

KYLE SHEPHERD – Pianist, Saxophonist, Composer & Band leader.

BIOGRAPHY

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

Kyle Shepherd, born in Cape Town, South Africa on 8 July 1987, is widely regarded as one of South Africa’s most influential and accomplished jazz pianists and composers.

Shepherd has released two critically acclaimed **Albums** to date with both his Albums ‘fineART’ [2009] and ‘A Portrait of Home’ [2010] earning him SAMA (**South African Music Award**) nominations; ‘fineART’ for ‘Best Traditional Jazz Album’ and ‘Best Newcomer’ [SAMA 2010] and ‘A Portrait of Home’ for ‘Best Traditional Jazz Album’ [SAMA 2011].

In his review of ‘A Portrait of Home’, international music critic, Marcus O’Dair | The Arts Desk UK, commends the work of the Trio. “A Portrait of Home sees Shepherd, together with Shane Cooper on double bass and drummer Jonno Sweetman, creating music of subtle yet tremendous power. Though the technique of all three is undeniable, this is no antiseptic chops fest: it is music of genuine passion, meditative and stately but always emotionally engaged. It has groove at its very core, with hummable, stripped back melodies on top – and not just in the “head” sections that traditionally top and tail jazz arrangements.”

Shepherd regularly performs in concert as a solo pianist, while also leading his trio with Shane Cooper (Double Bass) and Jonno Sweetman (drums) and his Quartet featuring top South African Tenor Saxophonist Buddy Wells.

Apart from performances in South Africa, Shepherd has also toured to The Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Norway, France, Denmark, Malaysia, Swaziland, Mozambique, Botswana and Zimbabwe, with the most notable concert appearances being at The Bird’s Eye Jazz Club (Switzerland), The Aarhus Jazz Festival (Denmark), The Riverboat Jazz Festival (Denmark), The Cape Town International Jazz Festival (South Africa), The Joy of Jazz Festival (South Africa), The Pan African Space Station (South Africa) and The Genting International Jazz Festival (Malaysia).

During the course of his career, Shepherd has performed as pianist and/or saxophonist, with some of South Africa’s greatest musicians including Zim Ngqawana, Louis Moholo-Moholo, McCoy Mrubata, Hilton Schilder, Errol Dyers, Mark Fransman and the late Robbie Jansen, amongst others.

Shepherd featured in the AWARD WINNING theatre production, ‘AFRIKAAPS’ for which he directed & co-wrote the music and also performed in.

Film documentaries that feature his music are: ‘AFRIKAAPS’ by Dylan Valley, ‘The Uprising of Hangberg’ by Dylan Valley & world-renowned film maker Aryan Kaganof. Shepherd was also commissioned to compose a new work for the music production ‘Die Buitestaanders’ by Mareli Stolp & Magdalene Minnaar.

Shepherd continues to use his ability as a pianist, saxophonist, Xaru player (traditional mouth bow), vocalist and poet towards forging a unique compositional and performance concept that pays homage to all his musical influences and the many great musicians he has worked with, all while continuing to look forward musically. "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 while at the same time actively participating in the global, universal sound" says Shepherd.

ALBUM & 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."

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

"I believe that on fineART, Shepherd carries the torch for this style of music." Don Albert (Financial Mail)

"(His compositions) unashamedly display his cultural music traditions, drawing on the unique rhythms, harmonies, and melodic devices of what Kyle calls "music from home". Carol Martin (SAJE - South African Association for Jazz Education).

"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)

"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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