

# fineART MUSIC

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## Kyle Shepherd – pianist *Biography*

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*"As a composer and arranger Shepherd is proving to be one of the chief architects of modern Cape jazz." Andre Manuel, The Cape Times*

Shepherd, born in Cape Town, South Africa on 8 July 1987, is widely regarded as one of South Africa's most accomplished jazz pianists, composers and band leaders. He started his musical journey at the age of five (5) on classical violin. However, at the age of fifteen (15) (which was also around the time his love for Jazz and improvised music was growing), Shepherd discovered that he had an innate, natural affinity for the piano which has since become his main instrument. This multi-instrumentalist also plays the saxophone, African traditional instruments and sings.

Shepherd's **New Album**, 'A Portrait of Home', will be launched at a concert to be held in Cape Town at UCT's College of Music (behind the Baxter Theatre) on 14 August 2010 at 20:00. 'A Portrait of Home' is live recording of Shepherd's Trio in concert at Stellenbosch University's Music Conservatory (Fismer Hall) in August 2009 and features Shepherd on piano, Shane Cooper on double bass & Jonno Sweetman on drums.

Shepherd launched his **Debut Album** entitled 'fineART' to critical acclaim in January 2009. 'fineART'. It also earned him two **2010 SAMA – South African Music Award** nominations for Best Traditional Jazz Album and Best Newcomer!

The Kyle Shepherd 'fineART' Quartet has just returned from a **9-Concert Tour in Europe** during June & July 2010 where they enthralled audiences at The Bird's Eye Jazz Club (Basel, Switzerland), The Århus Jazz Festival (Århus, Denmark), The Riverboat Jazz Festival (Silkeborg, Denmark) & Kaløhus (Skødstrup, Denmark).

Shepherd draws his **musical influences** from the traditional rhythms, melodies and harmonies of Cape Town, South Africa as well as Jazz music and ethnic traditional music of the world. Abdullah Ibrahim, Zim Ngqawana, Robbie Jansen, Keith Jarrett and Jason Moran all count amongst those who have inspired Shepherd musically, spiritually & creatively. "My music is a direct representation of my traditions and the lineage of artists that came before me, and I am merely a portrait of their mastery."

Apart from solo piano performances, Shepherd regularly leads his own Trio, Quartet and Sextet formations. Beyond this, he continues to explore & deepen his creative consciousness through interesting and **artistic collaborations** such as his duo performances with Zim Ngqawana in 'Exhibition of Vandalizim' of which a Video Documentary filmed & directed by Aryan Kaganof has been produced, as well as a collaboration in the multi-media theatre production, 'AFRIKAAPS', directed by Catherine Henegan, with an illustrious cast of poets, spoken-word & Hip-Hop artists including Quinton 'Jitsvinger' Goliath & Emile Jansen. Apart from performing in & co-writing the production, Shepherd was also the musical director.

During the course of his career, Shepherd has had the honour of performing in South Africa and abroad with some of South Africa's greatest musicians, including the likes of Zim Ngqawana, Louis Moholo - Moholo, McCoy Mrubata, Hilton Schilder, Errol Dyers and the late Robbie Jansen.

Below are excerpts from some **Album and Concert Reviews**:

In his Foreword to Shepherd's Debut Album "fineART", internationally acclaimed South African music legend, Zim Ngqawana had the following to say about Shepherd's music:

*"Authenticity is another word for originality and this is clearly evident in Kyle's compositions, arrangements and improvisation. He has managed to find a balance between the intellect and intuition. Kyle is a meditator and a poet."*

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*"Cape Town music has its own sound, and Shepherd doesn't hide the fact that much of his music and piano playing is inspired by Abdullah Ibrahim. He uses this inspiration as a jumping-off point to offer his own original slant. .... "I believe that on fineART, Shepherd carries the torch for this style of music." Don Albert (Financial Mail)*

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*"It's this 'Proudly South African' tradition that audiences can expect to hear" ... "which sees the multi-instrumentalist navigate an impressionistic collage of South African jazz sounds, from slam poetic minimalist re-imaginings of Afrikaans volksliedjies and Muslim calls to prayer, to goema groove deconstructions, tributes to Abdullah Ibrahim, Ngqawana's philosophy of "Zimology" and more that, as the doyen of South African jazz scribes Gwen Ansell pointed out in Business Day recently: "live in the jazz world but are never imprisoned by it". Miles Keylock (Mail & Guardian)*

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*"Shepherd's jagged edges and questioning dissonances sound far more like Ibrahim at the start of his career than his magisterial solemnity. The young player's plaintive little minor-key segues into fragments of musical fragments represent a sonic collage of his city, much as pianist Robert Glasper's sounds (also heard this year in Cape Town) collage the jazz history and hip-hop present of New York. " Gwen Ansell (Business Day / The Weekender)*

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As part of the 2008 Cape Town International Jazz Festival Programme, Shepherd's 'fineART' Quartet performed two of his original compositions in a virtual 'Jazz Conversation' with jazz students from the Juilliard Institute for Jazz Studies in New York. This made a very favourable impression on acclaimed saxophonist Ron Blake who led the event on the Juilliard side, who commented that Shepherd's eclectic compositions sounded " *very fresh, very 21st-century.*"

**Forthcoming 2010 Shows** include:

- August, 14. The Kyle Shepherd Trio, **CD LAUNCH**, UCT College of Music, Rondebosch, Cape Town, South Africa
- August, 28. The Kyle Shepherd fineART Quartet, Standard Bank Joy of Jazz Festival, Bassline, Johannesburg, South Africa

**Shepherd's previous National & International Concert appearances** include:

- 2010 July - The Kyle Shepherd fineART Quartet, Aarhus Jazz Festival, Århus, **Denmark**
- 2010 July - The Kyle Shepherd fineART Quartet , Bird's Eye Jazz Club in Basel, **Switzerland**
- 2010 July - The Kyle Shepherd 'fineART' Quartet, Kaløhus, Skødstrup, **Denmark**
- 2010 June - The Kyle Shepherd fineART Quartet, The Riverboat Jazz Festival, Silkeborg, **Denmark**
- 2010, May - The Kyle Shepherd Trio, UCT College of Music, Rondebosch, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2010, May - Zim Ngqawana & Kyle Shepherd Duo at 'The Vandalizim Exhibition', Star Metals, Stellenbosch, South Africa
- 2010, April - Zim Ngqawana & Kyle Shepherd Duo at 'The Vandalizim Exhibition', City Hall, Cape Town, South Africa

- 2010 April - 'AFRIKAAPS' at the ABSA KKNK Festival & at The Baxter Theatre featuring inter alia Kyle Shepherd - Music Director, Quinton "Jitsvinger" Goliath & Emile Jansen. Directed by Catherine Henegan). Oudtshoorn & Cape Town, South Africa
- 2010 Mar - Duo with Zim Ngqawana at 'The Vandalizim Exhibition', Momo Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2009 Cape Town International Jazz Festival (The Kyle Shepherd fineART Quartet), Cape Town, South Africa
- 2009 'The Glasshouse presents' at Theater Bellevue (Kyle Shepherd / Quinton 'Jitsvinger' Goliath (poet) Duo), **Amsterdam**
- 2009 Club Reserva Concert (Kyle Shepherd Solo Piano), Gent, **Belgium**
- 2009 Pine Valley Concert(Kyle Shepherd Solo Piano), **Swaziland**
- 2009 On Edge of Wrong Festival, (Kyle Shepherd Solo Piano), Cape Town South Africa
- 2008 Heritage Festival (with Louis Moholo – Moholo), Artscape, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2008 Genting International Jazz Festival (with Cape Jazz All Stars), **Malaysia**
- 2008 Festival Les Temps Chauds (with Cape Jazz All Stars), Bourg En Bresse, **France**
- 2008 Macufe Cultural Festival (with McCoy Mrubata), Bloemfontein, South Africa
- 2008 Obs Festival (The Kyle Shepherd fineART Quartet) Cape Town, South Africa
- 2007 Cape Town Jazzathon (with Errol Dyers Band & Robbie Jansen Band), Cape Town, South Africa
- 2006 Cape Town Jazzathon (Kyle Shepherd's Silent Messengers), Cape Town, South Africa

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