

LOCAL LEGENDS UNITE

Norma Fraser and Thomas Mapfumo share the stage for the first time

NORMA FRASER AND THOMAS MAPFUMO



PHOTOS:TODD COOPER

Norma Fraser and Thomas Mapfumo are legendary musicians, both residing right here in Eugene. If you've never heard of them, don't beat yourself up. They're better known in their countries of origin — Jamaica and Zimbabwe, respectively — than in the states.

Fraser's 1967 cover of Cat Stevens' "The First Cut Is the Deepest" was a critical and commercial success both in Jamaica and abroad, helping sow the seeds for the starry-eyed reggae subgenre called "lovers rock." Fraser also tells of how she taught Rita Marley, Bob Marley's musical collaborator and wife, how to sing.

As for Mapfumo, he's a superstar back home, best known for inventing a fusion of Western pop and the traditional folk music of Zimbabwe's Shona people. He calls the music *chimurenga* — a Shona word meaning "revolutionary struggle" — and as the name suggests, Mapfumo is a political firebrand who's been on the wrong side of both Zimbabwe's British colonial government and the repres-

sive Robert Mugabe regime that replaced it.

These are two musicians that will talk to no end about how fucked up the world is — especially this summer, where barely a day goes by without something earth-shatteringly horrible happening. In fact, Fraser says she's having trouble writing new music because "every time I write an album, things change in the world and I have to rewrite."

Mapfumo's working on a new album with his band The Blacks Unlimited, but his focus is broader. "We are sending this message: Killing each other is not the solution," he says. "The solution is that we should actually live like a people, you know?"

Fraser says it was the idea of the bookers at Hi-Fi Music Hall for the two to come together. The year-old venue is the first ever to get these musicians on the same bill, performing Aug. 27, and it's likely there will be ample backstage discussion about the state of the world.

Fraser is familiar with Mapfumo's music and legacy,

and says she's excited to perform with him.

"We're activists coming from two different cultures," Fraser says. "He's from Africa, I'm from Jamaica. Even though I was born in Jamaica, I know my heritage is from Africa. I hope our energies will combine and become something magnetic, something that will make people feel refreshed, recharged."

Mapfumo says he is less familiar with Fraser's music but is nonetheless excited. Mapfumo has rabid fans all over the planet. He tours most of the year, having recently returned from concerts in Mozambique and Britain. Thus, his hometown shows are few, far-between and well-attended.

"It's been a long time since we played a show here, so we are expecting quite a good showing," he says. "The show here in Eugene is gonna be something else. Anywhere we play people like to get on the floor and dance." ■

Norma Fraser and Thomas Mapfumo perform 9 pm Saturday, Aug. 27, at Hi-Fi Music Hall; \$15 adv.; \$18 door, 21-plus.



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