

# Ladysmith Black Mambazo

It's been almost two years since Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Paul Simon ignited the musical world with 'Graceland', an album that brought the rich heritage of South African music to an enormous new audience. Since then, this premier accapella group has been very busy indeed, according to Ladysmith Black Mambazo founder and spokesman, Joseph Shabalala.

"I think the most amazing thing that has come from our work with Paul Simon is that we have now travelled around the world, and people love us and love the way we sing. That's it. I am a singer. And now I see how much people listen to the music. Amazing things have happened since 1986 when we made 'Shaka Zulu'.

Spiritual convictions are at the root of this singer/composer's muse. Shabalala's modesty belies a career that now spans some thirty years as a singer and performer. The music is called Isicathamiya (Say "Ith-Scot-tamia") and click your tongue down off the roof of your mouth in between the t's and you'll be close to the Zulu pronunciation. It means "to walk on one's toes, lightly."

The journey began in the mid-50's when Shabalala left the Township of Ladysmith heading for the port city of Durban. He returned to Ladysmith after a few years and began to form his own groups. He recently recalled this period of his development:

"I always felt this was very personal, very good music, but I felt there was something missing somewhere. I formed the group in 1960 and tried to teach them music that I feel, but I failed until 1964 when a dream came to me. I always hear the harmony from the dream and I said that this is the harmony that I want."

The group's name refers to 'The Black Axe of Ladysmith', because they won every singing competition, cutting down their opponents. Their local notoriety led them to the big city of Johan-

nesburg where a live broadcast brought them into the national spotlight in South Africa. Their recording career began in 1970. The 26 records released since that time established Ladysmith Black Mambazo as one of Africa's most enduring acts.

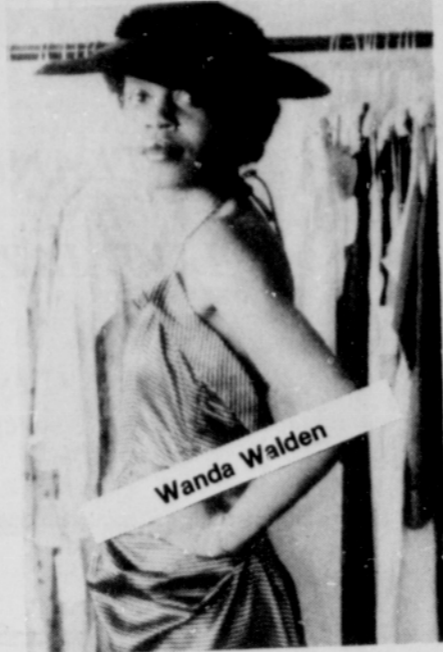
The group had traveled to German concert dates three times before Paul Simon heard the group in the midst of his 'Graceland' recording sessions. Despite their trips to Germany, the group was unknown outside of Africa except to very few knowledgeable fans of African music and a handful of Germans. When they flew to London to record with Simon, that was all about to change.

The Graceland Tour was one of the most lauded cultural events of 1987. To many people, it was a dramatic introduction to indigenous African sentiment rooted in tribal traditions and a people evolving on a continent riddled with contradictions in social tradition, culture, politics and the future. For many, Ladysmith Black Mambazo will remain the focal point of all the joy and irony experienced during the Graceland Concert. The sound is inexplicably physical, something many call spiritual effect.

Having picked up the Grammy for the Best Traditional Folk Album, Shabalala and the group went into a New York recording studio to record their 27th LP, aptly titled 'Journey Of Dreams'. It is, in many ways, Joseph Shabalala's testimony to the dreams that have led his way into a landscape of harmony and beauty.

"I learn from this dream until those who're singing for me appeared and they were children. I can't say whether they were black or white, but I discovered they were floating between the stage and the sky. Those children are singing very nice with their beautiful voices. If the children were here on earth you'd find me amongst them, singing."

# Spotlight On "Lady Magic"



To quench her thirst for vintage fashions, Wanda organized, managed and directed two modeling troupes, coordinating vintage fashions to music and choreography, she created a timeless period of new life and lingering excitement.

In 1985, Wanda launched an exciting career in theatrical costuming when she was contracted for the position of Costume Designer for the play "The Resurrection of Lady Lester". Set in the 1950's, the play took its audiences back to the 40's and the 30's, revealing an array of period clothing and vintage apparel. Wanda's costuming captured the timeless era of the play.

In 1986, "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom", a play about music and racism, afforded Wanda the opportunity to grace Portlanders with her acting talent. Of Wanda's performance, Maggie White, Editor, The Downtowner, said "Wanda Walden was consistent throughout the play as Dussie Mae and should be given more roles. All in all, it was a superb evening of theatre." The costuming was done by, you guessed it, Wanda Walden.

In 1987, her name appeared on no less than five theatre credits for acti-

ng and costuming: "Cermonies In Dark Old Men," "Portraits in Black," "Split Second," "Wild Indian," and "Simply Heavenly."

On October 29, 1988, at the Performing Arts Center, Wanda will appear as Rachel in Storefront Theater's production of "Zoo Man & the Sign." She will also be the costume designer for the IFCC's production of "The Colored Museum" slated to open in January, 1989.

As far back as she can remember, she had a love affair with fashions: dressing up in vintage clothes, trying on different hats and shoes and imagining what it would be like to create styles that would capture the imagination of her peers.

"I always enjoyed nostalgic fashions and music. I used to watch old movies just to see the vintage clothes and the decor," she recalled. After finishing high school, she set out to learn the history of fashion and learned to distinguish the different fashion styles from era to era.

"I started collecting vintage clothes as a hobby because I had always been involved with the arts: writing, painting... and I fell in love with period clothing - the workmanship, the detail," she said.

Her name is Wanda Walden, but in the African-American community, she is known as "lady magic."

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## D.J. Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince

It's been a year and a half since D.J. Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince scored their first international hit, "Girls Ain't Nothing But Trouble," an amusing little ditty about the perils of modern teenage romance. Shortly after Jive Records picked up the indie single, "Girls" went on to sell over 100,000 copies in the U.S. In the U.K., it soared into the Top 20. Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince grew up in the neighboring Philadelphia towns of Southwest Philly and Winfield, respectively. Jeff Townes, now 23, says he started deejaying at parties at ten years old. "I used to call myself a bathroom deejay," he recalls, "because I would tag along to parties with older deejays and finally get my chance to go on when they went to the can."

Jeff spent long hours in his basement "laboratory," teaching himself the techniques that distinguish his work today—catching double beats, scratching two records at once, backspinning and "transforming" (taking a sound already on record and altering it to sound completely different). He emerged to debut his new skills at a party hosted by Lady B, the great rap deejay who has made her radio home at Philly's WUSL for years. "The next day she talked about it all on the radio," he recalls. Instantly, Jeff was established as one of the top hip deejays in the city, and it kept him working for three years. But by January of '86, after having hooked up with "about 2000 different crews," he was bored. Then he met the Fresh Prince.

Prince, 19, was born Will Smith, and wrote "poetry and little stories" from the time he was a kid. After hearing the Sugar Hill Gang's "Rapper's Delight" in 1979, he started to rap, reasoning that "they weren't doing anything I couldn't do." He was 13 years old.

By that time he was already known as "Prince Charming," thanks to his teachers who, even as they were scolding him, marvelled at his ability to talk his way out of a jam. After shortening the moniker to Prince, he added "Fresh," he says, "when it was the word."

"I don't understand groups who come onstage looking real mad," says Prince. "We just want people to have fun." On the other hand, the crew's motto for 1988 is "Too Damn Hyped." The combination of their new album and upcoming tour should work together to make this prophecy come true.

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## Toure Kunda

Inheritors of the many cultural influences generated by French colonial rule and by the incredible diversity of African tribal groups, the three brothers called 'Toure Kunda' have always been open to new musical possibilities. A combination of rich musical tradition, inspiration from Otis Redding and James Brown, and influences from rock and reggae have made 'Toure Kunda' one of Europe's most popular African bands. The unique musical mix has also made the group accessible to enthusiastic throngs of Americans who have had the good fortune to see 'Toure Kunda' perform in this country.

The three Toure brothers—Ismael, Sixu, and Ousmane—come from Senegal, a small country on the coast of West Africa. In 1975, Ismael traveled to Paris to explore the music scene there. After a year of adapting to European culture, he sent for Sixu and Amadou, the eldest brother. Before Amadou's arrival, Ismael and Sixu recorded two albums which mixed reggae and African music. Those records were not made under the name 'Toure Kunda'.

When Amadou arrived in Paris, the brothers assumed the group name. Their early work emphasized voices and percussion in combination with traditional African instruments, the balafon (a wooden xylophone using gourds as resonators) and the kora (a twenty-one stringed instrument with gourd and cowskin resonator and redwood neck).

In 1983, Amadou died during a performance at Chapel des Lombards in Paris. Younger brother Ousmane joined the group, inspiring the ensemble to continue with his fresh spirit and strength. In the spring of '83, 'Toure Kunda' recorded a beautiful tribute album to Amadou: 'Amadou Tilo'. The LP's rolling rhythms and modal melodies proved extremely popular, and the group—including the brothers and an exciting dance band of singers, dancers, and musicians—embarked on an extensive tour of Europe, Algeria, and their West African homeland to support the record.

The Paris-Ziguinchor tour of West Africa (which can be heard on 'Toure Kunda Live') was a monumental achievement for the band. When Toure Kunda arrived home, they were met by a cheering, dancing crowd which included the President of Senegal.

Their visit to the homeland inspired 'Toure Kunda' to further explore their roots, and upon returning from Africa they cut the very traditional 'Casamance Au Clair de Lune'. Ismael stresses 'Toure Kunda's' commitment to their musical origins.

In January, 1985, 'Toure Kunda' recorded another LP, 'Natalia,' with Bill Laswell of 'Material'. Following the release of that record, the group toured the U.S. Ismael stresses the close connections between the music of Black Africans and Americans. "Because of our origins we have ties with Black-Americans," he says, "by jazz, which existed from the memories of people who were taken from their land, by blues, and by the fact that all the music played by Black-Americans has an affinity with ours. We have to make them discover it."

Writing for Spin, Village Voice music critic Greg Tate put it another way: "As messengers from our collective point of origin, 'Toure Kunda' possesses the power to move us into circular motion, from our beginnings to beyond and back again."