

A classic changeover

WHAT'S a nice girl like Ilne Hofmeyr, who started her career in the opera chorus of Capab, doing in the smokey caverns of Johannesburg's clubland?

Singing and playing her heart out, that's what — and having the time of her life doing it.

Ilne is a rock singer and bass guitarist. The second accomplishment comes as quite a surprise as she hardly stands higher than the bass she plays and looks incapable of lifting it, let alone playing it.

Surprising also is the cool, cultured poise of this 26-year-old pocket-sized powerhouse of a woman, almost an oddity in a world where female rock musicians are not usually renowned for their cultural accomplishments. But perhaps it's just because nobody ever asked them.

You don't have to ask Ilne. She talks constantly and rapidly with the same natural ease and friendliness that she puts into the music that has become her life.

"That's the marvellous thing about rock music it gives you the opportunity to express yourself, how you feel about life. With the classics you are expressing someone else's feelings," she says.

Ilne holds a degree in music from Cape Town University, where she studied piano, singing and flute, majoring in composition and orchestration. She began her musical career in the opera chorus of Capab and looked set for a career as an opera singer.

A chance encounter with the rock music dra-

ma "Death of a Singer" changed all that. She landed the lead and that was the end of the opera.

"That was when I first got to know the bass guitar. I got a bass and started teaching myself to play and that was that."

For the moment "that" is a two-week gig that has just opened at Hillbrow's Chelsea Hotel with Roger Lucey's Zub Zub Marauders, a group she joined three months ago and which, she says, is a band heading for the top.

Again, how does a nice girl from the Capab opera chorus make it to the Golden City rock slot?

"When I decided that the classics were not what I wanted, I knew that I'd have to come to Johannesburg. So in May last year I packed my bags, hitched a lift from a friend and arrived — without a penny to my name and just one contact in Johannesburg.

"I worked for the first six weeks as a waitress in a steak house and then began playing in a duo.

"We split up and I worked with another girl but nothing was right, either the managements wanted country and western or they wanted sing-alongs, and neither of those are for me.

"Then in December Roger Lucey invited me to join the Zub Zub Marauders as bass and vocalist and so far we've been working just about non-stop."

Ilne looks upon her work as more than just a job — it's a way of life with its own demands and disciplines.

By JEAN WAITE

She may be small but rock singer Ilne Hofmeyr packs a powerful punch when she's behind her bass guitar. After seeing her play with the Zub Zub Marauders, it's hard to believe she started her career in an opera chorus.

When she's not on-stage she is either rehearsing, getting together with the boys in the band to arrange their music, practising or, on the odd night off, watching her friends play.

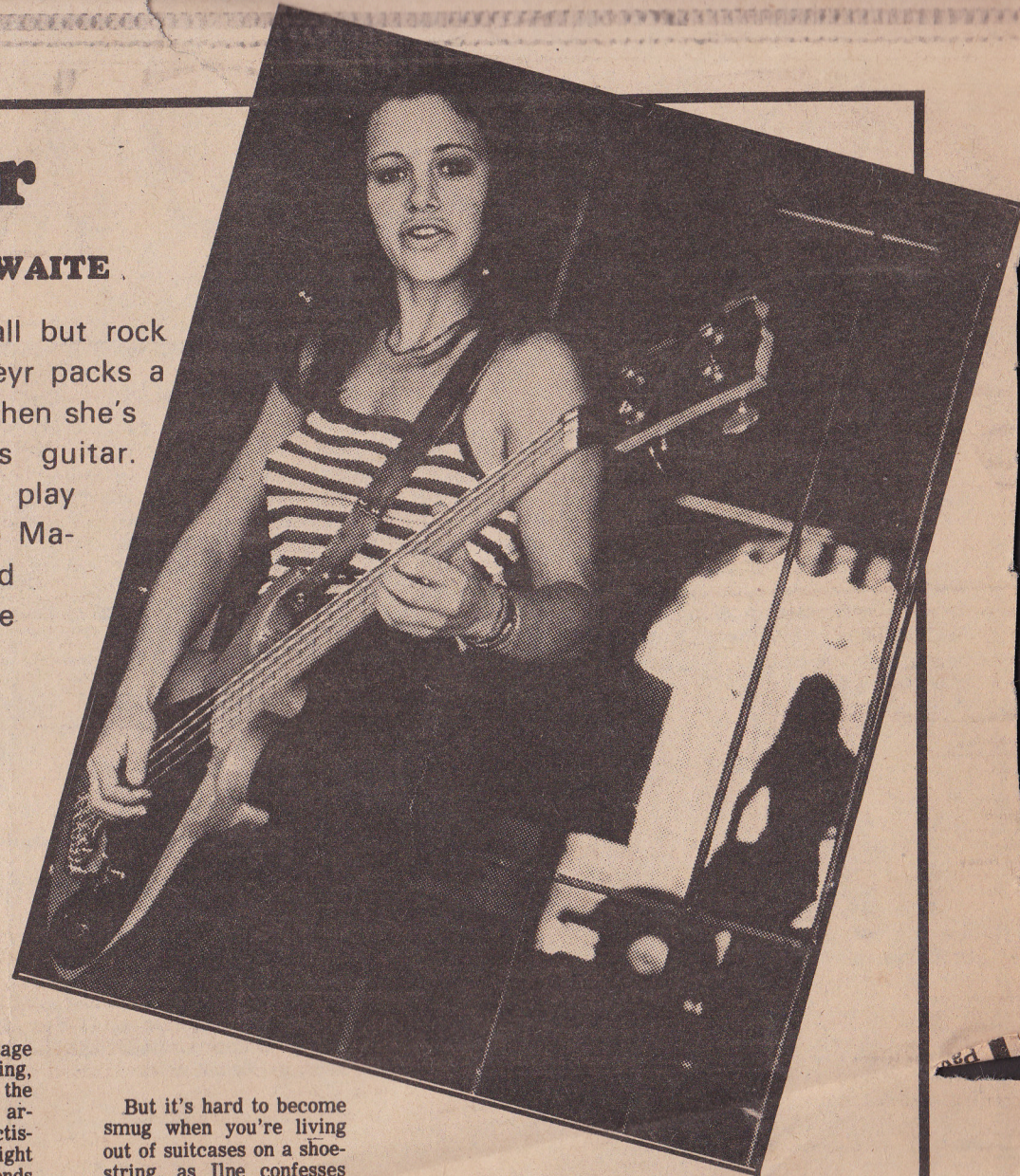
"I practise constantly, scales and exercises. You have to if you want to advance. It would be easy to just stay on the same level and not bother, play the bands for a few years then simply fade away.

"But if you want to make music a career, you must practise and never let yourself get stale or smug."

But it's hard to become smug when you're living out of suitcases on a shoestring, as Ilne confesses she is.

"It's a chicken and egg situation," she says. "You need to constantly upgrade your equipment to get better jobs, and to get better jobs and more money, you need good equipment, so at the moment every penny I earn goes into paying off my equipment."

She says it with a laugh, it doesn't matter, the mu-



sic is the thing, that's all that matters.

"I might not know exactly where I'm going — but I sure know where I'm not going."

From someone with a strictly conservative classical background who upside-downed her life to become a rock musician, you'd better believe she's right.

Picture:
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