



Ladysmith Black Mambazo Blurbs

“It isn’t merely the grace and power of their dancing or the beauty of their singing that rivets the attention, but the sheer joy and love that emanates from their being.”

Paul Simon

“If the creative discipline and good spirits of the South African singing group Ladysmith Black Mambazo are any indication of the prevailing will and temperament of its homeland, South Africa has great chance of completing its transition from racist tyranny to equal-rights democracy with joy, not further bloodshed.”

The Los Angeles Times

"Undulating rhythmic phrases that push and pull ... harmonising that is both ethereal and earthy."

World Music, UK

For an a cappella group that began in 1973 and won three Grammys, Ladysmith's voice is still resilient and timeless.”

PopEater

“Above all LBM leave their audience in awe of the power and variety of the human voice and its ability to conjure up sounds which evoke the beauty and atmosphere of a land far away. What a gift.”

Yorkshire Post

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LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO KEEP THE MUSIC OF THEIR CHILDHOOD ALIVE

***Songs From A Zulu Farm* Set For Release On February 1, 2011**

Since their earliest recordings and performances, the South African-based Grammy Award-winning a cappella group Ladysmith Black Mambazo – as individuals and as a group – have maintained a respect and a reverence for their past. Indeed, the centuries-old story of their homeland – sometimes joyous, sometimes troubled, but always rich and exhilarating – has been at the very foundation of this vocal group since its very beginning.

But alongside the South African history witnessed by an entire world, there's a quieter, more personal past shared by the members of Ladysmith Black Mambazo – a time of youth and innocence, when the world consisted of nothing more than the hills and open fields of their parents' farms in Zulu country. Before the stage performances, before the collaborations with American pop stars, before the Grammy nominations and awards, before all of that and so much more, the only songs these children knew were the traditional folk tunes handed down to them by their parents, their grandparents, and the countless generations that preceded them.

And yet, for all the decades that have come and gone, these songs are still very much alive. Ladysmith Black Mambazo shares them with the world in their new recording, ***Songs From A Zulu Farm***, on Listen 2 Entertainment Group / Razor and Tie set for release on February 1, 2011. Taking the many songs and stories of their youth and adding new lyrics, founder and frontman Joseph Shabalala and the other eight members of the group recreate the idyllic world in which they once lived and offers a glimpse of it to fans and audiences around the globe. To say this is their most personal work to date would be an understatement.

"These are songs from the earliest time in our lives," says Shabalala. "These are stories our fathers and mothers and other relatives shared with us, songs our grandparents sang. We have changed them somewhat and/or added extra harmonies and lyrics, but overall these songs represent an important memory of our early life. When we sing these songs, we're singing songs from our history. It is such a joy for us to put these stories and songs together for our fans to enjoy too."

Included among the sixteen tracks on *Songs From A Zulu Farm* is “Old McDonald...Zulu Style,” a South African rendition of the well known children’s song, “Old McDonald Had a Farm.” This original classic is reworked in ways never before imagined as it is piped through the language and culture of the Zulu people.

Less familiar to Western audiences – but no less engaging – are the various traditional tunes taken directly from the Zulu culture. Some are cautionary tales: “Imithi Gobakahle” (“Children Come Home”) calls the children inside when the skies grow dark and a rainstorm threatens, while “Ekhaya” (“Don’t Leave Home too Soon”) encourages teenagers to stay with their families until they are truly ready to live on their own. Other songs are about the various mischievous and troublesome animals so prevalent in Zulu country: “Ntulube” (“Away, You River Snakes”), is an attempt to chase snakes and frogs out of the river to make the water better for swimming, while “Uthekwane” (“The Prettiest Bird?”) is an ode to a vain bird who boasts of her beauty to the other animals.

Toward the end of the sequence, Shabalala professes his love and longing for the times and places of his youth in “Thalaza,” a song he composed to encourage Zulus – and people of every nation and culture – to reconnect to innocence of their younger years.

“Your roots are who you are,” says Shabalala, who revisits the farmland of his youth every month. “I’ve read somewhere that it is very common for people to move back to their childhood home later in life. This is true for many people I know. I go home to see the sights I’ve known since I was a baby. I see that field and I see my father and my mother standing with me as a little boy. I love going home because it is just that...home.”

While *Songs From A Zulu Farm* may originate from the culture of South Africa, they speak to certain joys of childhood that are universal. “Whether you are in Ladysmith, Virginia, or Ladysmith, South Africa, there are children being told – or being sung – stories that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. These are the same stories and songs that they too will share with their children. We hope that these songs sung to children in South Africa can be shared with and enjoyed by families in other places in the world.”

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Ladysmith Black Mambazo: Back to the Beginning

by NPR STAFF - January 30, 2011

Ladysmith Black Mambazo has been singing the story of South Africa for more than 40 years. The a cappella group gained worldwide fame when Paul Simon featured it on his 1986 album *Graceland*. Since then, it's performed with everyone from Stevie Wonder to Dolly Parton, and for everyone from the queen of England to the Pope. Now, Ladysmith Black Mambazo is going back to the beginning. The group has recorded a new album, *Songs From a Zulu Farm*, which collects songs traditionally sung by Zulu parents to their children.

"There's such a rich, wonderful history. A personal history that comes from the group that's not always found in their CDs," Mitch Goldstein, the band's manager, tells *Weekend Edition Sunday* host Liane Hansen. "When we were sitting down and talking about the next project they wanted to work on, I suggested that they share with their audience — with their fans — their personal side.

"I've been to the farms where they grew up outside of Ladysmith [a town in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa]," Goldstein says. "When I'm there with Joseph [Shabalala], the founder of the group, and Albert [Mazibuko], they share stories of their childhood and the songs and what their parents used to teach them."

One of those songs, "Imithi Gobakahle (Children Come Home)," gives the children a warning of approaching weather.

"It's for when the storms come," says Mazibuko, an original member and cousin of Shabalala. "It's a warning song. It's when we call the children to come to a safe place."

Another example of this can be found in "Ntulube (Away, You River Snakes)."

"This is a song we used to sing when we are going swimming," Mazibuko says. "When we have another creature we don't want to share the water with, like snakes, frogs. It works all the time."

The songs on *Farm* have been teaching generations of children in Ladysmith.

"When my grandmother told me about the songs, she said that their parents were singing the same songs to them," Mazibuko says. "Because in our culture, we learn something from other people and they take it down to the next generation."

At 69, Shabalala still tours with the band to support *Songs From a Zulu Farm*. Goldstein says Shabalala remains adamant about performing and traveling with Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

"Albert on the stage, every night, announces that the group was formed almost 50 years ago by Joseph," Goldstein says. "They do the arithmetic and marvel at how old he must be."

At this point, Goldstein says he doesn't see Shabalala doing anything else.

"He always says, 'This is my life, this is my love, this is what I want to do.'"

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Review: Ladysmith Black Mambazo

By Sheena Hastings

Published on **Friday 17 June 2011 04:58**

At Leeds Town Hall

South African a capella vocal group Ladysmith Black Mambazo shot to worldwide fame in the 1980s, with their contribution to Paul Simon's Grammy-award-winning Graceland album. They've gone on to earn their own Grammys and an affectionate and loyal following around the globe. The nine-man ensemble are a hard-grafting lot, who bring quirkiness and great good humour to their act. Still led by their incredibly limber 69-year-old founder Thomas Shabalala and creating sounds as subtle, exciting and perfect as ever, the group – which includes four of Shabalala's sons – sing as one, yet each manages to express his individuality.

This tour focuses on LBM's latest album, Songs from a Zulu Farm, reaching back into the childhood of the founder and expressing stories of animals, fairytales and innocent games. But also in the mix are a fun Zulu version of Old Macdonald Had A Farm and of course Homeless, a nod to the breakthrough relationship with friend and mentor Paul Simon.

Added to the often mesmeric energy of the harmonies were high-kicking contests, a few break-dancing moves and thigh-slapping routines. Shabalala says he will, on retirement, hand over the reins to his son Thamsanqa, but there was no evidence here that dad's powers are diminishing yet. Above all LBM leave their audience in awe of the power and variety of the human voice and its ability to conjure up sounds which evoke the beauty and atmosphere of a land far away. What a gift.

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CD Review: **Ladysmith Black Mambazo** - "Songs From a Zulu Farm"

By Glyn Phillips

Africa's most famous choral group **Ladysmith Black Mambazo** maintain their international reputation for vocal excellence with this latest album: "**Songs From a Zulu Farm**" (released **7th February** 2011 in UK). It is possibly their most personal album to date, as the group's founder **Joseph Shabalala** takes us back to the farms and natural world of his childhood to sing songs learnt at his grandparents' knees in the KwaZulu-Natal of the 40s and 50s - "a world of innocence of joy".

If you're already familiar with LBM (and it's hard to imagine anyone either within the world music scene or even in the mainstream that hasn't heard their music at some point over the last 50 years) then you'll know what to expect and you won't be disappointed. If you're young enough not to have heard them then you can look forward to rich traditional Zulu songs, lush harmonies, breathy vocals, clicks and whirs and zummms and that peculiar ability that Ladysmith Black Mambazo possess - to transport your spirit to the hills and plains of South Africa. The Ladysmiths work purely in the South African '**isicathamiya**' acapella style mixing undulating rhythmic phrases that push and pull underneath the lead melodic lines, with harmonising that is both ethereal and earthy at the same time. This is music that is both great to play on your computer whilst working (the voices and rhythms seem to massage your soul - very calming indeed), as well as to get up and dance around your living room and for a moment imagine yourself swaying through the warmth and wide open vistas around this musical Zulu farm. This is a very natural album, both in sound and spirit. The band supply most of the sounds of farm life too (listen for the clucking chickens!).

The album's title gives away the central theme of the album and this is backed up by the names of tracks such as "The Biting Chicken", "Bad Donkey", "Praise the Cows and Bulls", "Away You River Snakes" and "Wake Up Little Chicks"; and besides troublesome fowl and serpents the songs reflect upon other aspects of country life: teenagers that want to leave the farm and their families, magic to encourage crops, exhortations for the clouds to move out of the way of the sun, the tale of an ugly bird that thinks she's beautiful, the power of thunder, the sound of children playing in puddles, and Joseph Shabalala's homage to roots and home and identity.

And to round it all off? What else but the world's favourite agricultural song: "Old McDonald Had a Farm - Zulu Style"! Trust me, you won't have heard it like this before. This is to be the first in a series of three albums dealing with the band's journey through life. **Ladysmith Black Mambazo** will be touring the album in the UK: **19th May - 26th June** 2011. Catch them while you can!

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Ladysmith Black Mambazo Sustain South Africa's Voice Through Music

By Jett Wells **Posted** Jan 25th 2011

You know them from 'The Lion King' soundtrack, but Nelson Mandela once called them "South Africa's cultural ambassadors." Since then, Ladysmith Black Mambazo has continued to take Mandela's message of peace and spread it around the world.

For an a cappella group that began in 1973 and won three Grammys, Ladysmith's voice is still resilient and timeless. Original member Albert Mazibuko tells **PopEater** the group strives to sing to more generations to come, especially with new album 'Songs from a Zulu Farm' on the way.

What did it mean to you when Nelson Mandela referred to you as cultural ambassadors of your nation?

This was the highest honor for us. To be singled out by Nelson Mandela told us that we needed to look at ourselves, as a group, differently. We truly represented our nation and had to continuously understand that responsibility.

What kind of responses do you see while touring internationally? Was it always open arms, or was it hard to translate a South African sound?

It seemed, and still seems, that people truly open their arms and minds to what we do. People understand we represent our nation and culture and want to share this with everyone. People seem to want to embrace what we offer.

Do you see the group as more about music or sending a message, acting as teachers?

That is an interesting question. I think the message is most important, but we use the music to deliver the message. And in doing so we want to be teachers. It's really all as one -- very intertwined for us. I guess we see ourselves as teachers bringing a message through our singing.

How's the progress with the Mambazo Academy? Is it completely built yet?

Sadly, the progress is very slow. There are so many things changing in South Africa and only a little bit of money to go around. We do spend most of our spare time, when we are home, teaching the young ones about the culture and its history. But doing so in an organized academy has not occurred.

You've collaborated with so many notable musicians like Michael Jackson, Paul McCartney and Paul Simon. What's your best memory from those experiences?

Yes, we have been honored to be asked by so many famous and important people, so to pick just one out is very difficult. Of course the Paul Simon memory is the most important for us. We recently worked with Josh Groban, and I think this was different because he is of a new generation, and when we met him he showed that he really loved what we do. So knowing our singing has affected a new generation of artists was touching.

You've also provided music for so many films. Do you find it surreal that moviegoers see these movies and hear your voice without knowing it?

I've met people who say, "I saw this movie and it sounded like the filmmakers copied your sound for the film," and it turns out it was us. So it is funny to see people's reactions when they learn that what they heard was actually us.

The group has shifted over the years. Which years had the best ensemble?

Well, the group we are now has been pretty steady since 1993. Since then we lost a couple of members, but 1993 was important to us. That is when our leader, Joseph Shabalala, had three of his sons join the group. This is the next generation of Mambazo. So, after us older fellas move along they will carry on for many years. Joseph has said the group is more than one or two people. It's a cultural entity that should continue on for decades.

Do you compare your success at all to that of Buena Vista Social Club? If so, what do you think of them?

I've heard of that group but I do not know their music. I think there is a community of cultural groups that should continue on for many years. They are truly one of them. I know the Chieftans too. And the Blind Boys of Alabama. I'm glad to know all of these groups have success.

Is there any kind of new music today that you like? American pop music, perhaps?

It seems a new sound or style comes along every few years, and it all has something interesting to say. I like hearing where music goes, how it changes, the sounds and styles. I have to say I most enjoy simple singing. I don't like when they use machines to manipulate voices. Pure vocal is the most beautiful sound to listen to, I feel.

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