

Sun City - Racist Citadel

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"Don't ask me Sun City
cuz I ain't gonna play,
I ain't gonna play."

This is a verse from the hit video "Sun City" by Artists United against Apartheid Capital Records.

Not since the days of Woodstock and the lamenting verses of the 60's and the 70's has there been a major effort by organized musicians to push a political issue across. George Harrison organized a valiant effort in the early 70's with the highly successful "Bangladesh", and more recently Bob Geldof spearheaded a whole series of television and record spin-offs when he headed a group of British musicians under Band-Aid's hit song "Do they know it's Christmas?" ... and of course there have been the individual cases of people who stood up for what they thought was right - John Lennon did it back in the late 60's when he returned his Medal of the British Empire to Queen Elizabeth II as a statement of personal protest against British policy towards Biafra, and there were others - Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young - who inspired a generation of restless

youth with their anti-war themes, just as the United States was making headlines with its glorious crusade against Communism in Vietnam.

The influence of television, and the fact that this was the first time EVER that the carnage would be viewed by suburban housewives every night on the 6 o'clock news, were both of monumental importance. The violence within motivated not only a radical political opposition, but it produced a revolution in musical thought - music wasn't simply for sheer pleasure and enjoyment any more, but became compassionate, and compassion became "hip". Political and moral theorizing through the vehicle of music produced the likes of Bob Dylan, Arlo Guthrie, the Weavers, and Aretha Franklin. (Hey give me some R-E-S-P-E-C-T.)

In the hit video Sun City, viewed on 'Much Music' quite regularly as of late, we see a resurgence of this kind of music. Indeed, it would appear that "compassion" has become "hip" again, and has found its cause in the issue of South African Apartheid.

Written by Little Steven (Van Zant), formerly of Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band and now leader of his own Disciples of Soul, Sun City

features musicians that cross every possible cultural and national barrier. From Afrika Bambaataa to Bruce Springsteen, from Jackson Browne to Peter Gabriel, from Daryl Hall to Ringo Starr and his son Zak Starkey to Pete Townshend, to name just a few, Sun City is a compelling attack on South Africa's system of racial domination.

The project was also conceived by Little Steven, after he visited South Africa twice

earlier this year. Its main verse "Don't ask me Sun City, cuz I ain't gonna play, I ain't gonna play" is in reference to the very real Sun City, a Las Vegas or Disneyland-like resort which caters only to whites. Set in the midst of impoverished Bophuthatswana, one of the so-called 'tribal homelands' created by the South African regime as an integral component of its racist rule, Sun City represents part of the reality of Apartheid - South Africa's system of racial laws which

deprive Blacks of their basic human rights.

It is racism made bureaucratic, yet it is a bloody bureaucracy, claiming hundreds of lives in the last year or so, and with hints of more carnage to come.

In contrast to the Ethiopian situation last year, which is essentially a "natural" problem exacerbated by politics, the tragedy of South Africa

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