



Jazz band from Sweden "plays New York, Buenos Aires — and Edmonton."

Music

# Swedish Mwendo jazz

Mwendo Dawa  
Yardbird Suite

review by Mike Spindloe

The Edmonton Jazz Society, through their venue the Yardbird Suite, and the annual Jazz City Festival, has succeeded in bringing Edmonton a great number of jazz groups and performers that we wouldn't see without their efforts. Sweden's Mwendo Dawa is a good example. The group has eleven albums to their credit but has only visited North America a few times. Their current brief tour includes New York, Buenos Aires — and Edmonton.

The name of the group is Swahili for "the way to a special goal" and was chosen because of the influence African rhythms have had on their music. The four members of the group are Susanna Undeberg on piano and keyboards, Ove Johansson on tenor saxophone, David Sundby on drums and Stefan Petterson on bass.

Onstage, the group used a variety of programmed backing tracks to augment their sound, mainly consisting of electronic rhythm tracks and basic riffs which they used as bases for improvisation. The result might

be best described as a sort of fusion. The recorded tracks occasionally seemed to be an intrusion on the generation of the music which otherwise was quite spontaneous and enjoyable. All four performers demonstrated mastery of their craft, especially Ove Johansson, playing often-frantic tenor riffs somewhat reminiscent of Jan Garbarek, or at least what he might sound like playing tenor instead of soprano.

The group varied their sets by including instrumental ballads along with the riff-based numbers. A highlight of these compositions was "Why Me," composed by bassist Stefan Petterson.

Mwendo Dawa's eleventh album, *Human Walk*, released on Sweden's Dragon Records, is a well-crafted showcase of their unique blend of acoustic and electronic styles and an accurate reproduction of their live sound. It was recorded in New York — according to the credits, in a single day!

The group was originally invited to the Jazz City festival but was unable to come at the time. This time around, their travels are being subsidized by the Swedish government, making possible their tour of small venues and disparate locations.

# Film Biko's spirit Cries Freedom

*Cry Freedom*  
A Universal Picture  
Westmount 4, West Mall 6, Whitemud

review by Rosa Jackson

"Change the way people think and things will never be the same." These are the words of Stephen Biko, a rare black South African who has managed to make some impact on his nation's history. Although his goal of achieving equality for the black people of South Africa escaped him, all those who heard him speak were moved: Steve Biko seemed to be the black identity personified.

How sad, then, that a movie capable of changing the way people think, true to the memory of Steve Biko, falls short. This is not to say that *Cry Freedom* lacks any of the elements of a great film: it has action and drama, and is visually stunning. It is simply unfortunate that Richard Attenborough chose to focus on the life of the South African editor, Donald Woods, rather than that of Biko, for the major part of the movie.

By any standards, Woods has led an exciting life, one worth depicting in a movie. But the turmoil in his life is overshadowed by that in Steve Biko's; his family's suffering pales in comparison to that of the Bikos'. A large portion of the movie shows the Woods' escape from South Africa, and exciting as that may be, it is not enough to hold our interest for the duration of the film. The intended suspense loses its effect because we already know that Woods did survive to tell his story, or we would not be watching the movie.

However, this movie has strengths which make its weaknesses worth tolerating. One is the acting of Denzel Washington as Steve Biko. Having never seen Biko myself nor heard him speak, I cannot comment on the authenticity of Washington's performance; I can only say that he most certainly brings the spirit of the man across.

Soft-spoken and seemingly average, he possesses a charm and magnetism which

wins him thousands of followers. It is tragic that a leader capable of inspiring such pride and self respect in a downtrodden race is smothered by a government which feels threatened. He cannot convince his oppressors that "we're just as weak and human as you are."

Kevin Kline, as Woods, also delivers a fine performance, but not an outstanding one. Perhaps the problem is that Woods is simply a more shallow character than Biko, and as a result Kline sometimes appears superficial. Woods comes a long way, however, from his first appearance as a prejudiced "white liberal", enjoying all the benefits of his position in society, to become one of South Africa's strongest advocates of "black consciousness".

The second half of the movie is devoted to tearful scenes with Woods and his family which soon become irritating and seem an unnecessary burden to the movie. We are faced with enough grief over Biko's death without having to watch Woods' family snivel about having to leave their mansion — which, we cannot help but think, they have enjoyed for five generations at the expense of the black people. It is heroic of Woods to give up "the job, the house, and the Mercedes" which he considers his due, but we are hardly in a position to sympathize with him and his family.

There is some brilliant cinematography in this film: we are shown a stark contrast between the gorgeous architecture and scenery of the Woods' home and the squalor of the black townships. Richard Attenborough once again demonstrates considerable skill in directing a movie of such massive proportions.

*Cry Freedom* should be considered a "must-see" despite its flaws, because it will educate you about apartheid. I know it is debatable whether the purpose of movies should be to teach, but in this case it is worth opening your eyes and your mind to facts which you might not know about South Africa, and which will undoubtedly shock you as the film transforms statistics and news reports into reality.

# CHOICE · CRACKS



On hearing a particularly good turn of phrase  
Oscar Wilde remarked "I wish I'd said that."  
The painter Whistler replied "You will Oscar, you will."



Generations past often cracked wise. So make the wisest crack of all. Crack a Pepsi and enjoy our series celebrating irreverent wit that endures.



Pepsi-Cola and "Pepsi" are registered trademarks of PepsiCo, Inc.