

3RD EAR'S COMMERCIAL INVOLVEMENT IS AS FOLLOWS:

There seems to be a lot of international interest in some of our artists - specifically:

1. Madonsini - once again, the commercial-cum-cultural aspect must be emphasised. Madonsini is a tremendous artist and a great talent. She works somewhere in the fields in the Transkei.

There is interest in her music and she can well use the financial benefits of her talents.

She must be found and recorded as soon as possible.

2. Umkhonto Ka Zulu - John Sithole and Des Lindberg (CAT Studios) initiated this group in the studio and produced the subsequent album and developed a band around the sound that the two produced.

I was involved as a recording engineer and 3rd Ear Music is the publisher of all this material. We've had a release in France and Germany for the cassette compilation that Des put together but we have had no local release to date.

A specific request from Shanachie Records to record all material as soon as possible, is indicative of the interest that this band has been causing.

3. Sipho Mchunu - The interest in Sipho is, of course, well known and here he can play a leading role - not only as a performing and recording artist but also as a producer.

Sipho has some specific production ideas. He is also held in high regard by many of the as-yet unrecorded artists that I have come across and auditioned or heard at various concerts; besides the idea of getting him together with Darius Brubeck and possibly produce some sort of jazz and traditional project.

There are a number of other artists but I will just deal with these three for now. Besides that, I have a number of completed masters that could be considered for immediate release. As was mentioned, there are two ways in which we can go about setting up this production facility:

1. As an independent record company with our own label and identity - we produce and finance the music from its inception through to the master tape at our expense with possible advances, of course, from the record distributors.

Although some record company/distributor might be interested in assisting us set up such a project, I believe we would have to finance a large portion of this ourselves.

This could lead to problems in administration and marketing.

Where we are strong at this point is, of course, on the technical side of live performances and studio production. But whether or not we can go into the administration and marketing is another thing.

2. We approach the record distributors with a project - if they like the idea, they will then advance us the money to produce the recording.

The tape and contents then belongs to us. We lease the tape to them at a percentage - the advance would obviously be deducted from a portion of this percentage.

The rights will be theirs for South Africa only. We retain the publishing and the first option of exploiting it internationally.

They do all the promotion, marketing and manufacturing of this record, the video and possibly the concert performances.

I have had experiences with both methods and personally prefer the lease tape deal arrangement. I am sure there would be no problem in even creating our own label under this arrangement. Similar possibly to the way the Soul Bros. lease their masters through TUSK Records.

This brings us to another area: international.

There has been a lot of positive interest in Siphos by a number of record companies, local and in the U.S.A. In particular, Shanachie Records, whose director - Randall Glass - would like to meet with Siphos on the 20th October at the Apollo in New York. Hopefully, you could meet with him at the same time and guide Siphos.

I explained everything to my partner and our 3rd Ear Music representative in Washington that you would be representing mine and Siphos' interests in the U.S.A. and that we would only make decisions on your return to South Africa in November.

I have tried to explain to Randall Glass of Shanachie Records that Siphos would not be able to make any hard and fast decisions in New York without first consulting the rest of the people here in South Africa.

I just feel that it's important for whatever record company that does get involved from the U.S.A., to know that there's a lot more at stake here for Sipho and his future than simply signing him up as another popstar-cum-songwriter who may or may not sell records in America.

Sipho is a tradition. And he has to decide clearly, not under 'international pressures' what it is he wants to do. Everybody, including us, is guilty of not giving him enough time to explain - we're all too busy talking!

At this point our motives (I believe) are good. So, too, is the talking. As strapped as we are for finance, I sincerely believe we should not look at anything in the short term.

Sipho, too, must understand that he has to be guided by looking ten years up the road.

Of course, I'm just assuming here that Shannachie wants to get involved on that kind of level at all. Even if they don't, there is nothing to try and convince them that they should. In other words, Sipho is not only a source of his own talent but he can be a very worthwhile producer of sound from this area.

And all this at the same time of fulfilling his commitments back home in the Tugela Ferry. And that is a very, very important aspect which the Americans, in their clamour for 'units' tend not to ever see.

Johnny Clegg has a wonderful anecdote about how the struggle in a performer's life in America revolves around about not having buttered toast in the mornings, their fight against drugs or that her stepfather left her when she was twelve - that, as Johnny puts it, is the limit of their struggle!

These people in America - no matter how well-meaning or academic or professional they may be - are pretty much removed from the realities of this world.

Apologies but I, of course, am just assuming that somebody would like to go into it as deep as I am trying to make it out to be! Most capitalist/profit-orientated companies simply want to make money regardless of all the complications.

But sometimes it's nice to try and get people who are that concerned to also become involved.

On the technical side - 3rd Ear Music is possibly the most experienced concert sound and studio production company. Besides having hands-on experience in operating live concert and recording equipment, we also have access to a number of potentially workable studios and sound companies

From the training of new young aspirants - here once again the Music Association of Natal can play a big role in finding young people in the rural areas with an aptitude to becoming technicians in the music business, we also are very well connected in assisting in the setting up of festivals and concerts.

Besides that, we have done many of our own in the past twenty years.

There is also the prospect of a local importer of sound equipment becoming involved in setting up a new company.

Sound Crew in Westville would consider offers for the outright purchase of all their equipment. TUSK Records also has a system that Derek Hannan could make available for smaller outlets/venues - from trying to create an open-air situation on the banks of the Tugela Ferry (where Felix has been clearing away a space) to the concert halls right here in Durban City - from tuition in the veld to tuition here at the Community Arts Workshop - all these venues can be revived which would then generate a cycle of events and put back into this pretty depressing local music scene, some life.

General:

There are many other aspects that I could mention and that need 'co-ordinating' into a functional and profitable commercial enterprise that will benefit the people of this area. What we now need is funds to put all this talk into action. Unfortunately, there are a number of financial institutions who do seem to be handing out money for 'cultural activities' but, because of the lack of infrastructure in this area and the non-existent communication that the various areas of music have between themselves - much of this 'funding' will do nobody any good.

We have academics running around researching this and that at great expense; we have new bodies formed to sing and produce new Peace Festivals and nothing takes place; we have yet another Arts Association to look after the interests of that particular branch of culture, and we produce another world of cynics and sceptics because nothing that all this money is meant for actually works.

Yet if you break these companies or organisations down person-for-person there's all the talent one needs to make such a project work. Why does it not work? Well, 3rd Ear Music may not have all the answers but we certainly do have the contacts and the determination to apply our 20 years of experience (walking between the cultural and commercial lines) into ways of developing a formula that will keep the music and the people alive in this area.
