

Solanke, Orlando Julius.... Meeting of Veterans

Orlando Julius monthly concert at O' jez Club, Onike, Yaba, Lagos assumes a special dimension tonight with veteran actor and musician, Jumi Solanke jamming with the band. The show promises to be remarkable in many respects.

Ever since Jimi was invited to Lagos last month to savour the honour of being celebrated on the occasion of his 60th birthday, his enthusiasm for musical performance has been ignited. The experience reminded him of the past when, in addition to acting he moved round the clubs and performed with almost every band, in concert.

On the occasion of his birthday, he performed with the Classic Band led by Y.S Akinnibosun whom he knew only as a sideman in those highlife days of the early sixties. And with guitarist Apaipa Jay in the band to provide ideal highlife chords of the palm wine type, Solanke sang to his own delight almost all the songs that made him famous including *Onilegogoro* which he wrote for Roy Chicago.

On hand to remind him of the same old feeling was Tunde Osofisan who was with Roy Chicago at the time the song was added to the band's extensive repertoire. They both doubled on vocals, not in counterpoint, but in a lateral, harmonic style.

Jimi's exploits with Roy Chicago's outfit were occasional. The band was based in Lagos, at Abalabi Hotel, Olorunsogo, Mushin, while Jimi was based in Ibadan. But he had a regular stints with Orlando Julius whose big band dictated the entertainment pace at Independence Hotel, Ibadan. Jimi did not only sing his own compositions which the band released and played very well, he also sang O J's songs which were then very popular. This explains the essence of this meeting.

A trait which is still peculiar to Orlando Julius is his ability to establish simple, harmonic progressions that offer the opportunity for any one to join in. One of the qualities which has continued to characterise his performances is the energetic effort at solo opportunities. In those days, it was mainly the alto saxophone which he employed to instil confidence in his sidemen. These days, it is the tenor which he plays with so much technical ease, issuing phrases that his audience love to identify with.

On the other hand, a significant quality which continues to characterise Jimi's singing style, is the ability to communicate deeply and directly with his audience, a positive quality that is the cumulative effect of his immense capability as an actor.

As the two veterans meet tonight, they would remember the good times they had together at Independence Hotel, Ibadan in terms of complimenting each other's musical abilities. Both of them are singers, and they dueted together in those days on certain tunes. And as musicians with the flair for jazz, some of the songs are bound to enjoy some elevation in terms of fusion. Jimi has always vocalised with the 'Preachers' (a jazz group) both in terms of using his voice as an instrument and a mind, in terms of expressing himself in words.

The two musicians have this readiness for instant performance, a trait which has become a natural phenomenon. O J. for instance, feels the urge to add his instrumental voice to whatever music he hears.

For this reason, he often goes about with his tenor saxophone, cumbersome though it is in terms of weight. And because he is a genuine artist, he never waits to be introduced or invited to the stage before he promptly creeps in, his saxophone slung over his neck.

The same goes for Jimi Solanke who would in fact naturally gravitate towards entertainment venues to hear the musicians out and possibly become part of the music-making. These are the attributes of true artists.