

Att: Gillian

## **URBAN CREEP**

### THE BAND

Why the name URBAN CREEP (a socio-geographical term referring to rural-urban migration)? The members of the band find this confrontation between African and the imported Western culture the most exciting aspect of the South African cultural life. The strong influences of indigenous pop-cultural forms are easily detectable; the marabi and mbaqanga in the keyboard playing, maskanda in the viola and guitar, goema rhythms in the bass and drums. At the same time R&B, rock and funk provide the bands stylistic models for their songs. URBAN CREEP is not a fusion "concept" band, but a flexible, liberated unit celebrating the rainbow cultures of Southern Africa.

Within the first year of their existence, they had been asked to open for Johnny Clegg, Midnight Oil, Sting and Roxette on their South African tours.

### THE MEMBERS

#### **Chris Letcher** (24)

Born in Grahamstown, trained in classical piano. During teens he began to explore Afro-jazz, influenced by the large townships which surround Grahamstown. At this time he also began to experiment with guitar, writing songs inspired by the great rock poets like Dylan, Van Morrison and South Africa's James Phillips. His driving rock guitar style was influenced by the Stones and Jimi Hendrix.

Chris then studies music and journalism at Grahamstown University where his focus shifted ~~somewhat to studying~~ and playing more indigenous music styles. He played with Afro-Jazz band, *Pete's Dog Monday*, following which was songwriter and lead guitarist for SA rock influenced *Gramsci Beat*, who were for two years to collaborate with Afrikaans beat poet, author and musician, Andre Letoit. Chris went on to write a paper on the socio-political dimensions of South African popular music, graduating with an honours degree in musicology. On graduating he travelled through Botswana, Swaziland, the Transkei and Natal, the van finally breaking down in Durban where he continued to write songs whilst holding down a day job as musical director of a theatre company. It was on the set of a production that he met Brendan Jury and together formed Urban Creep in late 1993.

#### **Brendan Jury** (25)

Born in Durban, the son of an opera singer and dance-band swing pianist. He began classical piano and violin tuition before his teens. At high school he moved on to electric guitar, being strongly influenced by African American music. At the same time his interest in the South African pop sounds of marabi, mbaqanga, maskanda and goema, began to influence his songwriting. At university Brendan majored in musicology within a Bachelor of Music degree, during which time he collaborated on albums with Durban bands and was co-founder, violist and singer for Afro-jazz influenced band, *Lifhouse*. He also arranged and played viola for the *Imizwilili String Quartet*, a chamber group playing original local compositions.

Brendan wrote a paper on the Alternative Afrikaans rock movement, focussing on the work of *James Phillips* and *Andre Letoit*. On graduating he began working in musical theatre, performing as an

actor/singer/dancer until he met Chris and begat Urban Creep.

**Ross Campbell** (23)

Began playing drums in his early teens and at seventeen recorded his first album with goth-rock band, *Celtic Rumours* a single from which reached #1 on the SA charts. On leaving school he studied marketing for two years and was then drafted into the army, where he spent a further two years experiencing the horrors of dealing with township political violence. On leaving the army Ross met French traveller, Didier Noblia, and together they formed a rhythm section that went on to record an album under the name of *Landscape Prayers*, with Nibs van der Spuy. Ross is strongly influenced by Afro Jazz and SA black pop sounds.

**Didier Noblia** (28)

Born near Biarritz, France.

In his teens he represented his country in the national junior soccer and rugby sides, studying sports science after leaving school. He dropped this however to take up the bass guitar and to do his national service in Djibouti. On returning to France he played with jazz fusion group, *Passport*. A year later he decided to return to Africa and ended up in Durban where he met Ross and formed the rhythm section that was to become the engine room of the Urban Creep.

