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ARTIST BIO: Johnny Clegg

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Johnny Clegg occupies a peerless position on the global music stage – one that is built on more than four decades of making life-changing, life-affirming and groundbreaking music for hundreds of thousands of fans scattered throughout the world.

From the time he began mastering Zulu music and traditional Zulu Inhlangwini dancing as a teenager, to the formation of Johnny and Siphos and then Juluka with Siphos Mchunu in the late 1970s, the creation of Savuka and the past 23 years as a solo artist, Clegg has carved out a music career that places him alongside the world's most acclaimed artists.

While Clegg is quick to acknowledge that the idea of mixing music and cross-cultural experimentation already existed in the sub-culture of Zulu migrant labour in the 1940s and 1950s, his major artistic achievement is as an innovator of truly crossover music. Clegg's mixing together of English lyrics and Western melodies with Zulu musical structures came a full decade before Paul Simon's global breakout album, *Graceland*.

When awarded the degree of Doctor of Music honoris causa by the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2013, Clegg recalled how this crossover music sprung to life. "From 1970 to 1977, Siphos and I played traditional Masikande music. I learnt the rules of composition and the rules of presentation. However, from time to time, I could not help hearing echoes of certain characteristics of Celtic Folk music in some of the Zulu war songs. There was something that made me feel a conversation could be had between the two traditions."

The melodic connection that he was hearing spurred Clegg into introducing Irish and Scottish folk music into the Masikande he and Mchunu were playing, resulting in what was initially a "strange mixture". "We began an experiment which led to the music of Juluka and the concept of crossover music – music that encouraged the mixing of language, rhythm and melody in the same song."

In late 1979, Juluka's first album *Universal Men* was released – and, nearly 40 years later, it remains a stunning example of the transcendent capabilities of music when in the hands of the gifted. This revolutionary record was followed by *African Litany* in early 1981 – a 10-track album that significantly broadened Juluka's audience and whose opening track, "Impi", along with "African Sky Blue" are now undisputed South African classics. The album *Ubuhle Bemvelo* followed, featuring songs sung entirely in Zulu, backed by a mix of Western and African musical styles. The international breakthrough album was the 4th album, *Scatterlings*. It entered the top 50 in England and Juluka were offered touring engagements in Europe and the USA. Johnny resigned as a lecturer in the department of Anthropology, Wits university and became a full time musician and performer up until the present time. In the wake of a tour to the USA, Canada, the UK, Germany and Scandinavia, Juluka released *Work For All* in 1983 and *Musa Ukungilandela* in 1984, the duo's last record before Mchunu headed back to his farm fulltime in 1985.

Decades after the group formed, it's easy to forget just how radical Juluka truly was. Alongside heralding a new musical form, the creative outpouring of songwriting and performing that emerged from Clegg in collaboration with Mchunu was directly in opposition to the Apartheid regime's slate of laws. Getting airplay on any of the South African Broadcasting Corporation stations was near-impossible and live performances were frequently organised away from the prying eyes of the police and other authorities. In spite of these obstacles, Juluka gained a devoted fanbase through a mix of memorable songs and live performances that were life-changing for those who witnessed them in the repressive climate of Apartheid South Africa.

In its citation conferring a Doctor of Music on Clegg, UKZN made reference to the artist's influence far beyond being a musical innovator. "With a critical eye on South Africa's racial imbalances, he has promoted a unique pride in African heritage in a way that reconciles rather than tears asunder," the citation read. "At the height of apartheid he made possible what seemed impossible: a celebratory ideological and artistic model for tolerance and human brotherhood against the backdrop of South Africa's divisive racial policies."

After the dissolution of Juluka, Clegg continued his singular musical journey with the group Savuka ("We have risen"). Savuka again mixed African music with Celtic folk music, but also included a strong element of rock in its sonic brew – as heard on the Johnny Clegg & Savuka's striking debut album *Third World Child*. That album again broke new ground, containing three of the most incredible songs to have emerged from Clegg's pen – "Scatterlings of Africa", "Great Heart" and "Asimbonanga" (Mandela)".

It was the latter song that delivered one of the most emotional and enduring images of Clegg over his storied career. At a concert in Frankfurt, Germany in 1999, Clegg introduced the song by saying, "Thirteen years ago, in 1986, South Africa was in a state of emergency and there was a really intense cultural struggle being waged. We were part of that and this is a song that we wrote for truly one of the greatest South Africans in history, Nelson Mandela ... we would like to open the show tonight with a tribute to him." Several minutes into the performance, Madiba himself appears on stage, surprising Clegg and then paying tribute to the role of song and dance in his own life, before requesting that "Asimbonanga" (Mandela) be performed again. The image of Madiba dancing alongside Clegg - both dressed in black and white - remains one of the most potent and moving in recent South African history.

Performing has always been central to Clegg's career, with countless shows at home and on the international stage over the years – including a 36 show tour of USA and Canada in 2016, during which Clegg travelled an astonishing 17,000 miles in 42 days. His recordings – more than 24 albums - have amassed sales in excess of five million albums worldwide, marking him out as amongst South Africa's most successful artists on sales alone.

Clegg is also one of the most awarded artists the country has ever produced – including being honoured with the Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) by Queen Elizabeth II in June 2015, being awarded the Chevalier des Arts et Lettres (Knight of Arts and Letters) by the French Government in 1991 and receiving the South African Order of Ikhamanga in 2012. Alongside the recent UKZN Doctor of Music Degree, Clegg has been awarded honorary doctorates from Dartmouth College, The City University of New York and his alma mater, the University of the Witwatersrand.

What burns through one of the most awarded and consistently vital careers in South African music is Clegg's fierce curiosity for the world around him; an abiding intelligence; an expansive, collaborative spirit; a deep and enduring compassion for the people of the world and, perhaps still most importantly, a musical gift unlike any other.

"If there is a continuity in the work I have done, it is an underlying idea of crossing boundaries and mixing competing approaches," Clegg has said. "It forms the background and influence in the crossing over of musical forms in most of the music I have composed. It is an attitude and approach to culture which, in the terms of Lévi-Strauss, the great French anthropologist, his notion of bricolage – being a cultural handyman, fixing and changing the world with anything you have at hand, that has given life and meaning to what I do."

Johnny Clegg – Selected Timeline + Historical Highlights

- **1953:** Born in Rochdale, England, Johnny Clegg was raised in his mother's native land of Zimbabwe before immigrating to South Africa at the age of nine.
- At the age of 14, Johnny began to learn to play the guitar. Through his interest he met CHARLIE MZILA, a Zulu flat cleaner who played street music near Clegg's home. For two years Johnny learned the fundamentals of Zulu music and traditional Zulu INHLANGWINI dancing with Charlie. He was 15 years old when he saw the dancers for the first time.
- Equipped with his guitar, Johnny accompanied Mzila to all the migrant labour haunts – from hostels to rooftop shebeens. However, Johnny's involvement with black musicians often led to him being arrested for trespassing on government property and for contravening the Group Areas Act, (an apartheid law forcing different races to keep to their own residential and recreational areas). In this difficult and complex political landscape, Johnny managed to navigate a path, which enabled him to enter the hidden world of the Zulu migrant labourers. These men lived in a number of huge barrack-like hostels around Johannesburg, serving Johannesburg's insatiable appetite for cheap black labour. During this period he developed a reputation as a competent Zulu guitarist in the MASIKANDE (from the Afrikaans "Musikant") tradition.
- This reputation reached the ears of SIPHO MCHUNU, a migrant Zulu worker who had come up to Johannesburg in 1969 looking for work. Intrigued he challenged Johnny to a guitar competition, sparking off a friendship and musical partnership destined to alter the face of South African music. Siphos was born in Kranskop, Natal, in 1951. Although he had no musical training as a young boy, he had made himself a variety of musical instruments; his favourite being a three stringed guitar fashioned out of a paraffin tin. Soon he became extremely adept and well versed in Zulu street guitar music. He later also formed a traditional Zulu dance team and found a vast outlet for his creative energies. Siphos investigated this young white boy who danced and also played Zulu street music and looked him up at his apartment one day. A strong friendship developed out of this meeting as for the first time Johnny was playing with a street musician his own age. Johnny was sixteen and Siphos eighteen.
- Together they worked, often subjected to racial abuse, threats of violence and police harassment. As places where they could perform were limited by the apartheid laws, they had to stick to the street and private venues such as churches and university halls.

- When Johnny finished his schooling he went to University, graduating with a BA (Hons) in Social Anthropology and pursued an academic career for four years lecturing at the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Natal.
- **1976:** Johnny and Sipho secured a major recording deal and had their first hit sing entitled, "Woza Friday". A period of development followed, during which Johnny worked on the concept of bringing together English lyrics and Western melodies with Zulu musical structures. The formation of JULUKA, meaning "sweat" in Zulu, was in total contravention of the Cultural Segregation laws of the time, which emphasized the separation of language, race and culture. (Juluka was the name of Sipho's favourite bull, because like all migrants, Sipho practiced some cattle farming in the rural areas). Their music was subjected to censorship and banning and their only way to access an audience was through live touring.
- **1979:** First Juluka album - *Universal Men* - released.
- **1981:** Johnny Clegg and Sipho Mchunu launched second album *African Litany*. Although their work had been largely ignored by the South African Broadcasting Corporation due to Juluka's mixing of languages and African and Western music forms, *African Litany* became a major breakthrough Album for the band through word of mouth and live performances. *Ubuhle Bemvelo* was their immediate follow-up Album and was entirely in the Zulu language, but mixing Western and African styles of music.
- **1982, 1983 and 1984:** Scatterlings, the 4 th album title track launched their international debut. Juluka toured the USA, Canada, the UK, Germany and Scandinavia. In 1983 they released *Work for All* and in late 1984, *Musa Ukungilandela*.
- **1985:** Juluka split and Sipho went back to his farm in Zululand where he was born. They had worked together for 15 years.
- **1986:** Johnny went on to form another crossover band Savuka (We have risen), mixing African music with Celtic folk music and international rock sounds, and the album *Third World Child* was recorded. In 1987 Savuka was the leading world music group touring the francophone countries.
- Three years later, Savuka's hard work and tenacity had finally paid off and the band was reaping its rewards, with an ever growing fan base and phenomenal album sales! By the end of 1989 Savuka had sold over 1 million copies of their debut album, and their 2nd release had already sold over 700 000 units. The band's popularity was reflected in the music charts, and in an incredible moment on the album and singles charts, SAVUKA held the #1 and #2 position on the album charts with the 1st and second album at the same time, and on the singles charts held the #1 and #7 position with their singles "Asimbonanga" and "Scatterlings of Africa".
- This was a momentous achievement for the group out of South Africa and in 1990 they received the "Victoires" award from the French recording industry for the biggest selling international artists over two years. They also received in that year the world music award for the biggest selling world music group internationally. In 1990 they completed a nine-month world tour and in 1991 took off six months to rest.
- **1993:** SAVUKA went to record their fourth album which was nominated for a Grammy Award for the best world music album in 1993. The band broke up in 1994.
- Johnny and Sipho began looking at reforming JULUKA for at least one album in the new South Africa. This came to fruition in 1996 when they went into the studio and they commenced recording *Ya Vuka Inkunzi*. Johnny Clegg continues to collaborate with Sipho Mchunu from time to time.
- **October 2002:** Johnny Clegg released a solo CD *New World Survivor*, and completed a very successful run of a theatre show, *A South African Story*, in South Africa playing to over 40,000 people in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town.
- **July 2003,** Johnny Clegg embarked on a very successful tour of France and Germany.
- **2004** saw Johnny performing *A South African Story Part II* to sell out audiences in South Africa. He then embarked on a successful three month tour of Europe and USA.
- **2006:** Johnny released his much awaited new album *One Life*, featuring his first ever Zulu-Afrikaans crossover song as well as the first song written in three languages French, Zulu and English. In the same year, Johnny performed at sold out "One Life" concerts across the country. He was backed by the Soweto Gospel Choir on the shows at the Nelson Mandela Theatre. These shows were recorded, and later released as a Live CD and DVD *Johnny Clegg Live at the Nelson Mandela Theatre*.

- **2008:** New show **HEART OF THE DANCER** which looked at the role of dance in Clegg's career and how certain songs were shifted towards choreographic presentations when they were played live. It also looked at the history of one particular dance that became widely used in the JULUKA and SAVUKA periods. Once again these shows were sold out and extra shows had to be added.
- **2010:** In the first half of the year Johnny recorded a 13-part documentary series, *A Country Imagined*, for SABC2 which was broadcast in mid 2010 with a re-broadcast currently being screened. In June 2010, Johnny released the ultimate collection of songs, *Spirit is the Journey* celebrating 30 years of Johnny Clegg. This 30th Anniversary compilation was a double CD of his best-loved songs combined with an exclusive DVD titled *My Favourite Zulu Street Guitar Songs*, which includes Johnny's personal take on the various traditional street guitar songs that influenced him, what they mean to him and then performing them acoustically with some of his hostel mates.
- **2011:** Johnny's last studio album, *Human*, was released in SA in September. Clegg's 30th Anniversary concerts in Johannesburg in November 2011 and Cape Town in August 2011 were sold out. The original Juluka band was reunited for these shows, and the hit songs of Juluka and Johnny Clegg which spanned his 30 year career were performed to an emotionally ecstatic crowd.
- **2012:** On the 28th September 2012 Johnny Clegg performed for Prince Albert, The Sovereign Prince of Monaco and Princess Charlene in Monte Carlo, to standing ovations.
- **2013:** Johnny Clegg performed his highly acclaimed A SOUTH AFRICAN STORY at the Royal Albert Hall on Wednesday 27th March 2013. This story covers Johnny's life through his music, and is an inspiring and uplifting voyage. Johnny was the first solo South African act to ever perform at The Royal Albert Hall.
- **2015:** Henley Business School announced the opening of acceptances for the scholarship of the two year Johnny Clegg Music and Creative MBA. The programme will develop and grow the skills of current and future creative and music industry leaders as well as innovators and entrepreneurs in any industry or walk of life.

Johnny Clegg – Selected Awards & Honours

1986	Scotty Award: Master Music Maker
1987	Communication Contribution Award
1987	The Autumn Harvest Music Personality Award
1988	The Mayor's Office of Los Angeles Award: For the promotion of racial harmony
1988	OK TV Best Pop Music Award
1988	Le Victoire French Music Industry Award for biggest International record album sold in France between 1987 and 1988
1988	CCP Record Special Award: In recognition of exceptional achievement in promotion of South African music internationally
1989	Radio 5 – Loud & Proud Award – South African Music Ambassador of the Year
1989	Honorary Citizen of the town of Angouleme, France
1990	FOYSA Award (Four Outstanding South Africans) Junior Chamber of Commerce
1990-91	French Music Industry Award for the biggest selling record album in France
1990	Humanitarian Award : Secretary of State Ohio, USA
1991	Awarded the Chevalier des Arts et Lettres (Knight of Arts and Letters) by the Government of France
1994	Billboard Music Award “ Best World Music Album
1998	KORA Award : Best African Group
1999	Avanti Award – Best Music Video “Crocodile Love”
2007	South African Music Award for Best Adult Contemporary Album
2007	Awarded an Honorary Doctorate from WITS University.
2008	2008 SAMA Nomination for Best Live DVD.
2011	Honorary Doctorate of Law degree from CUNY (City University of NY)
2012	Awarded The Order of Ikhamanga
2012	Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Dartmouth College (USA)
2013	Honorary Doctor of Music degree (University of KwaZulu-Natal)
2014	The Brand Laureate Award for Brand Personality (Asia)
2015	Most Excellent Order of the British Empire by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
2017	World Impact Award from Naledi Theatre Awards

Johnny Clegg is a patron of the Smile Foundation as well as the Paleontological Scientific Trust (PAST) which is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the preservation, protection and promotion of Africa's ancient natural and cultural heritage for the benefit of Africans and humankind in its entirety.