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Interview with Warrick Sony.

Emphasis in *italics*.

Michael Drewett [MD]: ...first became involved with Shifty, without going into too much detail...

Warrick Sony [WS]: I first became involved with Shifty then I moved to Jo'burg, to – I moved to Jo'burg I think it was '85, I think. 1985 or 84, somewhere round there. But my first – it's not so much being involved with Shifty, it was more being involved with Lloyd. Er – Lloyd Ross and I had a band down in Cape Town called 'Happy Ships'. And we used to play once a year whenever Lloyd came down on holiday, at around Christmas time. And we'd put this band together, and we played I think two or three Christmases in a row or something like that, I can't remember. And then he brought his studio down to record it – his mobile studio. And I'd – at that point I'd already been fiddling around with Kalahari Surfers cassettes, and releases – and I'd been doing very primitive recordings with er, some of the Happy Ships guys in fact, even – we went to C Films and used their 8-track tape recorder; I think we just plugged things straight – straight into the back of it. And kind of did these weird assemblages of – of sort of half-formed songs, and improvised noise, and banging things, and...

So those tapes, and – and some of the recordings I did – Kalahari Surfers recordings I did in Westville, at C&G studios, became part of the first double single I did – um – called 'Burning Tractors Keep Us Warm'. And then, at that same time the Happy Ships was going once a year, Lloyd was coming down,

my interest in recording took up a little step where I had a 4-track portastudio I bought – which you could record four tracks, big deal, onto a cassette; and I mixed them down. And – I started doing – I think I did film, some film music for a guy – first time I'd ever done that. He completely ripped me off, didn't pay me anything, he was in – Port Elizabeth – so it was a – quite a big awakening.

[Timecode – 00:02:09]

And at that time Lloyd was – was just – he was putting the studio together formally in a caravan; and he had a location in Jo'burg. And, um – it seemed like a much better place to be – Jo'burg – was where it was all happening. And – and to have access to that studio – he had an 8-track recorder then, with – you know, beautifully laid out, you must have seen pictures...

MD: Mm...

WS: (...you have been around.) And – and I was pretty good at that stuff, you know I very quickly learned. And also the other tempting possibility was – was um, Lloyd showed me – how to record sound on set, which was how he earned money, to keep the thing going, because it was a – pretty much a non-profit situation. So I kind of slotted into that world: quickly learned how to record sound, became a sound recordist, and um – at that point Ivan left, and I took over his kind of – partnership in a sense, at – at Shifty – which was called Shifty – they started it together. And the studio was moved – was set up – the control room was set up in a little house in Concordia; most extraordinary place in Johannesburg. Um. Little dry, sort of dirty little river, and an old mining house in a *veld*, with nothing there but mine dumps. On the – sort of the south of Jo'burg. Um. And. What is now Baragwanath Road, um – and – and the Rand showgrounds, the Nasrec grounds were built around it. Certainly while we were there, things had started developing around there. In a very rapid rate.

I went there the other day – I did a – not the other day, but I went there a year or so ago, I did a – I was asked to present a paper on my music and architecture. And – particularly my lyrics, and architecture; 'cause I have a lot of architectural kind of things that I write about – the mine dumps being one of them. And then going back there to try and – I hadn't been back to the Concordia area for a long time. It's just become – almost like a sort of slightly upper-class Soweto; its – the whole area where we were – the mine house – everything's been destroyed; er the little river's still there but it's part of a big housing estate, with barbed wire around and walls. But – inside are Sowetan families who obviously can afford that sort of rental. Um. But are not particularly interested in the – the whole – which was built at a gated village; you know, there's no guards any more, and some of the guys have chiselled

through the wall, so you can get out [laughs]... and it's quite – amusing, so that's the Concordia site. And also historically a very important site – it's where the AmaWasha used to wash Johannesburg's clothes.

[Timecode – 00:05:05]

And these guys used to wash in the filthy river – I don't know how they got the stuff clean – dry it out and deliver it; they were inspired by the – the washers – the *Indian* washers, in India they used to, y'know, Dhoti washers – and then the Indian guys were doing it I think in Durban – there were a lot of Zulus who were doing that. So that was quite interesting; yeah I'm always big on that –er, history.

MD: I see from the photographs that you were involved in the Sankomota recording in Lesotho. Was that – that was quite early on in Shifty...

WS: Yeah, that was the first record that came out.

MD: But you'd done some Happy Ships stuff prior to that?

WS: Yeah, we'd done the Happy Ships recording. Um. In actual fact I wasn't actually involved in the recording of the Sankomota album – I kind of came along to help, kind of – yeah, my skills were pretty limited. All I was good at doing was my own stuff – which was basically switching on a tape recorder, and recording eight tracks, bumping them down onto two tracks for recording, and just learning the studio as I went. I wasn't – I wasn't very good – and even to this day I'm not – I'm not the world's greatest *recorder of bands*. Y'know that's Lloyd's forte – he's very good at – particularly good at live recording; the original demos for instance for The Genuines were fantastic. I discovered recently I put them on Bandcamp – you know I've got this sjambokmusic.com – there's a Jennifer Ferguson little short album I put out of *her* demos. They're fuckin' brilliant, yah. And Lloyd was *really* good at that. Just kinda – good at working under pressure, putting a great sound up and just recording on an 8-track machine. Which is what that Sankomota album was – it was – it was a great – for me anyway, it was a great introduction to – to Shifty, to this idea of a recording studio, mobile, that you could take round, record a band who were – um – forbidden entry into South Africa – there was no way of recording them. And then the way it worked, you know, we set up – he had the control room in a caravan, took the cables out, set then up in a – a soundproofed room, I think that used to be Radio Lesotho, or something like that, and the band did their tracks, live, and then got the drums good, and then re-did the bass, and pieced together this album, re-did the vocals. Then came to Jo'burg and did the horns, and percussion – I played some percussion on it I think.

And – and that’s – and then we – you know, as a record company we put the album together, got it pressed, um... his girlfriend did the art, the artwork, Caroline Cullinan, who’s still around – I actually saw her yesterday; she did the artwork.

[Timecode – 00:07:46]

And the band – you know they weren’t around, they couldn’t come to South Africa, they did moan a bit about the fact that a producer had taken over their album, and put brass on, and did a cover they didn’t like and so on and so forth. But that’s the – that’s the deal, you know? When you think of what the – the expense that Lloyd went to to go and get the stuff. You know the Beatles weren’t happy with Let it Be – Phil Spector fucked *that* up; and Paul McCartney re-released it later on, without all the strings and stuff. It happens, y’know. It’s the record company... It is a difficult thing in South Africa; if you were Gallo or something you’d just bulldoze people ’cause you had this sort of office block with sort of 600 people working in it, and everyone’s in awe of it. If you were one guy taking a risk on someone – they come down on you. And that was – the history of Shifty was that. It was that everyone moaned. [laughs] They were fuckin’ lucky, they had careers built, y’know, around this stuff, and Lloyd – Lloyd actually gave people their first break – Jennifer Ferguson... Mzwakhe Mbuli was the biggest fuckin criminal in this.

MD: Yeah...



WS: Um – and all those was people, y’know? And that was Lloyd’s skill – he wanted to have a record company, he wanted to produce records; he didn’t make his own stuff – that was how he lived his creative life. I did – I made my own stuff; I went to that studio for *me*, at night, when he wasn’t working. So I did *my* thing. I recorded one or two bands, but they weren’t – yeah – particularly huge. Koos I think were the most interesting of the things I recorded. Um.

But it was Lloyd’s skill and the microphones, and yeah, he was very good at microphones – he knew all that stuff, and – y’know obviously I have good ears – you know, I worked in movie sound, and obviously I could hear what is acceptable broadcast sound. So we both had that; and that is the first principle of any recording, is a good microphone – even if it goes onto a cassette, rather have a good microphone, than a high-quality digital recorder and a five rand microphone, y’know? [laughs]

So, you learn about sound and you learn about how to put – what a good recording *is*. And to this day I believe in getting a good recording – and *then* making it sound shit, y’know, afterwards. At least you’ve got the good

recording there, if you wanna go back. So my son's band was a point in case [sic]: we recorded his drums fantastically in this studio here – and he wanted it to sound shit, he wanted it to sound like a drum kit that had been recorded in the 70s. [Timeline – 00:10:13]

So - we did that after – y'know, I showed him how to use compressors, and – and stuff like the Beatles – y'know a lot of the Beatles stuff is almost – it's just – it's very hot, yah – the drums, so that sort of a sound, y'know Ringo, so when you hit the cymbal it goes 'boophhherrrr'.

MD: Yeah

WS: So that's – that's – yeah, that's how I came across – I went up to Jo'burg, met – consolidated with Lloyd, worked there, did sound, bought – I bought the 16-track recorder. I got a gig at Scholtz Films [00:10:43] recor – doing sound recording and mixing, and I paid it off. That was a big breakthrough, having double the tracks ...to record on. Especially for someone who just plays like me, y'know? I often just play stuff on my own. And it was a mission, too. I'd run into the room, push record, run into the room, play drums. And then kind of edit up the good stuff, and – and then play bass underneath it and then try and work out a song around that or, y'know. I often only – I just in the studio, a lot of those things.

MD: So, you're talking now, towards the end about – um... Lloyd finding musicians and recording them. So what do you think was the most significant aspect of Shifty, as a company, looking back on it?

WS: The most significant aspect of Shifty was – was – um – the most significant aspect was recording voices that would not have been recorded by anyone else. They were destined not to have radio play; some of them were destined not to even have proper record covers or even a vinyl record. Um, the first Mzwakhe Mbuli album came out as a cassette. It was called *Pete* – p-e-t-e. And, we ran those off in the studio – we had a setup with ten, realtime cassette recording – er – erm – ten at a time; and we did them by hand; covers were done by hand; um – which was it, *Change is Pain* – I think they were also just called *Pete*, it was a mysterious tape.

And that went – it was the first album I think in South Africa ever to have gone gold or whatever it is, to achieve some sort of status, without ever having radio play.

And that was tapping into the – the UDF grass roots networks. And that was unique about Shifty. No-one had done – no-one was doing that, no-one had

done that before – um – and I used to – Lloyd and I would go to various functions, and rallies, and record speeches; I was very into – even when I was at the – um

[Timecode – 00:13:01]

Lloyd had a huge collection of stuff that he'd rec – ...he'd do it formally; Lloyd would arrive there with his recorders and his mixing desk, and put microphones on stage and do it, y'know, really well.

MD: Yeah.

WS: So that Fosatu Worker Choir record, which is an excellent album, of great vocal performances, was done like that – was this whole lot of rallies that Lloyd went to. And recorded. Which is – yeah, it's an amazing thing to do, for a white guy to go to all of these places, and – he had a lot of energy like that.

And um – I – I used to kind of – I used help set up these things and do the recordings, and, yeah, we'd quite often do them together. Most of them I think he just did on his own. And I was running around the townships recording sound for – for CBS news or one of those companies, to make money to pay off the tape recorder etc. But, while I was working for the CBS and those people I kept a cassette machine going, and so a lot of the recordings I did were just completely one mono microphone, in the field, running around, the weirdest shit happening, y'know. Some of it distorted, some of it – I mean one of my albums of – of the recent stuff I've done, in the 2000s, at the very end of the album is guys shouting *verraaier* at de Klerk; that's a recording I did – and then singing hymns! [laughs] Y'know. I just found the recording when I was working on the album, I'd forgotten about it but I found a cassette – and that was the way, y'know, the field, the stuff that's in the field.

So there was no-one in South Africa, at all, who had he skills that Lloyd and I had – and the kind of, I suppose artistic mindset to – to capture these things; and then work them into a music form.

MD: So you were saying that – so first of all Shifty... if it hadn't been for Shifty there would have been people who we would not know about – they wouldn't have been recorded; they wouldn't –

WS: If there hadn't been Shifty, if there hadn't been Shifty, I don't think – well, the people whose first albums Lloyd did was: Jennifer Ferguson, Tananas, Sankomota, Mzwakhe Mbuli...

MD: The Genuines

WS: Genuines, yah.

MD: Aeroplanes.

[Timecode – 00:15:29]

WS: Aeroplanes didn't really – *break* it into a major career – none of them pursued music thereafter

MD: Yeah, exactly; but Vusi –

WS: But all those people, and Vusi Mahlasela, yeah, all those people owe their careers...

MD: Urban Creep – later on Urban Creep, Matthew van der Want...

WS: Yah, yah. They owe their careers to Lloyd; *I* think. They might have recorded – Urban Creep could have recorded down the road with Willem [Moller], that was later. It was kind of post-80s. But the 80s stuff, certainly, I can't think of any – anyone who would spend good money on recording an album that's not gonna be played on radio.



And all those artists that I've just listed wouldn't have been – played on radio.

MD: And in addition quite obscure artists who appear on *Forces Favourites* and *A Naartjie [in Our Sosatie]*, which...

WS: Those were part of Lloyd's interest in recording – um... I put those down to the live recordings. They were a spinoff of – um – they were done – a lot of those were done in the studio, and a lot of those were actually handed to us, and we recorded elsewhere, for *Forces Favourites* and those compilations.

And some – the other thing Lloyd did was record... or did he? There was – there was a – I put it out recently also on Sjambok there – a Free People's Concert recording – yah, that was Lloyd. There's a 8-track – I think it's a 8-track tape of it. And he edited them up – yeah, it was definitely him – and he edited that *Forces Favourites* up, and there were a lot of great bands in that. I put that on Sjambok, the whole thing. That was quite nice.

MD: Cause even the idea of putting together resistance compilations would have been unheard of...

WS: Yah

MD: ...at that time, no one else did that.

WS: No, no one else; no one would have done that.

[Timecode – 00:17:04]

MD: Er... there might have been the odd song here or there...

WS: Yah...

MD: ...or an album, but there was never an *attempt* to actually put anything together in any kind of a way...

WS: Yah, yah.

MD: And then, in your *Staffrider* article that you wrote in about 1990 or whatever, you – you talk about the difficulties of being an indie in South Africa, but given that context, do you think Shifty did all they could? Or d'you think there were things that Shifty could have done better – given, as I said, all those...

WS: My only criticism is that – the only things that Shifty could have done better, probably, would have been to have worked at a faster pace. I think there was a lot of stuff out there...



MD: Mm...

WS: And um, I think one of the – one of the mistakes, which I think Lloyd was always wanting to do, was get a hit record. Which a record company needs; and I mean you can't blame him for that – he's put all that money into it of his own money, and he was hoping he'd get a hit, like, he was hoping the Bernoldus album would be – that single *Hou My Vas Korporal*, he imagined that being played on radio, and – all the okes out there in Springs buying it, and... And then we did Gerrie, and that was given to Gerrie Coetzee and we hoped he'd use that when he went out fighting; except he used er – er – he used a song by one of those big haircut bands, y'know, the 80s.

But that – so that was the idea, so compromises were *made* to try and – for – to try and get a commercial hit. But that was Lloyd's interest you know, he was interested in pop music and stuff being commercial. And certainly bands like the *Softies* didn't have a political bone in their body. And they were recorded and their stuff was very good – very poppy and very possible. Could have become a radio hit definitely. And um – um – personally I think the more left – you know, I'm a much more leftfield person, I mean I never had a hit in

my life or anything approaching anywhere near that. And I – I've never recorded anything that I've imagined I'd get onto radio and I'd have a – have a big hit with, y'know.

[Timecode – 00:19:06]

So it's not been my focus, I've always made kind of money elsewhere, with other – first time I ever got radio play was an ad. For BMW actually [laughs]. It was a TV ad – the first time I ever did anything in the commercial realm was a BMW ad. And they used – remarkably – they used all my footage of um – of – my riot footage I recorded of AWB, and chanting, and – shooting, and tear gas, and all that stuff, they used for an ad. I put together a sound collage of all that then for Hunt Lascaris – first ad I ever did.

MD: So, in terms of things like marketing and things like that – d'you think – I mean I suppose people – their hands are tied when you're not getting radio play and so on, and also distribution networks were quite – monopolised as well, so you were.

WS: Yah. It was difficult to get the records into CNA. I mean James Phillips went into CNA and put his singles in –

MD: Smuggled one in...



WS: And we were kind of *furious* with him. Like – he didn't have to pay for that – we were the guys [laughs] – that was Lloyd's money there... but er – he thought it would be very funny that some guy's flipping through the singles and finds that, wants to go to the counter – which must have happened – and wants to pay for it, and it's not on their, on their... which, in *retrospect* what we should have done, and what *artists* do now, is – and what some of the radical guys – in Canada – at the time were doing, and the British... *were* getting money – they were getting things sponsored. It was a very radical audio artist, who coined the term 'plunderphonics' – guy called John Oswald; and he did a hack-up of Michael Jackson's *Bad*, which he cut into thousands of little shreds and he kept the shimmer of it – it was a really remarkable piece – first time I'd ever heard anyone do that sort of... almost like an art remix, but with quarter-inch tape – he actually cut it with a razor blade and rearranged the whole piece into an – an audio collage; which was the area I was working in too. Y'know I loved that cutting up tape and trying to get meaning with things that originally started out with something – banal. Um, so John Oswald got funding from the Canadian Arts Council – y'know he lived in that kind of country – to do that stuff; and then he handed out the vinyl free.

If we could have got some sort of funding from a benefactor, to have marketed and put into place, and have – I mean it's a *really important medium*, music, y'know, it really is – LPs – you know, if – and eventually some funding *did* come – from the Swedes; [Timecode – 00:21:49] and that was for *live* concerts, which was the best way to promote anything. And now we've gone back to that. After all that it's come full circle. The only real way of promoting the music now – because it's difficult to get radio play, and anyway, y'know, who listens to Radio Five, when – you've got your computer? Um. The only way to do it now is to play live gigs, as it was then. So the Swedish funding helped immensely in forming what became Voëlvry. And that was how a lot of those bands became known, through the live concerts – and that's why that took off.

MD: I mean you mentioned Voëlvry; obviously if you go back to Shifty's legacy, in a way – if we move on to look at their legacy, which of course would include things like Voëlvry.

WS: Yeah, yeah, most definitely. Lloyd is the only guy who'd record, y'know, someone like Johannes Kerkorrel, or –

MD: Koos...



WS: Koos Kombuis – André le Toit then – sent these cassettes that were – that were incredibly naïve and, um, I think he could only play three guitar chords. But his lyrics were incredible, you know? It didn't matter. And he had tunes. You know you can get a lot of tunes out of D, A and G. As we discovered with Credence Clearwater Revival [laughs]. But um – and – and also people – I mean to this day, music's not about how good you are with your chords, at all. I mean Iggy Pop taught us. And – and Bo Diddley – the joy of – a whole song was one chord. It's everything else that goes with it – it's the guy, it's the words, it's... it's everything.

And the Voëlvry – you know – I mean le Toit... we got... that first album came out, and then – he changed his name to Koos Kombuis, for the – he did the André le Toit cassette, *Ver Van Die Ou Kalahari*, then *Niemandslan [and Beyond]*. And – unfortunately he stood on some toes there with the – I don't know why he changed his name to Koos Kombuis – when there was a band already with us called *Koos*...

MD: Which was a problem...

WS: ...and kind of fucked them up and kind of torpedoed their – I think it torpedoed their chances; I mean they were very leftfield, and not everyone's cup of tea – very art. Art rock, you know?

[Timecode – 00:24:22]

But they fitted in there – they were very important. South Africa, what I've realised in hindsight, because there's such a small community of people – um – you had to – you had to stick together; so – y'know, if – myself, the kind of music I was interested in – and probably the only other band I found that were doing something similar was *Koos*. If I had to have my label there'd be like – there'd be two artists; 'cause it's a very small place with a very small pool of people, so when you get into the small genres of – sub-genres of rock music, because in those days there wasn't really much going on, it becomes very small. You know, when I went to England, the guys who did my album were quite vociferous about what they didn't like – and, y'know, which – they were pretty intolerant about in terms of music – commercial music, and what is *crap*. Whereas in South Africa you had to – you had to take into account that – we had a lot of strata. You know people working who were part of – maybe who weren't doing political music but who would play at a political, Free People's Concert, so I mean were therefore, even though their music was very, very sunshiney, bubblegum, even Christian pop – they still aligned themselves with the forces opposed to apartheid, which was important.

So that kind of bound together certain – there you had *one* group of people. So those – those albums are often very eclectic, those – which was nice actually, those – those compilation albums. And then you had – er – yeah whereas in most countries – people in England, and – and – although they felt they were being very oppressed by Margaret Thatcher and so on and so forth – they didn't have those – they didn't have the coal – the coalface in that way. It was sort of very – very hardcore police brutality, and people dying in police cells; someone like Mzwakhe would disappear. And come back psychologically rearranged – he was a totally different person after he'd been in detention. And then someone like Lesego Rampolokeng, whose ghosts accompany him to this day, from his – I mean I he like two years in prison. You didn't have that level, unless you were Irish, in the UK. Certainly not in America. Um.

MD: D'you think that was a kind of a spirit or a camaraderie amongst Shifty artists?

WS: Yah.

MD: Like a stable almost, that there was a sense of people being a part of something.

[Timecode – 00:27:04]

WS: Shifty – it was a stable. Shifty Records was a – a stable of musicians, as I've just describe, even – very *diverse*, from punk rock to folk singers, to – um. Yeah, from Joni Mitchell to The Damned, you know, um – it – it was that – from the sixti[?] – Roger Lucy wasn't really a Shifty artist, Shifty stable, but he did do – yeah, *No Easy Walk to Freedom*, that single, came out as a Shifty release. But – um – and – he should have done a *Tighthead Fourie and the Loose Forwards* album, but a lot of those songs were covers, that would have been expensive to have cleared the rights for. But um – in a sense, he was part of the Shifty kind of group, you know, in that he was – he was a leftfield person, he was politically – um – on the case; and – and – he – he – yah, you could say he was – he was part of the stable; as were others maybe that particularly weren't that maybe even some record industry people[?].

But you must remember that time, to get a – there was a big divide between us and them. You know, we were – the Shifty Records stuff was a group of people who – likeminded thinking – and politically committed to certain – they would appear in certain places. And then you had – groups like *The Helicopters*, and um...



[00:28:34 break as someone comes in, resumes 00:28:45]

MD: ...the big divides.

WS: Yah, so you had those; and at that time you must remember there were bands that – were 100% commercial, they went onto radio, they had – they had those haircuts... *The Helicopters*, I remember – it was – like showbands. And they were musicians...

MD: Yeah, *Petit Cheval*, and...

WS: ...*Petit Cheval*. And they – they – they had to make a living. They were guys who were serious about – you know, they had residencies, and they played cover versions, and they were musicians, they had to make a living, and they couldn't jeopardise their thing, and they had to get – they had to get into bands that could get a record company deal; and the record company deal would involve doing a certain kind of music. You know.

MD: Mm.

WS: And we didn't – we couldn't do that; we couldn't give people advances, we didn't – which was difficult for them as professionals.

[Timecode – 00:29:32]

So a lot of them, as time went on, moved to – to bigger record companies, like *Tananas* did, you know? And Mzwakhe eventually, and – er – Vusi Mahlasela. We did his first two albums, I think.

But that was already in the 90s. You see I consider Shifty to be the 80s – of importance in the 80s. The 90s, it dissolved – the energy dissolved because of the changes in the country. We imagined the ANC would embrace us, as *the* record company, but they just went to Gallo, they didn't even notice us.

Yeah – they completely – probably completely unaware of anything we'd done except for Mzwakhe probably. Who rapidly discredited himself. Sankomota all died. Um. It's remarkable how many musicians have died in car accidents.

MD: Yah. And so you have a situation where – you could finally start recording people for commercial reasons almost, and it still –

WS: Yah, it still became...

MD: The playing field was the same in many ways. You couldn't get radio play, and even *with* radio play, you couldn't get sales, so... I mean *Urban Creep*, Matthew van der Want were like *played* on 5FM, but it didn't matter, it didn't help to...

WS: Yah, it was – it was hard to crack the distribution, and... Then you started working in competition with all the other guys who'd been and got a lot of expertise during the apartheid days, 'cause they just – made money, all the way through. And – and then you were going to... 'Cause then, what happened was BMG then bought Shifty – er – what did they buy? A 50% share? 51%, I think – something like that. That's how they operated – a controlling share. Then we went to the BMG building and started working there. And that's – I started working full-time for Shifty then. I gave up doing news then – my daughter was born, it was dangerous.

And then – out next – the next phase of Shifty was to – we had this thing that – because now the previous regime was gone, and a lot of – a lot of prohibitions and things that were ...and the SABC we would imagine would have loosened up, which it kind of *did* actually, it did loosen up and it did start playing things that were er more – more radical. We – we then got in touch

with a lot of the pan-African bands, and we licensed – Shifty put out Salif Keita's album *Sorrow* –

[Timecode – 00:32:11]

MD: Yeah, and Ray Lema –

WS: Ray Lema, and – and those were great albums. And to this day are good albums and – are probably collectable, 'cause of the – I think we only pressed 200 copies of each them. And that was a way of – we thought, now that South Africa's part of Africa, they'll be a rush to get these great sounds of other – you know – and these artists could come here and play, and we could develop them. But we were met with incredible hostility with that stuff. It was – y'know. Salif Keita I remember these guys '[mutters mockingly...] Indian music'. They, yeah – the South African ear was – was so undeveloped because of apartheid that we didn't have anything but our *own* music; to hear stuff from Congo, from – even Zimbabwe, to hear music from – from the Sahel region – it's Islamic; it does sound Indian if you – you know... And the guys didn't want to buy Indian music. So they didn't want to buy – So the only people who would buy it are the same people who bought Shifty records – kind of – and a lot of middle-class...

The middle class started to booming then, under Mandela – the black middle class came up. And they – often – I remember one of the first big sales that we did at – at the market, 'cause we used to sell, you know, I used to go every Saturday and sell with Shifty Records, and – and we started importing stuff to sell as well, to shops and things, and – it was a *battle* man.

But... One of the first guys to buy was er – erm – Matshikiza, what's his name, Todd's son?

MD: Oh yah, yeah, John.

WS: John – oh – John Matshikiza came over here and he couldn't believe it, all the stuff, y'know? Bought a whole pile of records from us. And – you know, that sort of guy – those sort of people coming back to South Africa, who were *wordly*; and knew – and loved African culture in its entirety, not just South African, which is what we were trying to do. So again we were down to selling to the John Matshikizas of South Africa, which were very few.

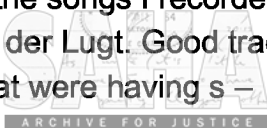
But we laid the grounds for later on. Salif Keita put [on] one of the best concerts I've seen. At the Market – at the – Warehouse. And. And to this day, there's a lot of those artists who are now here; who come often.

MD: So, um. Just two things that are a bit linked. But then. We were talking earlier, that a lot of the musicians at Shifty had gripes and so on. I mean is there anything d'you think Shifty could have done to avoid that? [00:34:50]

WS: We could have teamed up with a money guy. I remember – I remember one of Lloyd's friends, Dan Roberts, who's always had a – an eye for making money. He did commercials; and he made a lot of money doing – doing television commercials, and you know in the ad industry he said 'it's important to put together good money guys with good creative guys.' And that – that is the bottom line – y'know, if you had a good money guy.

MD: Because Lloyd has said that marketing and distribution wasn't his forte, that wasn't why he got into the whole thing –

WS: It wasn't mine either – I did a course in marketing management and all sorts of things, 'cause I try to – y'know, I was quite good – I studied art, and I helped with um – coming up with – we'd have these meetings, and putting together a team of – of designers and, to try and get a – a vibe and a look, and... I came up with the *Voëlvry* title. And the – the song that I'd recorded was – erm – that was one of the songs I recorded *on* that album, was the *Voëlvry song*, with Pieter van der Lugt. Good track – he was like sort of one of those English synth bands that were having s –



MD: Tainted – what was it, Soft Cell and that kind of thing –

WS: Tainted Love, Soft Cell, yah. So I was quite into that stuff, yeah. But – erm – yah, so that's how – but I tried ...I'm not very good with that stuff, I'm not very good with money.

MD: And the last thing is: what would you say, or what would you like to think Shifty's legacy is?

WS: What would I say, or what do I like to think? Shifty's legacy is what it is. It's – it's – er – 70 or so very eclectic albums, recordings, that – that would have fallen off the map if they hadn't been recorded by Shifty. And also showed that there were a lot of – um – there were a lot of white musicians who cared about the country they lived in. And there were a lot of black musicians who were prepared to stick their neck out, also, and say what they, and nail their colours to the mast, y'know – where it was – dangerous to do that; where it was *very* dangerous to do that for anyone, but more dangerous for the black artists, and I think Shifty's legacy *is* that – is recording, supporting the

underdog, at a time when – no one else would. I think that – that is quite clear from the catalogue...

MD: Great.

WS: ...yah.

MD: Thanks. [/ends]

[Timecode - 00:37:33]

