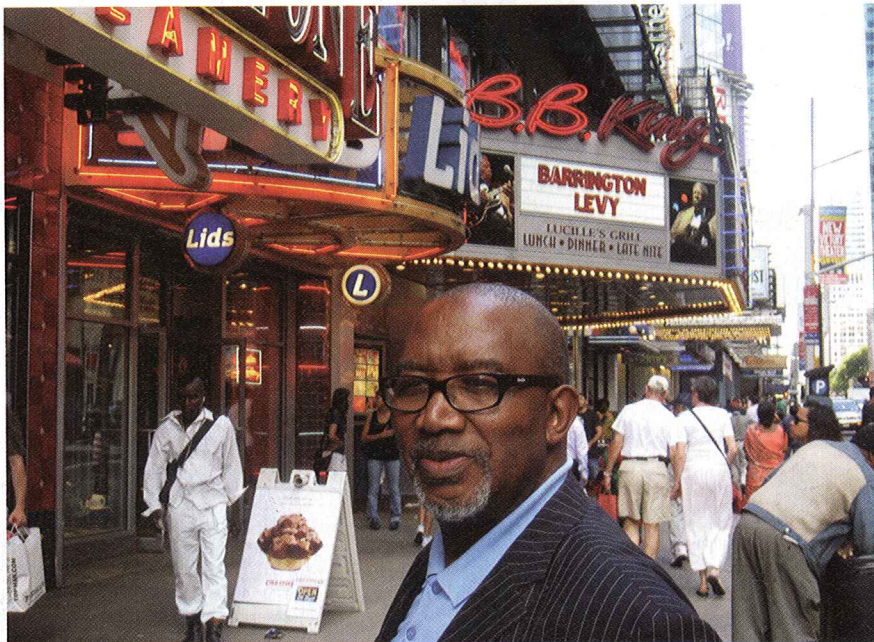


THE TRIP THAT CHANGED MY LIFE ...

SIPHO 'HOTSTIX' MABUSE



Experiencing the freedoms of the world outside of his own country inspired this musician to become a legend

Sipho on Broadway in New York for Mandela Day 2009

My first trip out of Africa was in 1982. We wanted to go overseas because, like all musicians, we felt there were better prospects, better opportunities. Our intention was to go to the US but we went through London and hung out because we had friends there and people who were in exile.

We had been to Swaziland, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique but never outside of Africa. I didn't know what to expect. Thankfully it was summer; there were all these people sunbathing in the parks. There was a big soccer game the day we arrived – Chelsea playing Tottenham Hotspurs, I think. And for the first time, I was in a crowd that was unfamiliar, which was soccer fans.

They kept asking us where we came from and what we did. And people were reacting pleasantly: 'What instrument to do you play? What kind of music?' and 'Can we come and watch you tonight?' That was it. I felt I wanted to live in England from that moment!

You also had Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park, where suddenly you're exposed to freedom of speech, something we didn't know about. Here were people talking about the queen and the president, and saying all sorts of things that we

would never have imagined in South Africa. It was this unbelievable revelation of what independence and freedom means.

There was a buzz about everything in London. It was a completely inspiring environment. I saw the Commodores; I saw James Brown – that was a highlight. I met Lionel Richie. He was very humble. We spoke about the difference between South African music and what he knew of SA music, and how shebeens were inspired by his music. When you go to shebeens all you hear is Lionel Richie, Michael Jackson and George Michael.

I went to a Joe Jackson concert, but what was most interesting was the band that opened for him ... I can't remember their name. I was astounded because there was this British band playing township music, and there was this positive response from the audience. We looked at each other and said, 'But these guys are playing *mbaqanga*!' That made a real impression on me.

From that experience, we thought: 'Do we want to stay and make music in South Africa or do we want to go overseas like everybody else?' I came back home and recorded my first song, *Jive Soweto*, and that was it. ●

SIPHO'S BEST VENUES

MEGA CONCERTS

'Many of the great musicians have performed here – these venues represent a chronology of different music over time, where you can hear all the kinds of music you could ever imagine.'

- Madison Square Garden (New York) – coming soon: Lady Gaga, Pearl Jam. thegarden.com
- Radio City Music Hall (New York) – coming soon: Diana Ross, the Dalai Lama. radiocity.com
- Wembley Arena (London) – coming soon: KISS, John Mayer, Eric Clapton. wembleyarena.co.uk
- Hyde Park (London) – coming soon: Kings of Leon, Pink, Jay-Z. hydeparkconcerts.com

SMALLER GIGS

- 'You must do the Apollo Theater in Harlem, New York – it's full of history, you feel it the minute you walk in the door.'
- Other NYC options: Birdland in Manhattan's Theatre District and Blue Note in Greenwich Village.
- In London: Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in Soho.
- In South Africa: Bassline in Newtown, Jo'burg; Mercury Live in Cape Town.