

PRESS RELEASE

LU DLAMINI: ULIMILAM

ONE OF A KIND

Words by Gisele Turner

Originality is a rare quality; it is also a gift. Singer/ composer Lu Dlamini reveals her phenomenal talent through Ulimilam, a collection of songs that celebrate the capacity of the creative individual to personalise a signature art form and make it deeply appealing. Lu's voice has depth and range on the physical level; but it is the vehicle for soulful, intelligent and emotional comment in every note. A mature artist with a huge body of experience, this beautiful album is set to spark fires of passionate acknowledgement wherever it is heard.

Lu Dlamini pours her musical expertises and experience into Ulimilam; and it is an extraordinarily moving journey for the listener. She starts the album with her well known and evocative eMombasa, a powerfully constructed melody that unpacks a deep rooted history and traces her ancestry to the ancient peoples. Her next song continues the thought line; in *Icala Lami* she acknowledges her ancestors for their support in a song of praise and gratitude that is wrapped in contemporary melodic jazzy format.

Njabulo (Felicidad) takes full advantage of the astonishing beauty of Lu's naked voice, barely and suggestively supported by solo guitar, its rhythms and nuances perfectly accompanied by the exciting complexities of guitarist Nir Hermelin's virtuosity. Nir offers a sparkling solo to complement this Latino inspired beauty.

Khumbula Uthando is a love song to melt a granite mountain; the verses sparsely supported by piercing notes from the keyboards and delicate tapping from both bass and kit. This jazz infused song gets an injection of energy for the chorus which carries the richly romantic theme. *Umoya Wolwandle* goes in a totally different direction; an instrumental with insistent beating on the *umakhweyana* accompanied by the tabla and with flurries of high and happy penny whistle from Sphelele Dlamini.

Cishe is a *crie de couer*, accompanied by the same sensitive trio as *Khumbula Othando* namely Barney Boephla on keyboards, Bernard Mndaweni on bass and Paki Peleoele on drums. Sung in English and isiZulu, this song has a profoundly soul- gospel inspiration musically and is about personal recovery.

Erobamima returns to the perfect combination of expert guitar, this time with the delicate but certain touch of Demi Fernandez holding the gentle but potent vocal chant; an adaptation of a slave song shared by Venezuelan musician Edith Salazah. Here Lu interfaces an Nguni component with the original, creating a piece of great poignancy.

An Ode to Bavikile celebrates womanhood, fecundity, growth and nature in a way that evokes a time when the harmony of a woman was deeply connected with nature; this ode takes the form of an *umakweyana* duet featuring Bavikile Ngema, friend and teacher to Lu Dlamini. Shifting time and tide, the track *Walking* is dedicated to its creator Syd Kitchen, the irrepressible genius poet and musician

who left behind a huge body of phenomenal neo-African folk music. Lu's voice wraps itself around the melody like a soft warm glove and her chosen musicians Nux Schwartz on guitar, Barney Bophela on Organ, Mazamo Zungu on drums, and Mazwakhe Gumede on bass carry the beautifully articulated poem and her every nuance.

Okusha goes pop and bouncy with its mobile rhythms and catchy melodies and joyous vocals. It is light-hearted, but addresses the issue of cultural compatibility and the need to see beyond our outward differences. Madala Kunene's spoken voice adds spice and humour.

The 11 track album comes to an end with *Khumbul' Ekhaya*, a song steeped in charm and sweet nostalgia, exactly expressing the happy longing for home when far away. It is a blossoming of joy reflecting the magnetism of the place from where the heart learnt its most important lessons.

Ulimi-Lami, which was recorded at The Headroom, mixed by Marius Botha and Mastered In Switzerland by Richard Edwards is a triumphant album; it opens a treasure trove of magical yet disparate songs whilst keeping them all together in a harmonious and loving whole. It is Lu Dlamini's gift to those who can hear beyond the melodies and techniques to the place where she cradles the soul of a nation within the context of humanity itself.

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