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A Country Imagined | Wednesday 20 July 2011 08:29



A COUNTRY IMAGINED

ON: Thursdays

AT: 19:30 – 20:30

EPISODES: 13

GENRE: Local Entertainment,
Documentary

Johnny Clegg takes us on a journey to
discover the South African imagination

From the industrial mining landscapes
that have inspired the novels of Nadine

Gordimer and the drawings of William Kentridge, Sam Nhlengethwa and Durant Sihlali – to the mountains of the Eastern Cape from which the stirring words of Enoch Sontonga and Olive Schreiner were born– the South African landscape is extravagant and diverse.

A Country Imagined takes us on an unusual and rewarding journey through South Africa as it 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 and dancers – Johnny Clegg – who is also an anthropologist, A Country Imagined takes us through South Africa's most beautiful and culturally layered spaces and through this, we explore the rich histories of art in the country and the "imaginings" of our society.

Johnny Clegg combines a unique ability to learn, teach and perform simultaneously. In the series he performs with musicians and dancers in remote villages around the country, talks to artists, both famous and unknown, hikes the Drakensberg to find the best rock art and views, travels in hot air balloons, helicopters and boats. To this he brings his insight, expertise and a great deal of humour, offering viewers a rich and accessible perspective on South African art.

The series introduces us to South African artists and their work as well as the landscapes they create from. Some, like Nadine Gordimer, George Pemba, Olive Schreiner, Hugh

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Masekela, Gerard Sekoto, William Kentridge and David Goldblatt are known around the world. Others will soon be. Some – like the beadworkers and potters of remote rural villages have mostly produced works without signatures. A Country Imagined brings them all together featuring work by more than 400 artists – through a fascinating exploration of art and artists set against a backdrop of spectacular scenery and a vexed and dramatic history.

SYNOPSIS

Episode 1: THE REEF – THE RIBBON OF GOLD

Beginning at the site of an ancient meteorite impact, Johnny Clegg follows an elusive thread of gold through the Witwatersrand reef to discover the fascinating ways in which artists have imagined these unlikely landscapes.

Episode 2: EASTERN CAPE – THE FRONTIER BETWEEN

Johnny Clegg makes his way through the densely layered histories and extraordinary landscapes of the Eastern Cape where he meets artists, dancers and musicians.

Episode 3: NORTHERN CAPE – THE BURIED SECRET

Johnny Clegg uncovers deep, forgotten histories as well as buried stories in the Northern Cape as they unfold along the great Gariep River. He follows a surprisingly vital creative current that runs through this harsh, dry land.

Episode 4: KAROO – A LONELINESS THAT IS FULFILLING

Johnny Clegg makes his way through obscure parts of the Karoo's long, desolate stretches, where he encounters some of the area's most surprising and inspiring art and artists.

Episode 5: FREE STATE – A SPIRITUAL PLAIN

This week Johnny Clegg follows the golden light of the Free State to experience the lesser known nature of this region and the art it has inspired.

Episode 6: CAPE TOWN

From the majestic beacon of Table Mountain, to the lush vineyards at its foot, Johnny Clegg makes his way through Cape Town discovering the many perspectives of what the Cape has meant over centuries, to a host of different people.

Episode 7: KLEIN KAROO/GARDEN ROUTE – ANCIENT PATHWAYS

Johnny Clegg follows ancient pathways from the forested coastline of the Garden Route, over the mountains into the Little Karoo.

Episode 8: JOZI – A TERRIBLE BEAUTY

Johnny Clegg explores the particular, peculiar beauty of the City of Gold. From its concrete jungle to its urban forest; from its snaking roadways to its urban sprawl, the art this city produces is bold, gutsy, urban and forthright.

Episode 9: KWAZULU-NATAL: LIVING THE PAST THROUGH THE PRESENT

Johnny Clegg heads 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 ancient traditions play

out in contemporary living. This journey through Johnny's heartland reveals the complex histories and creative legacies that have so richly shaped this region.

Episode 10: THE FAR NORTH - THE MAGICAL NORTH

Johnny Clegg ventures beyond the Tropic of Capricorn to a region of the country shrouded in mystery, and the site of some of the most extraordinary and prolific artistic production in South Africa.

Episode 11: TRAVELLING NORTH WEST 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.

Episode 12: MPUMALANGA – COMING HOME

Known mostly as bushveld and 'Big Five' country, Johnny Clegg travels through Mpumalanga to find what else exists beyond boyhood dreams of adventure and taming the wilderness.

Episode 13: 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 other artists whose creative ventures bring humanity to this vast, imposing terrain – "taming the dragon".

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