

Xhosa Cole (Stanley Arts, Norwood, Int. Jazz Day, 30 April)

11 April 2022

"I think people can underestimate the capacity that this music has to transform you emotionally and spiritually. We take that task and that job very seriously." Xhosa Cole.

Among the London gigs due to take place on International Jazz Day this year is a concert by a fine instrumentalist with a rapidly growing profile, at a venue also becoming known for its original programming: Stanley Arts in Norwood will be welcoming Birmingham saxophonist Xhosa Cole and his quartet on Saturday 30 April.

*Cole won BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year in 2018 and recently released his debut album, **K(no)w Them, K(no)w Us**, in 2021. He has continued to grow as an artist over the past few years, even co-creating the short film **Stationary Peaceful Protest** over lockdown. A new album, **Ibeji**, is in preparation.*

Playing alongside Cole on International Jazz Day will be Steve Saunders on guitar, Ben Love on double bass, and Nathan England-Jones on drums, whom he describes as "three very open musicians who are like-minded and up for taking risks, most of which are successful, some of which fail, but when we do end up in tricky situations we always support each other and get out of them, making for a very dynamic performance and exciting experience for everyone involved, the band and audience included."
Preview/interview by Evie Hill ():*

LondonJazz News: *What repertoire will you be playing on 30 April, and what lies behind your choices?*

Xhosa Cole: We're going to be playing the music of Thelonious Monk, the great African-American composer. I feel a strong connection with his music as he grew up around many people from the Caribbean in Harlem. I think his music and melodies resonate with me and I feel like there's a lot of room for expansion within the template that he has provided musically. I find there's a lot of freedom within his compositions.

LJN: *Is this your regular band set up, and what do you enjoy about playing with this group of musicians?*

XC: This is the latest line up I have been playing with regularly. Three very open musicians who are like-minded and up for taking risks, most of which are successful, some of which fail, but when we do end up in tricky situations we always support each other and get out of them, making for a very dynamic performance and exciting experience for everyone involved, the band and audience included.



Xhosa Cole. Publicity photo supplied

LJN: *And you/we will be celebrating International Jazz Day...*

XC: For me, every day is International Jazz Day. I am deeply immersed in this music and it's great to be able to celebrate it with everyone who's focusing and shining a light on this music. Any chance to play is a great opportunity and we're looking forward to celebrating the day with you, your venue and your audience.

LJN: *Congratulations on the release of K(no)w Them, K(no)w Us last year! Following this release, do you have any idea what musical directions you'll be taking in 2022?*

XC: At the moment I am still working a lot on developing my sound through experiencing, working alongside, and collaborating with, various musicians from different traditions and backgrounds. I'm learning a lot about different concepts of music-making from the African Diaspora at the moment and have been fortunate to work alongside some very talented musicians as we prepare for the next album *Ibeji*, which features seven different percussionists from the African Diaspora, and it will be incoming at the end of 2022.

LJN: *How have things changed for you musically since winning BBC Young Jazz Musician in 2018?*

XC: The BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year award put life into fast forward for me. It helped open more quickly some doors that may have taken longer to open. It enabled me to connect with lots of different musicians and to work, be challenged by, and be supported by, many different mentors. The main benefits were the opportunity to connect with different people, to put Birmingham on the map and to represent and be represented on that platform and on that stage.

LJN: *Is there anything in particular you want audiences to take away from the gig on 30 April?*

XC: We will go in with the same intention as we always do, which is to leave people in a better condition and state than when they arrived at the performance. It's a sacred opportunity to be able to perform for people live, and to celebrate this music and celebrate life through the expression of the music. I think people can underestimate the capacity that this music has to transform you emotionally and spiritually. We take that task and that job very seriously and we hope to see many toes tapping and faces smiling in bliss from listening to our music.



(*) *Evie Hill is Assistant Producer at Stanley Arts*