



Citizen of the World

Mozambican jazz musician Moreira Chonguica is a child of Africa, but his music speaks to the world. CLASSICFEEL's Bazukile Diko talks to him about his second album, *The Moreira Project Volume 2: Citizen of the World*.

Moreira Chonguica officially announced his arrival on the South African jazz scene with his debut album, *The Moreira Project Volume 1: The Journey*, in December 2005. Although he was relatively unknown and didn't have the backing of a big recording company, the album was nominated for three South African Music Awards (SAMAs). 'I didn't have a budget for marketing, no exclusive videos... but the album received nominations for the SAMA[s],' says Chonguica. 'Now that equals pressure, but I love positive pressure.' Much of *The Journey* was written, produced and recorded while the musician was still studying jazz performance at the University of Cape Town's (UCT) South African College of Music and was shaped by his life experience at the time. Since 2005, Chonguica has travelled extensively all over the world, influencing the way his second album, *Citizen of the World*, has evolved.

Chonguica has during his musical career collaborated with a variety of artists including pianists Mark Fransman and Camillo Lombard, saxophonist Manu Dibango and young up-and-coming musicians from UCT. These collaborations, which have seen the musician play with a rock band one day and top Cape Town DJs the next, have sustained the songwriter, producer and composer's passion for music. 'I love music. My background is in jazz, but I just love music so much that I collaborate with DJs, rappers... It feeds my soul,' the versatile musician notes. Chonguica also collaborates with well-known art photographer Zwelethu Mthethwa, who has been documenting the travels of the Moreira Project for a couple of years, and it is some of these images that grace the latest album's liner, lending its orange and white design a vibrant edge.

Chonguica wants his music to have depth and relevance to society. As with any musician, he does not create music in isolation, but rather takes inspiration from everything that is happening around him. The result is a sound that is both rich and emotional. '*Citizen of the World* is where I am at the moment,' he explains, 'the world is in crisis with economic recession, the war in Iraq, natural disasters and oil prices going up... The album is a reflection for me of what is happening around me now.'

His awareness of the world around him doesn't only influence his approach to music; it has also prompted him in his personal capacity to invest money and time in the Escola Nacional de Music (National School of Music) in Mozambique. 'With the

funds they painted the school. I also do workshops with students but it is beyond how much you donate, it's beyond how beautiful the school looks; it's about soul,' he says. Two years ago, while visiting the school, he was pleasantly surprised when he was lead into a classroom of 35 young girls playing saxophone. 'I said, "This is a man's instrument. Girls!"' Chonguica says with a grin. 'I thought to myself, this is beautiful.'

I am curious about the philosophy behind Chonguica's music and he explains that he wishes to touch people's lives. 'I am a human being first before a musician. I can't ignore the epidemics, all this drama happening; I can't ignore success either. *Citizen of the World* for me is a continuation of my philosophy to touch people's lives.' The passion that he feels when he records and when he talks about his music also translates to his live performances. Those who have had the pleasure of seeing him

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perform have described him as 'energetic' and 'moving'. 'For me, live performances are the best,' he shares, saying that he can't wait to show fans what the album has to offer at various festivals this year in Cape Town, Zanzibar, Johannesburg, Zimbabwe and Brazil. 'The way *Citizen of the World* was recorded is the same as a live performance – I wanted you [the listener] to be able to imagine being there.'

Chonguica attributes the emotional power of his latest album to the calibre of musicians that he worked with. He describes the album, saying, 'It is positive, it's hope, it's bright, it's tomorrow,' and continues that fans and first-timers 'won't regret' buying *Citizen of the World*. 'I'm not stopping,' the musician concludes. 'On the last song on my album I say, "I will be back." I will be back making honest and true music.' **CF**