



# SHIFTY records

Hello and thanks for your interest. Here follows a list of Shifty records to date:

1. SOUND FUTURE by the HAPPY SHIPS (LP)
  2. OWN AFFAIRS by the KALAHARI SURFERS (LP)
  3. a NAARTJIE in our SOSATIE (LP)
  4. SANKOMOTA (LP & cassette)
  5. WIE IS BERNOLDUS NIEMAND by BERNOLDUS NIEMAND (LP)
  6. FOSATU WORKER CHOIRS (LP & cassette) coming soon (by Sept '85) is:
  7. CHERRY FACED LURCHERS LIVE at the JAMESON'S (LP)
  8. VOICE OF NOCIT - a retrospective on the music of CORPORAL PUNISHMENT with a rare bonus on the flip (cassette only)
- See below and over for reviews of some of the records.  
Each of these LP's/cassettes are R13.00, which includes postage, tax, etc.

## Stirring songs from the shop floor

YOU'VE heard about the union — now listen to the record: Shifty Records and Fosatu have put together a recording of original worker songs, featuring the Sizanni Bantu Lucky Stars, the Umntrella Choir, the K-Team and seven other trade union choirs.

The choirs and their songs have grown out of the day-to-day work of Fosatu trade unions around the country. Shifty Records is the product of a strong commitment to South African music.

Shifty co-founder Lloyd Ross and

film-maker Brian Tilley first heard Fosatu choirs while filming them at last year's workshop. They felt the music had to be recorded.

"South Africa has a music culture that isn't just black disco or white overseas rip-off," said Ross.

Fosatu readily accepted the idea. "The choirs show that workers themselves can create their own culture," said Nelson Mithombeni, who is involved with the Braitech choir.

David Mashele, manager of the K-Team, which is made up of workers



### MUSIC FOSATU WORKERS CHOIRS (Shifty Records) Reviewed by JOHN PERLMAN

at Kelloggs in Springs, said: "The choirs make workers aware of the advantages of joining Fosatu and tell them about current events."

K-Team songs on the record tell of fellow Fosatu unionist Andries Raditsela, who died of head injuries

after being taken into police custody, and of the workers at Saool who were fired after the November stayaway, and won their jobs back.

Most of the songs praise Fosatu and urge workers to join trade unions: "Can we please come together and build a union," sing workers from the Frame factory in Durban, where the National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) has battled for recognition for 10 years. "The employers are making us fight among ourselves."

Others sing about problems in the

factories: "Beware of this informer. He's the one who's carrying the news to the employer"; and about politics: "You drive us to the homelands. Government, what have we done? We're aware of those sell-outs who want to share with us."

Mithombeni said: "Messages get across more strongly in song. Everyone can understand because they get involved, they sing themselves."

At union meetings, workers sing songs which they know well, and then the choirs perform original material. "But the choirs songs will soon become the workers' songs," said Mashele.

Fosatu choirs perform all over, at concerts, at union meetings and in the factories. Shifty happily went along with this. "We prefer to record where people are," said Ross. "Most of the choirs would have felt uncomfortable in a studio."

At Braitech, NUTW invited Shifty to the factory and 100 workers gathered in a packing shed during lunch-hour to record traditional worker songs. Other songs were recorded in hotels, church halls and at union AGMs.

## Riding the wave of repression



The Kalahari Surfers - as bizarre as Government policy.

SURFING in the Kalahari Desert probably sounds pretty bizarre — but it's nothing compared to some of the things the SA Government gets up to.

That's the drift of what the Kalahari Surfers have to say.

The Surfers — an anonymous group of "jazz protest poets" — have just released their first album, "Own Affairs".

It's one of the most mature expressions of rhythmic resistance this country has seen, and is sure to buck a few brains up in the Union Buildings.

It's the ultimate South African record. No metal-mouthed chants to "Freeeeeeee Nelson Mandela" here — the musicians realise more sophisticated protest is needed in times like these.

Take "Independence Day", a brilliant comment on the hazy politics (now there's something as bizarre as Kalahari surfing). Instead of slogans and such, the Surfers just play President Patrick

By CHRIS VICK

Mabephe's address at Venda's 1984 independence celebrations.

Relayed over a kwela backing track, the president's words hit home much harder than any musician. Chuck in a bit of Connie Madder and Piet Koornhof on the "role of the black man" and you've got a chilling reminder of what this government is up to.

As the Surfers say, "you get a casino with armed bandits, a national force, coca cola for the masses and dirty movies for the businessmen who've come in to help you build your nation..."

Or how about their dance track, "Don't Dance": "The SAID's there to see that we all enjoy democracy..."

Or "September '84": "Something on page three caught my eye, small print...37 die in township unrest —

police used teargas and bullets. Small news this — the headlines celebrate the birth of British royalty."

On "Hippo in Town": No lyrics, just this scary jazz line of a metal beast stalking the streets, eyes peered. The occasional hiccup — an outburst, the tension builds, a scream, and the patrol continues. An ambulance approaches to remove the victims...

And then there's "Prayer for Christianisation", which featured on the rebel rhythm compilation "A naartjie (anarchy?) in our society". This jazz poem remains one of the finest contributions to SA's REAL culture.

"Own Affairs", pressed in Britain as it was presumably "too hot" for local record companies, is available from Shifty Records, PO Box 27513, Bertscham, or HEBBROW Records in Johannesburg. Copies cost around R15.

But keep it under your bed — you never know who might come looking for it.

P.O. Box 27513 Bertscham 2013 Tel.(011)835 1351

P.T.O.





**THE HAPPY SHIPS**  
Sound Future  
(Came National Product/Shifty Records)  
review: Jay Savage

It is with more than a little pleasure that I make my return to these pages with a local record that warrants not only its own existence but also attention and praise.

The Happy Ships avoid the rigours of our most traditional paths; they appear to have nothing but disdain for the "process" and display a vague antipathy towards their own position as recording artists. It's refreshing to come upon a group who are adventurous and innovative without being smug or deluded as to their own significance.

But it is sad (and true) that Sound Future, must, of necessity, be an indictment of so much else that surfaces as post-pop; think, if you will, of the calculated snarl of a Bright Blue or the misplaced confidence and self-satisfaction of an Ellamental. It is plainly obvious that the Happy Ships have little in common with these groups.

But then, while remaining the most South African of groups, they have little in common with most local groups. A collection of some six acquaintances (who live in different parts of the country), they create their boisterous sounds when whim or convenience dictate. Put together under the control of Shifty Music's headman, Lloyd Ross (who, with Kalahari Surfer and fellow Shipper Warren Swinney brought us the engaging debut from Sankomota last year), this disc has been long in construction.

Fragmentary this record certainly is. Instrumental tracks were laid down individually over many months and this contributes to the range and diversity of the content. The LP has its flaws but its boldness (and by this, I don't mean inaccessibility — the music is easy and dazzlingly melodious) is sufficient to merit its purchase. The Ships take occupation of your mind with their disconnected, disconnected surveys (titles include Cigarette, Car Hoater, Nothing Inside and Feeling — and that's just the first side); you will not see them on Follow That Star.

Lloyd Ross' success in compiling this expatriated document of the privileged South African's aspirations, fears and empty joys is an admirable one and one that — thank God! — never sacrifices wit (better as it may be) for sobriety.

In an article in the enterprising new magazine, *Vulva* (issue No. 2), Lloyd Ross claimed, in typically self-effacing style, that *Sound Future* was an "aimless LP". I know what he means, but I prefer to think of it as an LP of unrestricted, tangential development and direction. Now, if only he'd get together with East London's Not Even The TV...

• for your Sound Future send R13.50 to Shifty, Box 27513.

WE'RE living in a country that is angry, wild, frightening and exciting. So it's not exactly surprising that there's always been an undercurrent of pop music that has determinedly reflected that and to hell with commercial considerations. You'll find agit-pop in abundance on 'A Naartjie in our Sosatie' (Rebel Rhythms) (Shifty Records), a collection of 10 artists/bands who unconpromis-

## A raucous musical shout against injustice

MAILBEAT: NIGEL WRENCH

ingly shout out against injustices. You're not going to find any love songs about the boy/girl/cat next-door here. What you will find is a line-up of quasi-classics

that not only scream their audacity but dazzle musically, too. Take the opening track "The Promise," by Transkeian Timothy Makhalima. Against a ripping

stark reggae background, his clear voice: "Where is that change nowhere is my share now/where is my town hall the writing's still on the wall/Across the cafe the wall is still dividing".

Lyrics on this record are not, um, subtle. Corporal Punishment have their 1979 punk classic "Darky's Gonna Get You" here. The title alone lets you know that James Phillips and his boys were not aiming at a Masters degree with this record. And God is it marvelous. Raw, raucous and quite fantastic.

But there are more sophisticated tunes, too. Stan James' "Cara Monia" and Roger Lucey's "Storms and Fires" — both recorded at Lucey's classic After the Thunder concerts two years ago — are each, quietly apocalyptic, if that's at all possible.

Don't get the impression this record is po-faced. There is the inimitable Bernoldus Niemand's underground classic "Hou My Vas

## A NAARTJIE IN OUR SOSATIE

If "A Concert in the Park" is the cosmetic face of commercial South African music, then "A Naartjie in our Sosatie" is the hand with the barbed-wire fingers and the blood on its claws.

For what the songs on this sampler have in common is a desperate and terrible awareness of our national ugliness. There is no hope here; only dope and darkest despair.

And some pretty awful music, of course. Like "Darky's, Corporal Punishment's bilious white guilt anthem: I don't wanna die or go to jail here, 'cause darky he won't care about this song..."

Or "The Promise", a stoned Reggae protest from a guy named Timothy to the

Powers that be: Down the town hall the writing's still on the wall, across the cafe the wall is still dividing...

Or "Prayer for Civilisation", the Kalahari Surfers' disturbingly anodyne vision of religion as a justifying agent for murder in wartime. Or "Hou My Vas Korporaal", Bernoldus Niemand's viciously ironic tropeic lament: Ja swaar korporaal, dis mos swaar korporaal, ek speel oorlog met my beste dog...

Of the 10 selections from Shifty's catalogue, only this one and the achingly sweet "Cara Monia" by Stan James can vaguely be labelled "commercial".

This does not mean you will hear them on your radio; it only means the other eight are less restrained and subtle in their focus on the sour side of our sosatie.

Most of the numbers were

recorded between 1979 and 1983, and eight out of the 10 bands/artists are either defunct or in frustrated hiatus. That alone makes it an artifact worth investigating.

But this is not a pleasant elpee. It is merely an honest one, honest in its guilt and its confusion and its desperation and its disposability. If you've ever felt any of those emotions as a patriot, get this. While it's hot.



**SHIFTY records**  
Sunday Times June 2, 1985

The Happy Ships' first LP 'Sound Future' sits alongside Lou Reed's 'New Sensations' as my most favourite record of the past three months. I saw them live on stage once - dancing, laughing out of control - heard their scruffy demo tape by accident, and now, in possession of a beautifully silkscreened cover of a pristinely clear, loud LP. I am happy. It is joyfully eccentric, the panicked sound of chickens chasing a song called 'Egg and Bacon Plantation', firmly revving Volkswagens and sundry traffic noises introducing a pummeling version of 'Car Hoater', and the deeply concerned tones of Hamish throwing themselves across a sincere 'Cigarette', as indeed they do throughout an album of ABSOLUTE ORIGINALITY. Nothing could possibly have presaged this debut: a bass thrums, walking, sparse whining guitar and a saxophone of guttural, athletic fury. This music tends to circle curious rhythm motifs, reminiscent of dub, accelerating into bursts of extreme melody or, yet again, a hostile blast of stark or intense Hamish prognostication: 'You're Not Important' imparting torrid sentiment with an edge of ridiculous humour: the solemn (?) line 'I don't like guns/I think about food' filled out by a very sad and extremely silly whistle. Throughout this album there gradually fills out a vision of intelligent beings musing and raging on topics of disarming trivia, twisted enough to see the darkness underneath - tartly emerging more poignant and hilarious than po-faced. And dance! Hey!

## BANNED BAND STILL ON

The other day - you came down to the mad-house Intending to do a song or two for us But they closed the door in your face Too much music they say no good for mad-cave

I watched as you turned your back on us With a sad sad smile on your face As they closed the door in your face Seems to me this madness is a serious affair

Another day you came down to the mad-house Crazy No, ridiculous, they must be mad So where's the big difference my friend Seems to me there's not much sense around anyway There's one great big mad house

## THE BEAT

It all dates back to their time as Uhuru, when the band was made up of Frank "Moki" Leepa, Moss Nkoko and Tsepo Tshola.

Halfway through a tour of South Africa in 1979, the band was suddenly asked to leave the country - presumably because their lyrics were a bit too "cutting".

They have been restricted from SA since then, which has severely hampered their development. And in 1981, the band disintegrated, with Tshola going off to join Hugh Masekela.

But guitarist Leepa and drummer Nkoko didn't give up - they linked up with bass wonderboy Maruti Selate in 1982 to form Sankomota, and started to look in

clubs in Lesotho. This year the band out its first album, Sankomota, which features a soft mix of jazz, reggae, mbaqanga and funk.

Recorded in Lesotho at the mobile studio used by Johannesburg's Shifty Records, the album was produced by Lloyd Ross.

It had to be recorded in Lesotho because of the SA "ban" on the musicians.

The album is an interesting blend of music, with lyrics in English, Sotho, Zulu, Swahili and Tswana, and is sure to do well.

Other musicians on the album are: LESOTHO: Sunshine Mokoena - keyboards, backing vocals. Sponky Tshabalala - percussion.

JOHANNESBURG: Rick van Heerden - sax, brass. William Ramsey and Eirfaan Gillan - sax. Stompie Manana - trumpet. "Warrior" - trombone. Lloyd Ross - guitar, keyboard, percussion.

## MUSIC

### HAPPY AS PIGS IN SHIPS

The Happy Ships make me want to finger-paint. Alternatively, the Happy Ships make me want to stick my fingers in my ears. Why? To spread the paint around, of course.

Red, blue, yellow and loud, the Happy Ships can be heard on 'Sound Future' (Shifty Records), a delightfully scrambled and deliciously stir-fried compost of fingernail scrapings and stainless-steel shavings and whatever else - lemon rinds naartjie pips, nicotine and cement - happens to get caught up in the flotsam of urban decay.

Put this in your wok and smoke it, baby. Not so much. Dada as Gaga, and not so much a pop group as a kibbutz, the Happy Ships succeed in making music that is both graceful and ugly, both friendly and aggressive, both joyful and manic-depressive.

In other words, we are dealing with a bunch of schizophrenic nazi-artists, children. They splash their canvas with primary

colours - Brass! Drum! Bass! Guitars! - and then they curl up and go crazy when the colours start to run.

Red and blue makes purple; red and yellow makes naartjie; red and yellow and blue makes the sun go down. The result: a magnificently loopy effort that recalls the spirit, if not the abrasive agit-prop ideology, of earlier sound-collage experiments by Frank Zappa and Henry Cow.

But these homegrown happy sailors are more of a collision between Piggas and David Byrne. Like Frankenstein's

monster, a lumbering concrete riff emerges from the labour pangs of shoulder-shrugging saxophones and corrugated percussion and mad tongues licking guitars, dogs bark, cars boot, tapes loop; and suddenly we have a voice: I don't wear gloves, I talk about nude, you speak about love, I think about food.

On 'Making Out', a chorus of synchronised puffing horns draws breath for a guitar that cuts like a butcher's knife. On 'Egg and Bacon Plantation', a puk-puking saxophone spirals

into the American national anthem and lands on its head in the pig-trough.

On 'We're Not Important', a chorus of "So wah, wah, wah" finally elevates these existentialists into infancy. But wait a second. The Happy Ships are important.

More important, the Happy Ships are fun. And downright dangerous.

PS: The Happy Ships have a surprise for you. Write to: SURPRISE FORCE, Shifty Records, PO Box 27513, Johannesburg 2013.



Bernoldus Niemand... the mystery man.

## SANKOMOTA: 'Sankomota'

Madhouse/Ramesela/Lhura/Wozza/Mope/Monozza/Yukani/House On Fire. (SHIFT)

Sankomota is a Lesotho band dealing in danceable blends of jazz and funk and southern African rhythms. The album, recorded Techno-Bush style in a mobile studio and reckoned to be the first vinyl to have come out of Lesotho, mixes the talents of Frank Leepa, guitar, Maruti Selate, bass and Moss Nkoko, drums. The result, brought to life with a full horn section and added keyboards, deserve attention.

Jazz funk is too cool a label for a sound which combines all the right contemporary noises with a rich percussive backdrop: at times the prominent bass steers towards moqanga, at others the band shifts from callals to reggae. To these ears, Sankomota sound best when they forget about directions and just play it straight. Hot music for a cold winter.

(Rating: 7) (CS)

