forbidden to play white music. The SABC also makes sure that the transmitters in the homelands are kept small to ensure that their signal won't be heard outside of a very short radius. It's part of a conscious plan to keep every black ethnic group separate.

This segregation of the airwaves has been a big problem for Clegg. Both of the bands he's been involved in, Juluka (Zulu for sweat), which broke up in 1984, and his current group, Savuka (which means "we have arisen"), have played a tradition-breaking hybrid of Zulu jive, South African folk music and international pop. In the 20 odd years he's been playing and recording, Clegg's music has helped break down the racially dictated musical barriers of South Africa. Long before Paul Simon's *Graceland*, Clegg was a cultural outlaw in South Africa. The records he cut with Juluka were among the few South African discs to feature blacks and whites playing together. When the group played in public, they often risked arrest for violating the apartheid laws.

Johnny Clegg's journey into Zulu culture had an unlikely beginning. He was born in England, but when his parents separated in the mid-'60s, his mother moved to South Africa (with a yearlong stopover in Rhodesia). When young Clegg heard black African music, it changed his life.

"We could get a Zulu station on the radio," Clegg recalled, "and the sounds piqued my interest. I carried a tape recorder and taped the songs I heard the black street musicians playing. The older Zulus took me under their wing and I got quite a collection of songs down on tape.

"When I was 15, I was arrested for being inside a black hostel and instead of taking me to the Charge Office, the police took me to my mother." The hostel was filled with migrant workers without official work permits. (If you're black, you can't work without a permit, but you can't get a permit without a job.) In the eyes of the police it was a hotbed of stolen goods, drug running, gun running and bootleggers. The police told Clegg his adventures were a danger to his own life. He didn't see it that way.

"I explained to my mother that there was a great deal of fighting," noted Clegg, "but that it didn't enter into the context of the dance. The fighting happened before or after the dancing, but never during. My mother was worried and we had quite a few arguments about it, but since she was a jazz singer she understood my intuitive love for the music."

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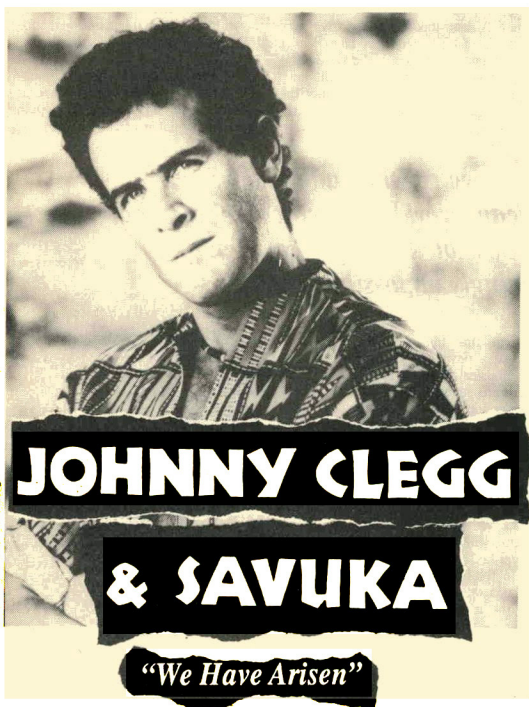


PHOTO BY NEIL MATTHEWS

By j. poet



Johnny Clegg is a white man who plays black music in an interracial rock 'n' roll band. Of course, there's nothing unusual about white people liking or playing black music, but Clegg lives in South Africa and in the country of

apartheid his musical taste is almost against the law.

"Even the radio stations here are segregated," Clegg told me from his home in Johannesburg, just before the band left for their recently completed tour of the United States, "although segregated radio has been softened of late. Today you have a station like Radio Metro that plays all kinds of music, all hours of the day, the kind of music that we'll hope-

AZANIA RISING: The Soul of South Africa

In the end, Mrs. Clegg supported her son's interest in Zulu music and bailed him out of jail whenever the police arrested him for being in the company of blacks. The arrests only made Clegg's love for Zulu culture stronger.

"Street music is played in places that aren't accessible to white people," Clegg explained. "For example, the rooftops of the apartment blocks (buildings) in urban areas have houses where the servants and flat cleaners (janitors) live. On the weekends there are informal gatherings on the tops of these blocks with concertinas, violins, guitars, what have you, and I'd sneak up there to play. Inevitably there would be someone selling illegal beer and we'd get drunk and make too much noise, and the police would come and arrest me again."

At one of those informal rooftop parties Clegg met Siphos Mchunu, a "formidable guitarist" who was also 17 years old. "Siphos had an incredible sense of humor and we hit it off from our first conversation. When we started playing together, something clicked." The duo of Clegg and Mchunu was soon playing underground venues, which were basically people's homes or small halls at universities. At that time they would have risked arrest if they'd even tried to get a gig at a South African nightclub.

Despite the problems the friendship created ("When Siphos and I visited his parents, I was arrested and threatened with deportation"), Clegg and Mchunu formed a strong musical and personal bond. "As I became more familiar with the Zulus, I realized that I didn't want to just learn the culture, I wanted to do the culture, to become a culture-bearer. There were so many things about it that I found emotive and beautiful that I wanted to be part of that continuing tradition, especially as it related to dance and music." Eventually, Clegg was accepted as a "white Zulu."

"The press has implied there's a secret ritual or something, but being a white Zulu is more of an allegory. As a young white person I embraced the Zulu culture and a great majority of the people embraced me to the point where I have special ritual claims and obligations to several Zulu clans, just as they have claims and obligations over me. It's not so dramatic, except that it happened under the apartheid system and that gives everything more impact."

In 1976 Clegg and Mchunu cut an acoustic album of Zulu ethnic songs using the name Juluka. This created more problems. "We sang in Zulu and English on the same record," Clegg chuckled. "The record company was upset. They kept asking us, 'Is this music black or white? This will confuse the radio stations.' We finally had a meeting with the broadcasters and the record people and with great difficulty they decided that since the backing was African, the black stations should play it. I believe that that record was the beginning of the breakdown of such strict categories."

Juluka ignored the problems and got on

with the making of music, gradually adding elements of South African folk, rock 'n' roll, funk and Zulu street guitar. "For the first year and a half the band played mostly in black areas, where whites didn't see us, so they weren't offended," Clegg said. "As we got more popular, occasionally we'd be playing in a township and uniformed police would walk on stage with their shotguns and say, 'You've got five minutes to empty the hall, or else you'll all be arrested.'"

Despite official harassment, by 1979 Clegg and his fellow musicians had a full-tilt Zulu/rock/South African folk/fusion band with six members (three white and three black) and a platinum album. Their success didn't stop the harassment entirely, but the bottom line, even in South Africa, is money, and since the band was making lots of money, the government was content to look the other way.

"Since we're white and black South Africans working together it shows that it is possible to cooperate, even in a seemingly impossible situation."

Clegg feels that this de facto acceptance helped break down the racial barriers that separate musical styles in his homeland. "Today there are several interracial bands doing pop, jazz and Zulu styles," Clegg said. "When we started, everyone thought we were insane."

Before Juluka disbanded in 1985, the band had earned several gold albums and charted a major Top 40 hit in Europe with "Scatterlings of Africa," a poignant tribute to the African diaspora. "We were on the edge of international fame when Siphos decided he had to go home and help his family take care of their farm. He felt very seriously that this was where his main obligations lay."

With the money Mchunu made, he built two schools for his people and introduced new farming methods to the community. Unfortunately, soon after his return home the local chief was murdered and a tribal feud ensued. In the unrest that followed, Mchunu's homestead was burned to the ground and all his cattle stolen. Clegg told me that today Mchunu is in a severe financial situation.

"I continued on in Johannesburg hoping that Siphos would want to get back together after taking a break, but he had too many obligations," Clegg said. Clegg told me he briefly thought about giving up music. He returned to work on his almost-forgotten master's thesis, an analysis of the symbolism in Isishameni dance, but in the end the music won out.

Clegg recorded a solo album of straight international pop entitled *Third World Child* ("There were still some African influences in

it, they weren't as high profile as my stuff with Juluka"), but as the South African political situation heated up he decided to return to performing. Clegg wrote several new songs, most of them more overtly political than before, and his new band, Savuka, is determined to rock the South African cultural boat, in both senses of the phrase.

"I don't consider myself a political activist as far as being a socialist or capitalist," Clegg explained, "but I believe that people have certain fundamental rights. If these rights do not occur, then this must be announced to the world and they must be fought for. We sing about some pretty ugly things on stage, the murder squads and people who have been killed in prison, but we try to remain hopeful, to present a vision of a better future. I don't think music can make a change in the political situation, but it can help make people more



AZANIA RISING: *The Soul of South Africa*



PHOTO BY CLARE MULLER

Johnny Clegg and Savuka are determined to rock the South African cultural boat.

aware, and in that way maybe we can make some small difference."

Savuka has already had more trouble with the police than Juluka had, but the band has been quite successful both at home and in Europe. And after the band's first tumultuous tour of South Africa and England, EMI International (Capitol in the U.S.) was impressed enough to offer Clegg a worldwide record deal.

"The *Third World Child* lp that you got in the States was actually a compilation of my solo album, the first South African Savuka lp and a couple of new tunes we did especially for international release, including 'Asimbonanga,' a song to honor some of the movement's martyrs, people like Victoria Mxenge, a black civil rights lawyer who was murdered, Neil Agett and Steven Biko who both 'died' in political detention, and Nelson Mandela, who has been in prison for more than 25 years," Clegg said. "We just finished mixing down a new album (*Shadow Man*) and while it isn't as overtly political as *Third World Child*, we're still addressing the same problems. *Grace-land* proved there's an audience that's willing to listen to things that may have been considered a bit foreign when we (as Juluka) last came to the States.

"I've had to work hard to sell this music to people, but I believe in it, and in what it represents — the future. Since we're white and black South Africans working together it shows that it is possible to cooperate, even in a seemingly impossible situation."

Shadow Man continues Clegg's long struggle to instruct his country and the world. Tunes like "Dance Across the Centuries," "Human Rainbow" and "Siyayilanda" combine Zulu proverbs, township jive and a driving

rock beat to provide listeners with scorching political commentary, hopeful visions of the future and music that uplifts and nourishes the spirit.

Since Clegg has played all over Europe and the U.S. in an interracial band, I closed the conversation by asking him if the "less-racist-than-thou" stance that the U.S. press often takes when reporting about events in South Africa bothered him.

"The one-to-one racism between individuals is a worldwide problem that you find everywhere, even in the so-called 'Free World,'" Clegg replied. "When Juluka was in the States in 1984, Sipho and I watched a tv news program on a Chicago station. A black family had been terrorized out of a block of flats by the white people in the neighborhood. There was a confrontation between white and black community members in the street, with the police standing between them. Everyone was shouting and it looked quite ugly. Sipho said, 'This is hard for me to understand, because this is the land of the free.' But that one-to-one racism is everywhere. The attitudes are more refined in America, but that way racism can have an even more insidious effect.

"There are also different levels to racism in South Africa. There's the one-to-one racism and then there's the kind of anonymous sanctioned racism that's legislated. When you grow up with it, you don't really feel responsible for it. If you're white, you're born into a system of privilege that you're unaware of until you see some massive attack on the system or have a personal shock of some kind to wake you to the reality of the situation.

"Like the United States, we have our own regional political dynamics. There are rednecks, but there are also progressive people,

mostly in the urban areas, who are trying to change the system. And, in spite of everything, I do have hope that we can work out a solution for ourselves. Although there's a powerful white economic minority that wants to see apartheid continue and strengthen, there are also lots of young people who are much more free, open and aware. Their relationships with their black colleagues in school are far more open and intimate than anything I saw when I was growing up.

"It's hard to explain the contradictions (to someone who doesn't live here) or even tell you why I feel hopeful, but there's a resilience to the people that you can feel on the streets, and in the workplace or in the church. I suppose it's the nature of the human race. We all know we're involved in the struggle, even if we perceive the problems and solutions differently. Even though we all go to work on separate buses, we all arrive at work at the same time and we've all got to work together.

"I do come from a horrid backward country, which I acknowledge, but the holier-than-thou attitude of some people bothers me," Clegg concludes. "Black people want to get on with the job of dismantling the faceless structures that keep us apart because they know, just as the progressive whites do, that at the end of a working day all we want is to sit down to a meal and have a drink and talk it through." ★

Musicians' Alliance Revitalized

[The following excerpt is reprinted from the ANC News Briefing, Issue No. 39, Volume 12. The story originally appeared in the South African Weekly Mail on Sept. 30.]

A revitalized South African Musicians' Alliance (SAMA) resolved at the weekend to concentrate on artists' day-to-day problems — and not on the ideological issues which landlocked the alliance shortly after it was founded in 1986. At its general meeting SAMA adopted an "affirmative action principle," committing musicians to direct community work, and decided to consolidate the alliance's structure before it addressed the cultural boycott or made contact with international trade union organizations. . . .

SAMA founder member Johnny Clegg of Savuka is optimistic that people now have a better understanding of what the union should be about. "None of us who started SAMA had really been involved with this sort of thing before," he told *Weekly Mail*. "Our biggest mistake was getting bogged down by issues like Sun City and the Info song. It took up the little time we had which should have been spent seeing to musicians more immediate needs." However, the problem of affiliation to specific causes appears destined to remain the major stumbling block on the SAMA agenda. ★