



Helping the **responsible traveller** find undiscovered, authentic experiences in southern Africa

Afrika T *by Kurt Ackermann*

FRIDAY, 30 APRIL 2010

A Country Imagined - list of episodes and synopses

[update: 21 February 2011 - A Country Imagined wins SAFTA award - the South African Oscars. Details [here](#).

update: 18 September 2010 - the boxed DVD set is now available. Details [here](#).

update: 12 July 2010 - I've gotten word that ~~a boxed DVD set is in the works and may be available as soon as August 2010. As more details become available, I'll post them here.~~

~~Also, I understand that SABC is planning to rebroadcast the entire series and are looking for a timeslot to run it in. Apparently the conflicts with the World Cup kept viewership down, and given all the positive feedback they've gotten over the series they want to run it when there isn't such overwhelming competition for audience. Again, as more details become available, I'll post them here. The series was rebroadcast in December 2010/January 2011.]~~

Given the numbers of visitors to Afrika T who are searching for information on the SABC 2 TV documentary series I wrote for, **A Country Imagined**, and getting just [the twinkly little announcement post I made](#) before the first episode aired, I feel compelled to post more on the series and the episodes themselves. As



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yet, there is no web site from SABC on the series, so this may be the best source in the interim.

A Country Imagined: Series synopsis:

From the industrial mining landscapes that have inspired the novels of Nadine Gordimer and the drawings of William Kentridge - to the hills of the Kwa-Zulu Natal Midlands - the setting for Cry the Beloved Country and the harmonies of Ladysmith Black Mambazo - the South African landscape is extravagant and diverse.

A Country Imagined takes us on a journey through South Africa and explores the landscapes that have inspired artists, writers, musicians and dancers for centuries.

Presented by one of South Africa's most loved and famous musicians - Johnny Clegg - who is also an anthropologist - A Country Imagined takes us through South Africa's most beautiful spaces - and through this, we explore the rich history of art and the "imaginings" of our society.

The programmes introduce us to South African artists and their work as well as the landscapes they work with. Some, like Nadine Gordimer, Olive Schreiner, Hugh Masekela, Gerard Sekoto, William Kentridge and David Goldblatt are known around the world. Others, will soon be. Some - like the bead workers and potters of remote rural villages have produced works without signatures. A Country Imagined brings them all together through a fascinating exploration of art and artists set against a backdrop of scenery and a vexed and dramatic history.

Shot on HD, with remarkable aerial, historical and time-lapse photography, A Country Imagined is a thirteen x one hour series, set to be aired from Sunday, 25 April 2010 on SABC2 at 21h00.

Episode synopses (I believe these are in order of their airing, but am not certain):

THE REEF (aired 25 April 2010)

Beginning at the site of world's greatest cataclysm, which created the natural landscape and geology of the Reef, Johnny Clegg follows that elusive thread of gold, and the manmade landscape it has created in its wake, to discover the diverse ways in which artists have imagined and responded to it. On his journey Johnny meets artists Marcus Neustetter, Willem Boshoff, Sam Nhlengethwa, David

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Goldblatt, Hugh Masekela and Jo Ractliffe. He also ventures down the world's deepest gold mine; samples age-old distilled beverages, and revisits memories of his childhood growing up on the reef.

EASTERN CAPE

A land of frontiers - physical, political and social - for centuries, Johnny Clegg makes his way through the densely layered histories of the Eastern Cape that are embedded in its landscapes, and its arts. This fascinating passage takes him from the Great Fish River to the towering Amathole Mountains; from the birthplaces of Nelson Mandela and Enoch Sontonga to the site of a devastating prophecy. Along the way he meets artists, dancers and musicians who bring to bear their own commentaries and creative responses to these histories and awe-inspiring landscapes.

NORTHERN CAPE

Johnny Clegg ventures through deep, forgotten histories as well as current stories in the Northern Cape as they unfold along the great Gariep river, surrounded by a semi-desert landscape. From ancient caves and ancient artworks to sinister tales of watersnake spirits, Johnny also uncovers bold, vital contemporary expressions in this severe landscape that create a parallel fluid lifeline through a harsh, dry land.

KAROO - A LONELINESS THAT IS FULFILLING

The long, desolate stretch of the N1 highway is Johnny Clegg's starting point in his journey through the Karoo. Along this journey he tries to understand that particular quality of silence and loneliness that defines this area: a loneliness that is fulfilling. Encountering some of the Karoo's most surprising and inspiring art and artists along the way, these stories are as moving as they are eccentric in a place that from the outside appears blank, but which, through stopping to really look, reveals itself to be a place of rich, hidden treasures.

FREE STATE - A SPIRITUAL PLAIN:

Anticipating a terrain steeped in its politically conservative reputation, Johnny Clegg discovers

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instead a very different reality and engagement with this land. Travelling through the intoxicating golden light of the Free State, past its vast, graceful farmlands and lyrical sandstone koppies, to extraordinary ancient rock art and other sites of deep spiritual connection, Johnny follows this radiant trail of space and spirit to experience the lesser known nature of this region.

CAPE TOWN:

Johnny Clegg navigates his way over and around the majestic beacon of the city of Cape Town, Table Mountain, to gauge the different lived perspectives of those that look onto it - and what the mountain represents to them. Johnny tracks various tales of the mountain: from untameable beast and bold giant, to the idyllic poetry inspired by the grapes it nurtures at its foot. He follows the city through its fields of fresh water springs to its harsh and dusty flatlands. He considers areas that stand as grim markers of devastation and loss, alongside people that still find the spirit to celebrate in spite of it. Johnny meets a host of amazing artists along his way through the city, including Sue Williamson, Hasan and Husain Essop and Andrew Putter, graffiti artist, Falko, poets James Matthews and Bernie Amansure, and novelist, Sindiwe Magona.

KLEIN KAROO/GARDEN ROUTE - ANCIENT PATHWAYS

Johnny Clegg follows the ancient pathways that meander from the densely forested coastline of the Garden Route, over the mountains into the Little Karoo. These pathways lead him to follow tales of fabled elephants and monumental trees to accounts of mermaids and watermeide that hide in rocky pools; and ultimately to the artists that draw upon these long existing migrations and imaginings to conjure their own artistic expressions along the way.

JOZI - A TERRIBLE BEAUTY

Unlike the classically beautiful natural landscapes of many other parts of the country, Johnny Clegg explores the particular, peculiar beauty of the City of Gold - of eGoli - of Johannesburg. A constructed city of the imagination, that builds and rebuilds above as much as it burrows and tunnels below; that builds forests where only veld should naturally grow, and that garners shiny minerals when only yellow dust is evident, the art that Jozi has born is imbued with a comparable energy: bold, gutsy, urban and forthright. Meet artists David Koloane, Senzeni Marasela, William Kentridge, Kudzanai Chiurai, Anton Kannemeyer and Stephen Hobbs as they take Johnny on an urban voyage of

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discovery.

KWAZULU-NATAL - LIVING THE PAST THROUGH THE PRESENT

Johnny Clegg ventures into the heart of Zululand - his creative and spiritual home - and up to the coast of KwaZulu-Natal, to discover the multiple ways in which long tradition plays itself out in contemporary living. This epic and privileged journey through Johnny's heartland reveals the complex histories and incredible creative legacies that have so richly shaped this region.

THE MAGICAL NORTH

Beyond the Tropic of Capricorn, north along the Soutpansberg Mountains towards Zimbabwe, exists a region of the country that is almost opaque and impenetrable to an outsider, palpably shrouded in mystery, magic and steeped in belief. It is also the site of one of the richest and most extraordinary artistic communities in the country - specifically renowned for an elaborate woodcarving tradition that goes back centuries - as well as for one of the country's most admired beading traditions. Through the artists that live and create here, Johnny is offered access through some of these veils, bringing further depth and meaning to that which is already so apparently powerful.

THE PLACE OF STORYTELLERS

The north-western parts of the country have long been home to some of South Africa's most revered and often flamboyant storytellers, and Johnny Clegg is following their thread. From those who have magically spun yarns with words to transport us into other realms of experience and adventure, to artists whose rich visions allow us keys into other worlds of seeing, Johnny makes his way - partly onboard a hot air balloon - through this wonderfully imaginative bushveld terrain, from Mafikeng to Groot Marico, and Mabopane to the Magaliesberg, meeting some amazing storyteller artists, including Tommy Motswai, Titus Matiyane, Norman Catherine, Ma Grace Masuku, Egbert van Bart and John Moolman.

MPUMALANGA - COMING HOME

Known mostly as bushveld and 'Big Five' country, interspersed with dramatic and spectacular lush hills, valleys, rivers and waterfalls, Johnny heads into Mpumalanga to find what else exists beyond boyhood dreams of adventure and taming the wilderness. Bordering on sister countries, Swaziland



[Afrigator](#)

and Mozambique, and along the provincial borders of Limpopo, Gauteng, the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal, this region has been the long-time space of numerous migrations of people from many, many places. Johnny follows the histories and arts of some of them, through this place that for many, at some stage, has represented home.

DRAKENSBERG - TAMING THE DRAGON

This final episode of the series finds Johnny Clegg high up in caves in the towering and majestic landscape of the Drakensberg mountains of KwaZulu-Natal. Against this awe-inspiring backdrop, Johnny contemplates the extraordinary art of the San, and down below, discovers other pockets of humanity -inspired artists who still work and create, spiritedly and passionately, to create playful gestures that “tame the dragon”.

If there are any questions about the production, artists, locations, artwork or whatever, I'm happy to field those and do my best to get them answered - just leave a comment.



Labels: [art](#), [Cape Town](#), [Drakensberg](#), [Eastern Cape](#), [film](#), [Johannesburg](#), [KwaZulu-Natal](#), [Limpopo](#), [Mpumalanga](#), [Northern Cape](#), [shameless self promotion](#), [south africa](#)

15 comments:



Anonymous [6 May 2010 at 14:48:00 GMT+2](#)

Is there any way someone in the United States can watch this?

[Reply](#)**Kurt Ackermann** [6 May 2010 at 15:22:00 GMT+2](#)

Right now the SABC is flighting this in the South African market only on their SABC2 channel. There has been some interest from what I've heard from international distributors, but no deal that I'm aware of. There has also been talk of a DVD series being issued (which I feel is likely to happen) but nothing concrete as yet. As soon as I know anything about broader distribution I will write a new post about it.

[Reply](#)**Anonymous** [10 May 2010 at 13:34:00 GMT+2](#)

bring on the dvd please!!!! what a fantastic series! incredible research and production. cant wait to have it on dvd and give to all my overseas friends!

[Reply](#)**Stuart Wedlake** [13 May 2010 at 07:54:00 GMT+2](#)

The BEST TV documentary entertainment I have watched in years.
We need MORE of these series looking at S Africa from an Artistic and Historical perspective. I just hope we have some of Johnny Clegg's music in the parts of the series still to be aired.
Simply the Best.
Stuart. Knysna

[Reply](#)

Kurt Ackermann 13 May 2010 at 10:24:00 GMT+2

Yes, Stuart - some classic Johnny Clegg music this Sunday in the Northern Cape episode...and there's more in future episodes as well. The series isn't about Johnny per se, but he is a prominent SA artist whose work speaks to the landscape, so his work has been incorporated in places where appropriate. And thanks for the feedback.

FYI, Once the series has finished, I'll compile all the comments posted here and forward them on so that the SABC has a chance to hear what you think.

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 14 May 2010 at 22:57:00 GMT+2

please, please, release a dvd of the series!!! so that those of us overseas can also watch...

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 16 May 2010 at 22:19:00 GMT+2

I'd love DVDs of the series to send to family overseas. When will these be released?

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 2 June 2010 at 13:24:00 GMT+2

I LURVE this series - the pace is just right, it isn't hammering you over the head with political correctness, wails of nationalism, or endless waffle: makes you appreciate the wonderful and charmingly eccentric people of South Africa even more. And the photography . . . ! If I were an artist who had a picture shown on the series I would be a bit bitter, as the camerawork surrounding the glimpse of the artwork is outstanding.

[Reply](#)



Kurt Ackermann 12 July 2010 at 10:30:00 GMT+2

Hi all - some good news on 2 fronts:

1. the series apparently will be rebroadcast and SABC is looking for a suitable timeslot
2. a DVD boxed set is being worked on and may be ready as soon as August

I'll give updates here as more info is available on both items.

[Reply](#)



Kurt Ackermann [18 September 2010 at 10:12:00 GMT+2](#)

Boxed DVD sets now available!

I've created a separate post with all the information and photos.

<http://www.afrika-t.com/2010/09/country-imagined-dvds-available-now.html>

[Reply](#)



Anonymous [1 April 2011 at 17:52:00 GMT+2](#)

Where can one get hold of the DVD boxed set?

Many thanks

AE grobler

[Reply](#)



Kurt Ackermann [1 April 2011 at 18:33:00 GMT+2](#)

Hi there - DVD information provided on the blog here:

<http://www.afrika-t.com/2010/09/country-imagined-dvds-available-now.html>

[Reply](#)

Anonymous [7 September 2011 at 08:54:00 GMT+2](#)



Hello Kurt, I just watched the first episode and even though I am not South African and I have never even been there I was just captivated by the stories and the wonderful music used in the show. Can't wait to watch the rest of the episodes. Would love to find out more information about the music used in the series. It's so hauntingly beautiful. Can't get the songs out of my head. Where can I find information on the songs/artists featured? Thank you!

[Reply](#)



Anonymous [29 October 2011 at 22:19:00 GMT+2](#)

Hi. Please could you tell me who the artist is of a photograph of a Giant African man striding across a street of old Johannesburg, the pic was in black and white. Many Thanks

[Reply](#)



[Kurt Ackermann](#) [1 November 2011 at 08:44:00 GMT+2](#)

Hello Anonymous. That is a work titled "Joburg Man" by Arlene Amaler-Raviv and Dale Yudelman. Check out Dale Yudelman's website with further info at <http://www.daleyudelman.com/index.php#mi=2&pt=1&pi=10000&s=5&p=8&a=0&at=0>

Be sure to roll over the "info" button in the bottom right corner for details on the work. It has become an iconic image for Joburg.

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Blogging Hiatus

Gentle Reader,

*Some five years into the life of **Afrika T**, I now find myself unable to keep up with contributions at a level that I and you have come to expect from this blog. Partly this is because of other activities in responsible tourism (see example [here](#), and another [here](#)), partly from other projects in sustainability (see examples [here](#) and [here](#)), and partly for reasons that are more personal.*

I am certainly still active online and in responsible travel, so feel free to comment on existing posts here, to [follow me on Twitter](#), and to note [what I've been reading online via Delicious](#). I also hope to return to Afrika T, so am not bringing the blog to a halt, just declaring a hiatus of indefinite duration...

Thank you for your support over the years, and, if you're a newcomer to the site, may it still prove valuable.

Kind regards

Kurt

5 December 2011
