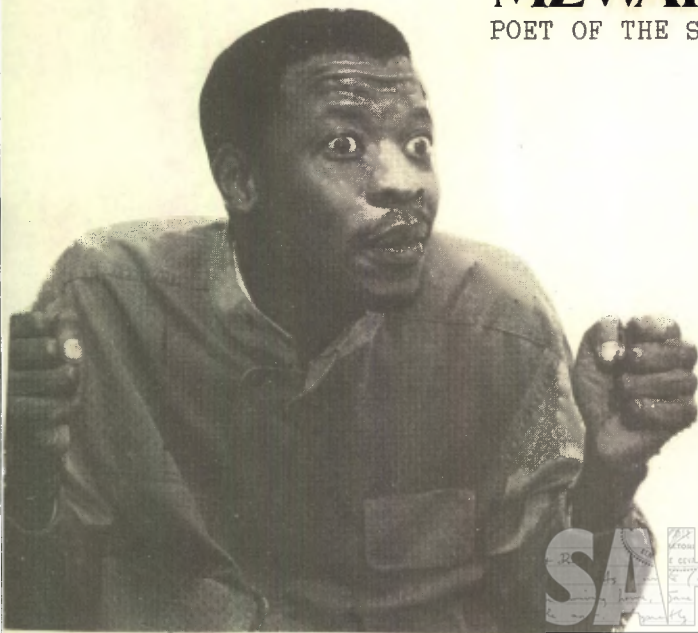


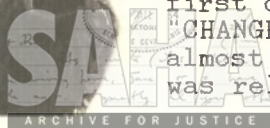
SHIFTY RECORDS

MZWAKHE

POET OF THE STRUGGLE



SINCE HE FIRST STOOD UP TO recite his work at the inaugural meeting of the United Democratic Front, MZWAKHE MBULI has been known reverently in the struggle for a non-racial South Africa as 'the people's poet'. It is a label he has earned. As a cultural activist he has been detained more times than he cares to remember, and his first cassette recording, "CHANGE IS PAIN", was banned almost immediately after it was released in South Africa.



Despite attempts by the government to break him down, the poet's defiant spirit has remained unmoved. In all of his most recent work, much of it written during nearly six months of solitary confinement last year, this tone of anger at the injustice of apartheid is still stridently clear. During this period of solitary confinement he found himself not only making up and memorizing the words of his new work, but also a range of musical parts to accompany them as well. "I had to learn to work well without a pen and paper, and without keyboards and a studio" he remarked, adding that he found himself able to "reach an inner source of inspiration without the motivation of reading."

Recognition for his efforts in the political struggle have not gone unnoticed outside of SAP (South African Police) circles. He has been invited twice to appear at cultural festivals organised by the trade union movement in Germany, and received letters of support while in detention from the International PEN organisation's WRITERS IN PRISON COMMITTEE as well as from NELSON MANDELA himself. Detention also prevented him from accepting an invitation to appear on tour with British singer and social activist BILLY BRAGG, as well as the recently organised CASA festival for culture in a democratic South Africa held in Holland.

His creative work has not gone unnoticed on the international scene either. German recording label PIRHANA RECORDS released the "CHANGE IS PAIN" album, as did jazz label ROUNDER RECORDS. The recording, originally released by SHIFTY in 1986, was made with musical backing provided by musicians who have all established themselves as talented in their own right.

Guitarist SIMBA MORRI UARTI established his distinctive style of playing performing and recording with his own band, WASAMATA.

Drummer IAN HERMAN and bassist GITO BALOI are both members of the acclaimed TANANAS phenomenon. IAN HERMAN was also a member of the successful outfit THE GENUINES, as well as drumming on the JENNIFER FERGUSON album.

Internationally, "CHANGE IS PAIN" recieved critical acclaim in the music press. Noting the album's "strangely poetic tensile strength as much as its topicality", the NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS went on to give a rating of 9 points out of 10 in their review of it. This all adds up to a record that is as valid artistically as it is committed politically.

After being released from his latest spell in detention without trial, the poet said: "I regard myself as entering my second phase of my creative years. If you are a poet, you have got to produce poems. We are the means of production and in solitary confinement, I produced by memory." He was promised on the day following his arrest that he would never be the same again. "They wre right", he said. "I am Mzwakhe Part Two, and I feel more powerful than ever."

MZWAKHE himself sees the relationship between art and activism as essentially and inseperably linked. "Some people like to say that they are artists, not politicians. To me that is nonsense - artists must be involved in the struggle if their art is to have any worth." Certainly, in its creation and its committment, in the art of MZWAKHE MBULI, 'die lang man', poet of the people's struggle, one finds a voice far too valuable to be ignored.