

Piano man Kyle Shepherd stakes his claim on the Cape Town Jazz scene

By Claudia Mohr

I am always telling people how Cape Town has such great musicians on offer and that nothing beats a live performance - that element of surprise that comes with seeing somebody play "live". The ultimate test of skill wrapped up in a personal musical experience for both those who play, and those they play for.

Last Saturday I made my way down to Welgemeend, Gardens, to catch up-and-coming jazz pianist and composer Kyle Shepherd and get my weekly live music fix. Welgemeend, situated on the grounds of the Jan Van Riebeeck School and boasting National Heritage, is historic charm at its best. Brimming with warmth and touches of intimacy, it was the perfect setting for a solo concert by this very intense pianist.

Kyle in person exudes a quietness that one imagines comes from living within oneself rather than out. His music however is all passionate authenticity and an outward display of emotion coming to you in-between bursts of fluid dissonance and melodic integration.

Having just launched his debut album entitled 'fineART' in January this year, this 21 year old musician exudes all that is proudly South African, as his music adopts idioms of the Cape Jazz style while still maintaining elements of originality. Listening to the album tracks, complete with band, is a different experience to hearing him play them in a solo setting. They fuse together in a constant rising and falling action, contrasting moments of quiet intensity with brazen improvisation on the edge of harmony all the while exploring intermitting melodic themes that hold fast to a Cape Jazz tradition.

After adventuring outside of the dominant melodic theme, he returns to the familiar drawing the audience into the experience with feelings of recognition and memories of home.

After losing South African greats like Bheki Mseleku last year, it is comforting to know that the new generation is forging a voice for itself with artists like Kyle who embody true dedication and a deep and apparent love for original music.

Note to all musical explorers: Kyle is playing at the 'Edge of Wrong' free musical improvisation festival on Sunday, March 1 at The Intimate Theatre, 37 Orange Street, Gardens. (Opposite the Labia).

* Book on 021 448 5555.



Kyle Shepherd