

Revival needs public support



BackBeat
with Cornelius Thomas



**MENTOR
MAGIC:**
(right) Mentor
Alan Webster
on sax with
Matthew
Boon .



**HOMEGROWN
TALENT:**
Chris Saunders,
drummer/guitarist
of The Basics

*Darin
Depperton
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THE JAZZ revival in East London seems to be under way indeed, with new acts the Matthew Boon Quartet and The Basics easing into the consciousness of the jazz public.

The revival reference refers to jazz talent — bands that are crisp, able and ready.

The older acts are still around but Boon and the leader of The Basics, Christopher Saunders, are adding new masala to the pot.

Friends, Ikhwezi, the Lulama Gawulana Quartet and Alan Webster Quartet bring up the more established jazz guard. However, they experience difficulty in finding regular gigs. The blame for this lies neither with the bands nor in the clubs, but rather with the public who do not support jazz as a home-grown cultural idiom but as an occasional diversion.

Even Dukes, a custom-made, state-of-the-art jazz venue, cannot provide the artists with regular gigs

because of the lack of broad-based support.

The city's top jazz band, Another Level, regularly travels to Port Elizabeth and Bisho — where there is a demand for its excellence — and to Graaff-Reinet and Transkei towns to play "bread and butter" gigs.

Meanwhile the evergreen Lulama Gawulana is still in a composing mode. He has recently added the *House of Danbury* — a polyrhythmic complexity of South African heritage music and township jazz — to his growing corpus of compositions. The next step for Gawulana has to be to record a CD.

One of the new outfits on the jazz block is The Basics, led by drummer Saunders and vocalist Cizario Roberts. These two struck their first professional chords at the former CD's Jazz Café and have been improving since. They play regular gigs, emphasising fusion standards, at the Steakhouse in Parkside.

The youthful Matthew Boon Quartet consists of Boon on saxophone, Chris Thorpe on drums, Nicholas Knott on bass and Donovan Abrey on guitar. Largely under the mentorship of Alan Webster, this Quartet has, despite lulls between gigs, developed into a tight outfit playing "clean" mainstream standards and Quartet originals.

When I last heard Boon playing the sax at the Green Bean, his saxophony was open and expansive, edging towards the generous musical spirit of John Coltrane. This Sunday at Smokey Swallows he will show the distance he has come. Trumpeter Richard Poole from Grahamstown will guest for the Quartet.

All this aside; the point is that if the current revival is to be sustained, the jazz-loving public will have to respond with enthusiasm to the Boons, Saunders and the old guard too.