

Chapter 12

The time that David had spent in Britain had been good for him, but now that he was back in South Africa, he saw his homeland through new eyes. He was amazed at what lay in front of him. Here was rich material to fuel his songwriting. He was brimming with creativity. Everywhere he looked he saw or experienced something which inspired him. He began penning songs from a South African perspective. No more lyrics about the streets of London, or being down on his luck in Louisiana.

David was no longer interested in writing and performing music that tried to emulate the American and British experiences. Instead, he threw himself into the vibrant tapestry of his South African lifestyle, the good and the bad. Songs such as “Bellville Blues”, “Signal Hill”, and so on, flowed from David’s pen. This new direction in David’s songwriting gave him the ammunition to talk about the life he was intimately familiar with, along with the possibility to speak of and for the unheard, the invisible everyday person of the South African platteland. A song such as “Montagu” was rooted in a place he knew, geographically and culturally. In this song he refers to the muscatel from the area, he speaks of the habit of the rural people often being curious about one’s family roots – who one is related to by birth or marriage. He also mentions the ubiquitous café found on the corner with its Coca Cola or Springbok tobacco advertising painted on the walls. In these songs David could mix a certain amount of romanticism in his subjects and temper it with political realism. In “Tjoepstil”, for example, his politics are somewhat

harder. He surprisingly takes the side of a policeman, a protagonist who is reviled, but called for when trouble arises.

Some critics would accuse David of being an armblank wannabe, or even worse, a pretend-coloured farm labourer, milking the poverty-stricken from the comfort of his middle-class armchair.

His image too, underwent a dramatic metamorphosis. Here David again looked to the poor-white images of days gone by and the coloured labourers from the surrounding grape farms of his youth in Worcester. Baggy trousers and sensible brown or black shoes, white shirt and tie flapping in the breeze, topped off with what would become classic Kramer: the middle-part hairstyle. The shoes were like the ones worn by boys during their school years, and portrayed a message not only of poverty, but also a lack of sophistication, part of the South African kitsch that Kramer tapped into. In later years David would sport a pair of red shoes, which became his signature look. The baggy pants were usually khaki, like those worn by working men, especially farmers, and David often rolled up his shirt sleeves, all part of the myth of rural hard work and honesty. (Of course this image could easily have been transferred to the Australian outback.) His look was the visual equivalent of his sound, which he labelled *blik* (tin). Later, when David started his own record label, he called it *Blik*.

Regarding the artist and his awareness of image, Clarkson (2003:172) quotes the musician Sting to highlight the importance of image in the industry:

A certain amount of inspiration and the enjoyment of what you do. That's the prime mover. But then again there is what you might call strategy, where you look at the market and see what sells, and you see what image

is required. To a certain extent you taper your creativity to that particular mode.

Further, regarding image and the parameters it puts on an artist, Needs (2005:9) has this to say about The Clash:

In 1977, you had to be careful what you said. Despite its anarchistic manifesto, punk rock had its own unwritten list of qualifications for acceptance, especially within the ranks of its originators and elements of the media.

If you were a working class teenager from a council estate – preferably from a broken home with an alcoholic mother – and survived on a crap job or the dole, you were considered okay. The shittier your circumstances, the better. But if your background was comfortable middle-class, you'd attended a good school and were maybe tipping the scales in terms of age, there might be credibility problems. It was like you had *no right* to be a punk.



David in High Street, Worcester. (p.44 *Short Back and Sides*)



David in front of the Impala Café, Worcester. (p.16 *Short Back & Sides*)
The Impala Café was opposite Rusbank Gallery, an antique store owned by Mrs. Heller.

David moved back into his room in his parent's house. Soon he had a new routine: have breakfast made for him by Frances, a luxury he couldn't get enough of.

"Ma, I can't tell you how good it is to have breakfast made for me," he told her with a kiss.

"Hotel Frances gets its fifth star!" she declared, and David nodded his head with a laugh.

"It sure does!"

His days consisted of going to work at Hex Tex, either Solly or Frances driving him to work. Then after work he met friends. There weren't any clubs, so it was all fairly low-key and quiet. Occasionally there was a party on weekends to liven things up. Usually his evenings were spent with Renaye, either watching television or going for walks. South Africa had only recently received television services, and even though the shows available were very limited, this was where most families were now to be found in the evenings.

David saved all his money, as he had a pressing problem: he was without a car. He appreciated his parents driving him to work and back, but he didn't want to be a

burden to them, and he felt decidedly like a baby. Hex Tex was on the outskirts of town, much too far away to walk. There were no buses in Worcester that went that way. The only buses seemed to be the ones running between the coloured townships and the town centre. Yet, almost every day that either Solly or Frances drove him to work, he passed coloured people walking or cycling to work, and he was filled with a feeling of being a spoilt white boy. This hardened his resolve to be able to buy a car, and he was aware of the irony in this, that this only made him more of a white middle-class man, more removed from the people who had to walk miles to work. Of course, they would also rather drive a car of their own, but that was probably not going to happen to them in their lifetime.

Soon David was able to buy a white Cortina. Now his world suddenly expanded. Drives around Worcester were possible, and weekends to Cape Town for him and Renaye were regular features in his life.

On the workfront his job as a textile designer was interesting, and in his private life he discovered some Africana to boost his music every day. His pen was flowing freely with lyrics, words rich with his surroundings. His sketches were of springbok and antelope horns, post boxes in the shape of golf balls: images taken from the vast variety of examples of bad taste he encountered growing up in South Africa. These images were intertwined in his lyrics, and even the sound of his music was changing – his music was now more driven by a hard, unsophisticated beat, similar to the boeremusiek he and his friends had so scoffed as teenagers. He was riding a wave of creativity: his music, his look. He now tossed aside the hippie clothes of the past and embraced the look of the farmers he saw in and around Worcester.

Gone was any desire to emulate The Beatles. David discovered a fascinating tableau, one which had always been there, but he had never noticed, blind to the beauty of his own culture. Now it was the sounds of Die Lydenburg Vastrappers, David de Lange, or Die Oudag Boereorkes that David used as reference points. Of course, he also absorbed the visual aspect of these musicians.



David de Lange. <http://www.boeremusiek.org>.



Oudag Boerorkes. <http://www.boeremusiek.org>.

A photograph from *Short Back & Sides* shows David sitting on a bar counter.



(p.68 *Short Back & Sides*)

This could be any bar of the many Royal Hotels scattered throughout South Africa. David's heart must have pounded when he went inside to have his picture taken. He was like Daniel walking into the lion's den. The manne in the hotel would have had his heart for lunch if they chose to remember that this skinny guy sitting at the bar once sang about dry wine:

Dry Wine

Half asleep I dream in the dark
Trusting the locks on the door
And the dog's warning bark
Outside in the street a drunkard
Stumbles and sings
In the next door flat



A telephone rings and rings
But nothing disturbs the suburb's quiet
Not the sirens or the news of a township riot
Knowing it all from the distance of headlines
I express my opinion
With a mouthful of dry wine
A woman with red fingernails
Is playing with her diamond
Gazing through the restaurant window
At the lights on Robben Island
Her hair's cut in the latest style
Her eyes are painted blue
She's probably thinking
Now where in the world
Could I find a better view
Her husband asks the waiter
Are these prawns from Mozambique?
The waiter just nods his head
He smiles but doesn't speak
Knowing it all from the distance of headlines
I express my opinion
With a mouthful of dry wine
An old lady in a Sea Point flat
Lives with her dreams and dread
She can hear the disco music
As she lies in her bed
And in the servants quarters
She can hear them laugh and sing
In the next door flat
A telephone rings and rings
Perhaps I'm like a deaf man
Who has seen the lightning flash
Or maybe I'm just like the blind
And I'll only hear it crash.

Ashtrays with the hotel name printed on them, sheets of copper beaten to represent elephants charging in front of the fireplace, a crazy-paving path in the garden, the skin of a springbok on the floor, a doilie with red and blue beads covering a sugar bowl, wagon wheels, keys carved out of wood for 21st birthday gifts, all became sources of inspiration rather than annoyances and they filled David's notebook. A Ford Cortina

with a “dog with a head that nods in the back window” and small rugby boots which dangle “from the rearview mirror” became ideas for a character’s taste in songs like “Bellville Blues”.

Sometimes he couldn’t resist a barb, as in “Suburban Dream”:

And round the back
There’s a braaivleisplek.
For the girl there’s a separate loo.

David was content to play at small parties, strumming his acoustic guitar. Sometimes he was joined by Danny Tromp, a coloured bricklayer whose lyrics often reflected farm life.

One of David’s more popular songs amongst the Worcester crowd was of a girl called Sannie van der Spuy, with whom the hero of the ditty had a “vry”. The swimming pool in Worcester had its special places where couples could kiss and cuddle, so when David sang this song to the guests at Timo Smuts’s Worcester home on the Rabie farm, they all chuckled, the lyrics resonating with them.

Timo Smuts gave David his first pair of red velskoene, and sometimes hosted parties where David could air his music. These audiences loved the dichotomy, the love/hate relationship of the items David referred to in his songs and the between-song banter. The embroidered Bible texts, the little Zulu assegais with *Durban* written on them, which were so infuriating, were also *him*, his cultural DNA, like it or not.

After David finished working off his bursary at Hex Tex mills, he intended move to Cape Town.

Leaving Worcester was not unusual. At the time many Worcester young adults left after they finished their schooling. As David explained in “Just My Father’s Son” from the album *Delicious Monster*:

I wore an army greatcoat and tackies
with my Texans rolled in my sleeve
Just my father’s son, with my father’s name
In a town I couldn’t wait to leave.

It’s true that most kids couldn’t wait to leave Worcester, to chase some romantic dream they had. It’s also true that the teenagers wore army greatcoats when they went to dances, and tackies were the hip shoes, either white tennis shoes or black sneakers which came up to your ankle. Dances were held at places like the M.O.T.H hall, the Good Hope Café, or at private parties.

But before David left for Cape Town, there was a question of marriage.

Chapter 13

When David went off to Britain to study, the friendship between him and Renaye had to continue in the form of letters, phone calls and the occasional trip back to South Africa. They would have to see how things stood when he returned with his degree tucked under his arm.

David borrowed his father's car and drove through the streets he knew so well. It had been raining. It would be one of the last rains that winter. Spring was on its way. David noticed marks on the wet road where brakefluid or petrol had dripped from a car, making rather pretty patterns on the road.

He stopped outside the Lange's house, walked up the garden path and knocked on the door. He was nervous. This would be the first time he would see Renaye in quite a while. The door opened.

"David, oh how nice to see you!" cried Renaye.

She drew him closer into a hug.

David had been worried that the time and distance apart might have affected their friendship, that they would have become different people, and the bond between them might have disappeared, but it was soon clear that the old spark was still there.

In fact, as the days went by, it was obvious that they were even closer than before. David visited often, and soon they were courting. He divided his time between work and Renaye, the woman with the tawny hair and lovely smile.

Renaye did find him different in one way: he was still the same charming man she had known, but now he had periods of moodiness, of being quiet and withdrawn. When she asked him about it, she accepted his reply that he sometimes found himself yearning for something, a something he couldn't define, and this seemed to suck his soul out, away.

She took it to be something bad and good: his desire for more made him withdrawn at times, but she knew it was this very desire which would make him excel in whatever he did with his life.

At first their relationship had rocky moments, until she realised that he was faithful to her, to them, but that he needed space, and that sometimes he would stay away for a day or two. This was either because he was on a creative high, or because he felt trapped and frustrated, and really not good company.

However, the times they were together were wonderful. David was a caring and attentive lover, obviously happy to be in her company. He delighted in taking her on picnics in the mountains around Worcester. They would swim in the streams, make a barbeque or enjoy packed meals, and be totally happy in one another's presence. Many times they were alone, just the two of them, and even though they sometimes went without talking with what seemed to be forever to Renaye, their was such tenderness and communication, even in these silences, that she felt herself falling ever deeper in love.

When David asked her to marry him, she said yes, and he was ecstatic. He had planned a very romantic occasion, a picnic with flowers and wine, but this opportunity had never had the chance to arise. One evening, driving Renaye back to her parent's house, David heard the words blurt out from his mouth.

“Renaye, will you marry me?”

He was dumbstruck. What had just happened? What about the plans he was hatching for his romantic picnic? But he needn't have been worried. Rennaye threw her arms around his neck, so that David had to grip the steering wheel hard so as not to run off the road.

“Yes! Of course!” she cried.

David was not a Jew, as his mother was not a Jewess. Frances was a Gentile, which meant that her two sons weren't Jewish. This meant that David and Renaye could not have a traditional Jewish wedding.

The preparations were too much for David. When he was asked for his advice on potential invitations, or table decorations, his eyes glazed over, and with a non-committing reply made his escape.

“I'll leave that up to you. You're so good at this type of thing ...”

He had a sneaking suspicion that Renaye actually *liked* this business! There were a million things to take care of, and he was quite happy to leave it in the capable hands of his mother and future mother-in-law, leaving Renaye in the executive position of Final-Decision-Maker.

And then the big day arrived. The weather was perfect, blue skies without a cloud, not unbearably hot, as Worcester could sometimes be.

David was dressed in a new suit. He looked rather handsome. Standing next to him was Renaye, and she was simply stunning.

“Good heavens, Renaye,” yet another guest said, sidling up to her. “You look beautiful ..!”

This was a civil wedding, held in the magistrate's offices. The room was crammed with family and friends.

"Take your seats, please," a voice called out.

There was a rustle as people sat down on the wooden chairs. The ceremony began, and soon it was over.

"You may kiss the bride," the magistrate said.

The wedding ceremony itself had been a touch dry and official, but the reception was something very different. Speeches were delivered and toasts were made, causing either tears or laughter.

David and Renaye opened the dancing. Renaye's father cut in, so that he could dance with his daughter.

The banquet was sumptuous, and as the drinks flowed David's school chums became more boisterous. All in all, the event was a resounding success.

The newlyweds settled down in Cape Town. David continued his work as a textile designer but never stopped playing guitar, writing notes in his scrawling handwriting, ideas for songs, characteristics of people he had seen, and names of small towns in the middle of nowhere.

He and Renaye settled into their routine and soon there was a new dimension to the lyrics David was writing.

The imagery of his songs up to then had been to a large extent of the rural world, the poor working people. Now there was a subtle shift. David began to make references to the city he found himself in, Cape Town, mentioning places such as Parow Valley. His lyrics started having more bite. Robben Island is a stone's throw from Cape Town, the

seed for “Prisoners of War”. Any song that David wrote concerning his political views had to be extremely oblique, otherwise the censor board would have clamped down harshly - at the time it was illegal to even have a picture of Mandela in one’s possession. Kramer’s pen shows some clever twists, crafting lyrics with more depth than the average protest songs of the time:

Prisoners of War

The Italians built the road
That bumped down to the sea
To the old beach house
Near the river mouth
It was 1943
And they cracked the rocks with fire
And they sweated and they swore
And the sun beat down like in Italy
On these prisoners of war

My father fought in Egypt
He was twenty-five years old
Where the days were white and hot as hell
And the nights were black and cold
With the Allies for our freedom
Against Rommel and the Afrika Korp
Until a bomb exploded and all his dreams
Became prisoners of war

Every summer we went down
To the house at the lagoon
Every summer I turned brown
And played war games in the dunes
Every summer our new regime
Passed another law
As the boat sailed for Robben Island
With more prisoners of war

I came back from Angola, it was 1975
My heart was hard
And my mind was scarred
I’d forgotten how to cry

Wearing civvies for the first time
Just trying to be me
I walked the road the Italians built
That leads down to the sea
And the question I was asking was:
What were we fighting for?
Cause in the end we had all become
Prisoners of war.

In this song David writes:

My father fought in Egypt
He was twenty-five years old
...
a bomb exploded and all his dreams
Became prisoners of war.

This was indeed so. Solly Kramer did fight in World War II, and he was injured in the leg, causing him to walk with a limp. The “road the Italians built” is loosely based on Du Toit’s Kloof pass, where the N1 highway runs from Paarl to Worcester, as well as Mitchell’s Pass, the twisting mountain pass which joins Wellington and Ceres. Along the road there is a white cross, erected by the Italian prisoner of war soldiers as a memorial to the workers who lost their lives during construction of the pass. (To this day there are still large Italian communities in towns such as Worcester, Ceres, et cetera, in the Boland area of South Africa.)

The Robben Island referred to in the song is the island where Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners were kept, and Angola points to the so-called border war, where all white South African boys had to go to as part of their compulsory military service after they left high school, from 1966 until 1989.

David was playing at parties and folk clubs. He handed out copies of cassettes which contained some of his songs, trying to get himself known. To many who saw him at the time it seemed he had achieved just about all he could in South Africa, a singer of folksy songs, accompanying himself on an acoustic guitar. The shows he was playing were fairly low-key events, a few dozen people at most, usually the same faces.

And then came a momentous change in Kramer's life.

“Are you sure?!” David asked, eyebrows raised in surprise and wonder.

Renaye nodded her head, her rich brown hair tumbling over her shoulders. Her eyes shone, looking deep into David's. She wanted to see exactly how this news resonated with him.

It was mid morning, quiet outside. Just the sound of a solitary car in one of the nearby streets, the engine rising and falling as it made its way along the lower slopes of Table Mountain.

“I'm sure,” she replied. “Dr. Shapiro told me so this morning.”

David wrapped his arms around her and whooped with joy.

“A baby!” he shouted. “We're going to have a baby ..!”

David and Renaye drove back home to visit their parents. As David drove down the Worcester side of the Brandwacht Mountains he found himself in familiar countryside. He looked at the short squat bushes with their unusual green colour. When people were told the shrubs were reddish green, they never believed it, but the foliage covering the rolling hills was indeed reddish green. David drove past Worcester West, mountains

towering up in the near distance, turned right at the drive-in cinema, and crossed the bridge that went over the railway line.

He wanted to stop at a café to buy some fruit. On their way there he drove past an old age home. There was an elderly man sitting on the stoep. The last rays of the day's sun were falling over the stoep, casting long shadows. David wondered what things he had seen in his life. The image made a strong impact on David. His imagination kicked in: to him this old man was an ex-rugby player, a hero from a bygone era.

Long after David and Renaye had returned to Cape Town, the memory stayed with him, and he wrote notes which morphed into lyrics. "Hak Hom, Blokkies" was beginning to take shape.

The song was not the only thing developing. The baby was growing, and Renaye was becoming very pregnant. She started walking in that characteristically heavy manner: legs slightly apart and leaning back against the weight of the new child forming inside her. She bloomed. Her skin became more delicate, and her hair shone. There was a look of pure joy and excitement in her large eyes. She was always beaming. Everyone who saw her remarked what a beautiful mother she was.

David, on the other hand, became increasingly nervous as the birth date came closer, veering from wild joy to bouts of worry. What if something was to happen? What about the future? Would he be able to provide for his family? Would the child have all its fingers? And toes?

When Jesse Kramer was born there were joyous celebrations in Cape Town as well as Worcester. The Kramers and the Langes drove to Cape Town, eager to see their granddaughter.

David and Renaye were doting parents but it was the grandparents who did the real spoiling. Jesse was blissfully unaware of all the fuss and gurgled and giggled at the world around her.



Jesse (21), Amy (18), and David
Courtesy Huisgenoot 27 Sept 2001

Chapter 14

In 1980 David began recording his first album, *Bakgat!* (MOULP[L] 10). Some of the music was recorded live at the Barleycorn club, and some was laid down at Hi-Z Studios.

Apart from David, artists on the album included folk musician Edi Niederlander, and Richard Devey, who also drummed for the punk rock group The Safari Suits.

For the next few years Niederlander would play bars and restaurants. Her solo album *Ancient Dust of Africa* was released in 1986.

The other musicians were Phil Smiedt, Gary Horne and Marco Celotti. Like Niederlander, Celotti supplemented his income by working as a salesperson at Paul Bothners, a popular musical instrument retailer in Claremont.

Also in 1980, Phil Smiedt's band, Zebra, won a Sarie for *Uncertain Age*, in the Best English Album of the Year category.

One of the session musicians was Zayn Adam, who was well known to South African audiences, having had hits such as "Give A Little Love".

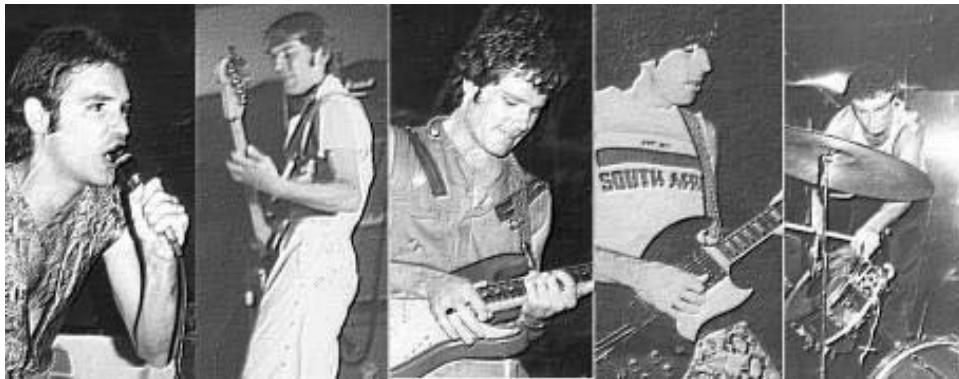
Devey's band, The Safari Suits only lasted a fiery year: from 1978 – 1979, but these were the beginnings of writings from a South African viewpoint, rather than merely emulating American or British lyrics. At that time, the Safari Suits were not afraid to use words such as "braaivleis" or "rugby". As guitarist Steve Moni points out:

We want to show people that a South African group can play without being ashamed of its South Africanism.
(http://www.rock.co.za/files/safari_suits.html)

David would also make references to this part of the South African milieu, and he began attracting an audience which stretched from the liberal left to the right.

The Safari Suits were harsher in their music and opinions than what was usually heard on stages at the time, as evidenced by their song *Whites Only*, and such intensity could not last very long. They morphed into The News, and then faded away. When Guillaume Rossouw left the Safari Suits, David auditioned for his spot.

Like Trevor Rabin of Rabbitt and Yes fame, Steven Moni's father was also a conductor: he was the conductor of the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra. (Not to be confused with Walter Mony.)



Guillaume Rossouw, Graham Handley, Paul Jarvis, Steve Moni, 'Dish' Devey
http://www.rock.co.za/files/safari_suits.html

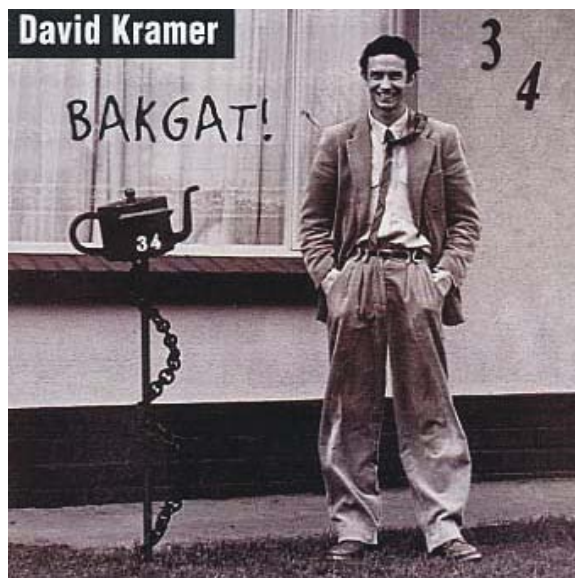
At this time there was the beginning of a mood that one could make South African music, which addressed South African issues.

The album cover photograph of *Bakgat!* was taken by David's brother John, and shows him in typical early Kramer attire. He is standing in front of very common middle-

class suburban house. The numbers marking the address are arranged at an angle on the wall. David refers to this way of numbering homes in “I Had a Dream” on his debut album, *Bakgat!*:

Well I dreamt I bought an Ideal Home
With these Cape Dutch gables
And classical pillars from Rome
It had a golf ball letter box
And statues of garden gnomes
With a number on the wall
Sort of artistically skew
Painted in chrome.

This house in front of which David is posing, tie at a jaunty angle, doesn't have a post-box shaped like a golf ball, but it does have one made from a large kettle, partly mounted on a chain which curves upwards. Critics of the song, and other like it, argue that it shows nothing of David, but is merely a list of South African kitsch. At the end of the song, some listeners might ask: “So what?”



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

The album was released in 1981 by Mountain Records. The songs on the album were:

1. Is Jy Bang?
2. Krisjan Swart
3. Bokkie, Bokkie
4. Onner Oppie Plaas
5. Tjoepstil
6. Koba
7. I Had A Dream
8. Biscuits en Biltong
9. Annette van der Wa
10. Frikkie
11. Bellville Blues
12. Botteltjie Blou

Somewhat surprisingly, on this debut album David tempers his more hardened political views. This could have been due to the fact that he was now a family man and was trying to build a career in music for himself. Perhaps he was wary of stepping on too many toes. In fact, a song such as “Tjoepstil” is a Kramer that berates the soft liberals for their hypocrisy - whilst often ridiculing and despising the South African Police (as they were then known), this liberal middle-class is quick to ask for help from these very same policemen when they are in trouble or danger.

Tjoepstil

You call me a rock spider you call me a gé
You like to mock the things that I say
Don't ever come out here to Parow Vallei
Cos if I should catch you alone one day
Then you'll keep tjoepstil
Then you'll keep tjoepstil

I've got sideburns down my cheeks
I haven't had my haircut for nearly two weeks
Call me a crunchie and I'll take you outside and
I'll show just how the crunch is applied
Then you'll keep tjoepstil
Then you'll keep tjoepstil

I'm a staff sergeant in the SAP
You and the press point your fingers at me
But when the black man crawls through your window at night
You call for me quickly cos then I'm alright
Then you'll keep tjoepstil
Then you'll keep tjoepstil

You and your friends
In their faded blue jeans
You think you know what everything means
You've got the big mouths
You've got the degrees
But when the shit starts to fly
Then you run overseas
Then you'll keep tjoepstil
Then you'll keep tjoepstil
Tjoepstil!

Another song on the album is “Krisjan Swart”, which lifts its geography directly from Worcester, and also has an element of glorifying the Afrikaners portrayed in it, which was somewhat puzzling for David’s early (mostly liberal, English-speaking white) audience. The lyrics are in Afrikaans this time.

Krisjan Swart

Bokant die stasie daar woon Krisjan Swart
Tussen die spoorweg en die Nasionale pad
Op die muur van sy stoep hang die horings van 'n bok
In sy agterplaas groei 'n perskeboom
Langs 'n groot ou duiwehok
Op daai duiwe is hy trots
Hulle maak sy hart so bly
Die silwer bekere op sy pelmet staan so in 'n ry
Ja, hy is Krisjan Swart
Hy's wyd en suid geken
Vir sy duiwe wat so vinnig vlieg
En pryse vir hom wen

Krisjan se vrou is lekker rond en vet
In haar hare dra sy curlers in haar mond 'n sigaret
Pantoffels aan haar voete kook sy moskonfyt
Met haar een oog op die tuinjong
Wat die agterplaas natspuit
Op daai vrou is hy so trots
Sy maak sy hart so bly
Al is sy nie jonk nie
Kan sy nog lekker vry
Ja sy is Wilmina Swart
Hulle ken haar wyd en suid
Vir haar melktert en mosbolletjies
Haar beroemde boerbeskuit

Krisjan se dogter is met 'n prokureur getrou
Hy't vir haar 'n groot wit huis in Riebeeckpark gebou
Die kaggel in die sitkamer is mooi met klip versier
'n Skildery van Tafelberg hang netjies teen die muur
Op daai dogter is hy trots
Sy maak sy hart so bly
Al is sy nie mooi nie
Het sy haar man gekry
Sy is Johanna Swart
Die vrou van die prokureur
Haar lippies en haar vingernaels
Is dieselfde bloedrooi kleur

Krisjan se seun is lekker fris gebou
Maar sy stem is 'n bietjie hoog
En sy broek is 'n bietjie nou
Sy hare dra hy lank en hy speel ook die kitaar
Krisjan vra sy vrou: waar kom die seun van 'aar?
Op daai seun is hy nie trots nie
Hy maak sy hart so seer
Kan ek tog sy pa wees?
Wil Krisjan redeneer
Ja hy is Krisjan Swart
Hy't ook sy pa se naam
Maar sy hare en sy kitaar speel
Maak sy pa so skaam

Bokant die stasie daar woon die Swart gesin
Krisjan drink net brannewyn Wilmina drink net gin
En hulle sit daar op die stoep in die skemer lig so flou
Hulle kyk hoe vlieg die duiwe sirkels teen die blou.

There is not much to critique about this song. It describes a man, Krisjan Swart, who gets much satisfaction from flying his pigeons. His plump wife bakes rusks and generally takes care of the house, and all is well. His daughter has done well because she has married a lawyer, but his son seems to be somewhat effeminate. Perhaps, one might wonder, the song would have been more poignant if it were simply about the man and his birds, and the joy he gets when he sits on his porch and watches them in the blue sky, as the last two lines suggest? About what has not been said?

Regarding the places mentioned: there is in actual fact an area between the station and the N1 national road, loosely known as Hospitaal Heuwel (Hospital Hill). The street that goes up towards Hospitaal Heuwel from the railway line is Hospitaal Pad. On the other side of the railway line it is known as Porter Street. To the left are the so-called railway houses, made of red brick, where workers for the South African Railways and

Harbours live with their families. They are mostly lower income earners. A handful of the railway workers take great pride in their pigeons, racing them on weekends.

And as the song says, once you pass through this area, you are at the N1 national road. Although in reality there is still Hospital Dam lying between you and the highway.

In “n Man Stap” (2004) Kramer writes of the Scala cinema theatre as well as the Pandora restaurant. These two places did exist when he was growing up in Worcester. In fact, he played with his band at the Scala cinema during school breaks. The song “Just My Father’s Son” says:

Behind the Good Hope Café in High Street
We played snooker in the afternoon.

The Good Hope Café also existed, in High Street, and at the time when David was a high school student there was a billiards hall behind it. Many afternoons were spent teasing Brummer, the boy with the cleft palate. Brummer would later be immortalised as Budgie in “Budgie and The Jets”. These buildings existed when Kramer was a boy in Worcester. The song has the intriguing line:

En die laaities sit sonder werk,
hul voete in die sloot.

The “sloot” referred to are the furrows that run through the old part of Worcester. They run alongside the streets, carrying water from Hospital Dam, which is used for

gardening. The dam is called Hospital Dam, because of its proximity to what was once a hospital, but is now a primary school for partly-sighted children.

In “Suburban Dream” David writes the lines:

Well I bought a house.
It’s a beautiful house
In Marais Road Panorama.

The relatively affluent suburb of Panorama still stands in Worcester.

Bakgat! didn’t make any particular waves, as it was banned by the SABC, therefore receiving no airplay. It increased David’s profile slightly, but he was still a textile designer who played gigs over the weekends for fun.

Roger Lucy recorded a version of the Kramer composition “Dry Wine” live at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. This song was included on his *Half A Live* (3rd Ear/Warner WIC 8000) album, released in 1980. This record was similar in format to *Bakgat!*, in that one side was recorded live and the other in a studio. Largely due to the inclusion of “Dry Wine”, Lucy’s album was removed from the shelves of music stores by the security police.



S.A.U.K. S.A.B.C.

HUISSHOUDELIKE KORRESPONDENSIE/INTERNAL CORRESPONDENCE

Memo No. 562
DATUM DATE: 29.01.81

ONDERWERP SUBJECT PLATE VOORGELÉ VIR KEURING/RECORDS UNDER CONSIDERATION

LANGSPEELPLAAT

Neem asseblief kennis dat die volgende ~~keuring~~ aan die komitee vir keuring voorgelê is, en mag dus, tot verdere kennis, in geen programme van die S.A.U.K. gebruik word nie.

Please note that the following ~~keuring~~ LP has been submitted to the committee for consideration, and therefore may not be used in any programme on the S.A.B.C. transmissions, until further notice:

THE ENTIRE ALBUM: "BAKGAT"
ARTIST: DAVID KRAMER
LP NO: MOUNTAIN RECORDS MOULP(L) 10

Timus Esterhuizen
Timus Esterhuizen
HOOFPSTELLER: SPRINGBOKRADIO/
CHIEF COMPILER: SPRINGBOK RADIO

AFSKRIFTE AAN/COPIES TO:

- Direkteur : Radioprogramme/Director : Radio Programmes
- HCOF : Afrikaanse Diens/Head : Afrikaans Service
- HCOF : Buitelandse Dienste/Head : External Service
- SUPERINTENDENT: Bantu Musiek/ Superintendent : Bantu Music
- HCOF : Sotho Dienste/Head : Sotho Service
- HCOF : Musiek/Head : Music
- HCOF : Streekdienste en Radio 5/Head : Regional Services and Radio 5
- HCOF : Engelse Diens/Head : English Service

- Organiseerder : Oudioteke/Organiser : Audio Libraries
- HCOF : Engelse T.V./Head : English T.V.
- HCOF : Afrikaanse T.V./Head : Afrikaans T.V.
- Direkteur : T.V./Director : T.V.
- Organiseerder Musiek T.V./Organiser : Music T.V.
- Organiseerder : Verskeidenheid Afrikaanse T.V.

- KEURING
P.W. HATAL (2)
R.M. WESTER: CAPE (1)
JOHN KOOB (1)
LEALLING (1)
EKSTRA (*)

When *Bakgat!* was released, the hits in South Africa were
(<http://www.rock.co.za>):

- Stars on 45 – Star Sound
- Johnny & Mary – Robert Palmer
- Bette Davis Eyes – Kim Carnes
- Don't Worry, Be Happy – Bobby McFerrin
- Banana Republic – Boomtown Rats
- All Out Of Love – Air Supply
- This Ole House – Shakin' Stevens
- I Owe You Nothing – Bros
- The Race – Yello
- Kids in America – Kim Wilde

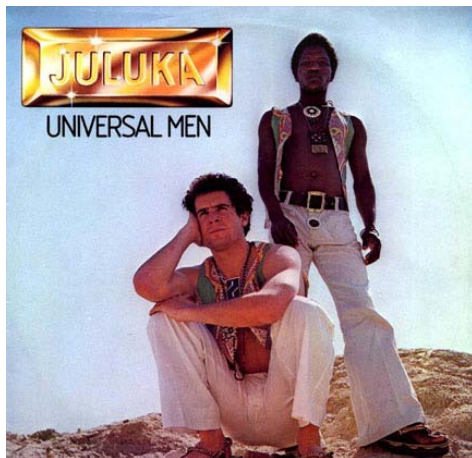
This was the beginning of the 80's. It was the time of the New Romantic look, where boys had haircuts like characters from Enid Blyton books: short back and sides, with an extravagant fringe which flopped over their eyes. They wore frilly shirts as though they fancied themselves to be either pirates or Rhett Butler from *Gone with the Wind*.

In the UK the top songs for that time were (<http://www.sixtiescity.com>):

- Imagine – John Lennon
- Shuddup You Face – Joe Dolce Music Theatre
- Jealous Guy – Roxy Music
- Stand & Deliver – Adam & The Ants
- Making Your Mind Up – Bucks Fizz
- Runaway Boys – Stray Cats
- In The Air Tonight – Phil Collins
- Flash – Queen
- De Doo Doo Doo De Da Da Da – The Police
- Super Trouper – Abba

Incidentally, there would be quite a few John Lennon songs on the charts that year, as the public responded to his murder. Towards the end of 1980 the ex-Beatle was fatally shot by Mark Chapman as he was making his way towards the doors of his apartment in the Dakota Building. (The Roxy Music hit, “Jealous Guy”, is a John Lennon composition.)

Also in 1981, Juluka released their second album, *African Litany*. They had previously released their debut album *Universal Men* in 1979. *African Litany*’s lead single, “Impi”, tells the story of the defeat of the colonial British army by the Zulus at the Battle of Isandlwana, and so was banned by South African radio but it still managed to become a hit on the campus circuit, as well as with black listeners. *African Litany* garnered Juluka their first international attention.



<http://www.talkingleaves.com/pithouse.html>

Kramer must have been aware of, and maybe inspired by Juluka, as they made waves with their truly South African music. It was an exciting example of music which crossed over many divides.

According to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny_Clegg, Jonathan (Johnny) Clegg was born June 7, 1953 in Rochdale (near Manchester), Lancashire, in the UK.

He was sometimes called *Le Zoulou Blanc* (“The White Zulu”), and an important figure in South African popular music history, with songs that mix Zulu and English lyrics, with African, European, and Celtic music styles. Clegg had been brought up in the UK, Israel, Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe), and Zambia, before finally moving with his family to South Africa. In his teenage years he became interested in Zulu street music and took part in traditional Zulu dance competitions, which was very unusual for a white boy at that time.

As a young man Clegg studied anthropology, a subject he also taught for a while at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He formed the first racially mixed South African band, Juluka, with gardener and Zulu musician Sipho Mchunu. By the end of their career, Juluka had two platinum and five gold albums, becoming a South African as well as an international success. They disbanded in 1986, when Mchunu’s father asked him to return home to herd the family goats.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation was the monolith of the airwaves at the time. There were only a handful of radio stations and they fell, directly or indirectly, under the mantle of the SABC. Television services had been launched in 1974, but radio was still an important part of the South African psyche. Many people had been raised doing their homework with afternoon radio-dramas in the background: *Dans van die*

Flamink, Wolwedans in die Skemer, Die Geheim van Nantes, So Maak Mens. And who could forget *Hospitaaltd*? The show always kicked off with the theme song:

Vanaf Maandag tot Vrydag, om half een,
vir Moeder, Vader, en dogter en seun,
is daar 'n lied en 'n glimlag vir jou,
by Hospitaaltd, ont-hou ...!

To a very large extent the South African entertainment scene of the time was dictated by what was happening in London and the United States. It was a time when local artists were striving to reproduce what was coming in from abroad. The idea of making indigenous music, other than for a black audience or the so-called boeremusiek market, was inconceivable.

The SABC was in a position to allow certain music not to be played, and decided which music should be played on, say, Radio Xhosa or Springbok Radio. The government had the authority to censor films, books, records, magazines, et cetera, and even declared that South Africans could not watch movies on Sundays, as this was deemed immoral. The mood of the time is summed up by Kramer in “Bokkie, Bokkie” (1980):

I grew up under the heavy hand of the cane and the dominee.

In the greater scheme of things, to some these lyrics seemed to speak of the oppression by the government at the time, when the police and army were becoming

more and more aggressive in their efforts to quell any unrest, and it seemed to address the problem of where English-speaking people positioned themselves in this status quo.

As for the use of Afrikaans as well as English, on *Bakgat!*, in “Kom Dans” Kramer says, almost in an example of *ars poetica*:

I speak official languages
Both English and Afrikaans
Adverts daub the walls
Say ‘Kom Dans. Come and Dance’.

Afrikaans was considered to some degree as the language of the government, the police, and the army: the oppressor. But in the area where David grew up, Worcester and its surrounding vineyard farms (Slanghoek, De Doorns, Rawsonville, Hexvallei, and more), Afrikaans was also spoken by the labourers in the fields, the very people oppressed by the apartheid laws. These workers were an inspiration for Kramer, in their life stories, as well as their dress. Both colour groups communicated in Afrikaans, more specifically, in the everyday ‘plat’ (flat) type of Afrikaans which Kramer used.

The Afrikaans of Kramer’s songs was never that of canonised Afrikaans poets such as Breyten Breytenbach or N.P. van Wyk Louw. In fact, this might be one of the reasons that his songs were so readily accepted by a larger audience – the lyrics to a Kramer song are far easier to follow than a van Wyk Louw poem. It was also a somewhat more Cape Afrikaans than the Natal, Transvaal or Orange Free State Afrikaans, (The four provinces at the time.) Kramer would pronounce the word “hande” (hands) as “hanne”, illustrating his typical Cape accent. “Hanne” (1983):

Kyk die hanne,
die twee hanne van my.
Waar het ek die twee hanne gekry?

The Afrikaans Kramer used was one which many people could relate to. Whilst he was at times political, it was almost always in English.

Kramer's image during the era of *Bakgat!* was similar to many successful stage artists, in that he presented his audience with an identity they could sum up in a few mental brushstrokes: the hair parted in the middle like the mine workers in the years when the National Party came to power, the baggy khaki trousers reminding one of days gone by, a mixture of colonialism, braais, sunny skies and Chevrolet, often a tie, and later the cheap red shoes with the soles made from motor car tyres.

The clothes depicted a person down on his luck, a Sunday best that had seen better days. Soon Kramer incorporated a bicycle into the visual milieu. It was a "dikwiel" (thick wheel), and in Kramer's world it was the method of transportation which implied extreme poverty.

The visual side of Kramer offers the viewer a kitsch which is very South African: a mixture of bad taste and low-income aesthetics. Around this time Punk Rock introduced kitsch as an alternative which could be beautiful. Groups like The B52's, who were big on the scene, also tapped into the world of kitsch, especially 50's kitsch.

Kramer offered a retro look, softening the reality, romanticising many unpleasant aspects of the world from which he came. But instead of alienating a more critical audience, many were charmed by his mixture of kitsch and rural images. They felt that he

was referencing a South Africa they knew well, with just enough tongue in cheek to make it witty and charming, hip. But when Kramer became mainstream after his breakthrough single “Hak Hom, Blokkies”, this new mainstream audience didn’t see Kramer as having a faint ridiculing element to his look. Rather, they thought, incorrectly, that he was one of them, someone who leaned to the right.

Chapter 15

David's spirits were low. The album he had fought so hard for to make was going nowhere. Those that did get to hear it were rather underwhelmed. He had a loyal, but tiny following, and it seemed to him that he had failed himself, as well as his admirers. All in all this put a huge amount of pressure on his shoulders.

To make things worse, his brother John was making huge strides in the art world. His recent exhibition had sold out. John had found his own style, and an appreciative audience, who not only understood and liked what he did, but also actually purchased the paintings, making it possible for John to paint full-time. John had made the difficult transition from part-time painter to bona fide artist, and whilst David was delighted for his brother, he yearned for the same to happen to him.

Even though *Bakgat!* was selling slowly, Kramer went back into the studio, even though he was not at all optimistic about the results. This time he used B&S Studios, situated in Wale Street, Cape Town, a mere stone's throw away from the Houses of Parliament.

He drove up Adderley Street and turned right into Wale Street, with the large statue of General Smuts on the corner, sitting on a rock, gazing out over the supposed bushveld before him. David passed Saint George's Cathedral on the left, crossed two streets, and there was B&S on the left. He got out of his car, and above the noise of the traffic he heard something else. It was the sound of people shouting. Then he saw it. People came running into Wale Street, covered with something purple. David couldn't

believe his eyes. What on earth was happening? As he watched the frightened crowd spill into Wale Street, stopping the traffic, a large police truck came into view as it chased the protestors, spewing purple dye from a large nozzle, which looked like a fire truck's nozzle.

People fled in all directions, shouting, weeping, covered in the purple mess which David's mind struggled to comprehend. The police were also running about, some with whips in their hands, forcing the tattered crowd to disperse. Right in front of David a man fell to the ground, and as he struggled to get up, a policeman was on him, thrashing with the thin plastic whip.

And then it was over, the protestors gone, the police gone. All that was left were the dazed motorists sitting in their cars, the traffic having come to a standstill. Slowly one car began moving forward on the wet tarmac, then another. Soon it was as if nothing had happened.

Shaken, David entered the recording studio. David's co-producer, Paddy Lee Thorpe, was waiting for him.

"Ready to go?" he asked.

David nodded his head.

"Hi, David," the receptionist greeted.

She saw that something was wrong.

"What's the problem?" she enquired.

"There was a protest outside," David explained. "And the police were very heavy-handed, as usual."

Eddie Wilkinson came out of the studio into the reception area, and heard David's words.

"A protest?" he asked.

Eddie was to play concertina on the session.

"Yes," David replied.

He told them what he had seen, and slowly he felt himself get most of it out of his system, and after a few minutes he was ready for the job at hand. He had always been good like that, being able to focus on what had to be done. He would think about the day's events later, at home, when he was able to decompress.

"Ok, let's get started," he suggested, and soon the session was under way.

All the musicians went into the sound-proofed studio and took their places. David sat down on a chair. Paddy went into the control booth and oversaw proceedings.

Things had cooled somewhat between David and Paddy now, but David accepted this as a small price to pay for more say over his music. He had insisted that on this album he was to be co-producer. He was not going to give any more of his control and revenue away than what he absolutely had to. This was typical of David, stubborn as a mule when it came to his music, especially the business side of it. It was only his second album, and he was a very, very small speck in the musical sky, but even then David treated himself and his career as though it were a multi-million dollar affair.

Jerry Barnard was the engineer for the album, so he placed a microphone in front of David's mouth, and another near his guitar. He miked up the rest of the band and they did a few sound checks, Jerry now in the control booth, watching the band through the

glass partition between the studio and the control booth. It was a relatively straightforward setup, and soon Jerry was satisfied with the sound quality.

“Ok. We’re good to go,” he told David through a microphone from his mixing desk, his voice sounding rather tinny in David’s headphones.

“What’s the first song?”

“Montagu,” David replied.

He couldn’t help grinning. The excitement of being creative, of actually putting his songs on tape was wonderful.

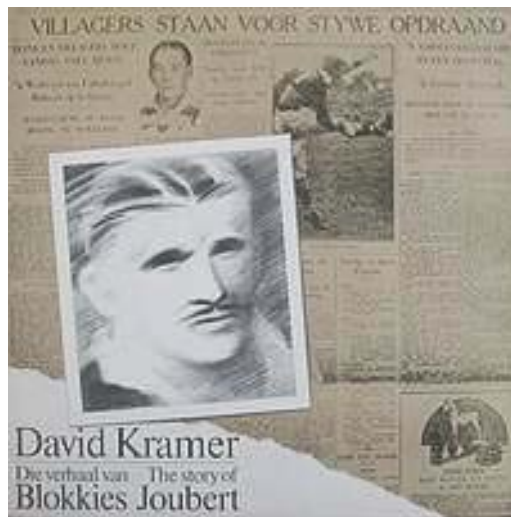
The tapes ran and the musicians played, and it took only two takes to get the song “Montagu” down.

“Montagu” was typical Kramer. There were no complex arrangements, no string section, virtually no backing vocals. The song consists of a rhythm section comprising drums and bass guitar, and David on guitar and vocals. A smattering of concertina could be heard. The bass guitar was also stripped down to just the basic notes being played on the beat of the snare drum. David played acoustic guitar, and the only variation of this on the album was when he played a metal-bodied resonator acoustic guitar. This guitar was like a normal acoustic guitar, except that the body was made of metal, with a “resonator”, which vibrated and made for a louder sound. The sound was somewhat harsher, but not necessarily in an unpleasant manner. (Mark Knopfler was one of the more famous players of such a guitar, especially in his solo career, away from Dire Straights.)

Once again on this song the listener is given an image of rural South Africa, in this case in praise of the town of Montagu and its muscadel wine. The lines rhyme, in what would become known as Kramer’s forced-rhyming schemes. In later interviews

David would explain that he was influenced by the simple nature of blues music lyrics, as well as the actual making of the music, everyday-people making music with whatever was at hand. He said that he wanted to make something like a South African version of blues. Of course, his songs rarely portrayed a difficult lifestyle heard in American blues, and were rather happy-go-lucky songs of an almost Charlie Chaplinesque figure.

The album was produced by Paddy Lee Thorp and David Kramer, and engineered by Jerry Barnard, except for the breakout song, “Hak Hom, Blokkies”, which was engineered by Dave Gordon and Scotty Scott at UCA Studios. All songs were written by David.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

The songs on *Die Verhaal van Blokkies Joubert* are:

1. Blokkies Joubert
2. Die Royal Hotel
3. My Hands are Shaking
4. Piet Bedien
5. Montagu
6. Friends of Mine
7. Hak Hom Blokkies

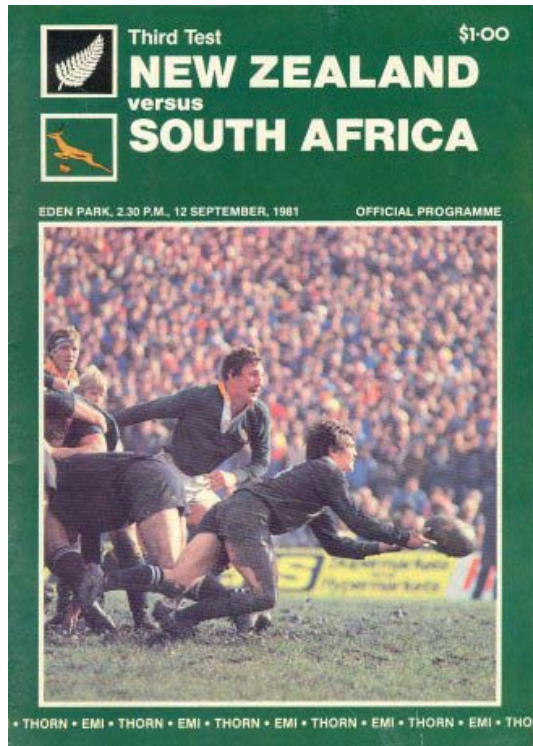
Die Verhaal van Blokkies Joubert was released in September 1981. (Mountain Records [MOULP (E)11]) “Hak Hom, Blokkies” was lifted from the album as a single. The album recording went quickly and smoothly as David was very familiar with the songs, having road-tested them in concerts around Cape Town. He had played venues such as The Space in Long Street, the Yellow Level at the University of Cape Town, and The Barleycorn Folk Club, amongst others. The music was mixed just as quickly, the artwork approved, and soon David had his second record in his hands.

But even so, he was still a married man with a baby, and a middle-of-the-road job. Very few people at that time thought of him as a musician. He was just the charming young man with the unusual hobby. David was becoming increasingly frustrated at being turned away at almost every door he knocked on. He tried to give cassettes of his demos to record company executives, but no-one was interested. Live venues were also almost non-existent. The only live music to be found was a band playing cover versions at a hotel or discoteque. One of these bands, Void, would soon cut their “American” long hair, morph into e-Void, and become huge with their mixture of electro-pop and African imagery. Yet still David was getting nowhere.

Mountain Records released the album and it was expected to go the same way as its predecessor: banned from the radio by the SABC. However, the winds of change soon blew over David’s career.

On August 15 the Springboks ran out on the field for the first test in Christchurch, New Zealand, fielding players Naas Botha and Errol Tobias, et al. Naas Botha was the kicking sensation and Errol Tobias the first black man to become a Springbok rugby

player. For the first test, captain Wynand Claasen was somehow omitted from the team.
They lost the test 9-14.



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/1/16/AB196TestProgramme.jpg>

The tour was a volatile affair, with protesters doing their best to have the tour stopped, due to their objections toward the apartheid policies of South Africa.



<http://www.wcl.govt.nz/wellington/tour.html>

By the early 1980s pressure from protest groups in New Zealand, such as HART (Halt All Racist Tours), came to a boiling point when the New Zealand Rugby Union proposed a Springbok tour for 1981. The Australian Prime Minister refused permission for the Springbok's aircraft to refuel on their territory en route to New Zealand. Protesters dropped flour bombs on the players from low-flying airplanes. There were some very ugly scenes. It was clear that South Africa was not wanted as long as apartheid continued.

In South Africa there was a fever of indignation at the protesting. (Of course, there is the irony that the riots and the government's reactions in South Africa at that time were far uglier, with many people being killed or detained.) The international critics didn't understand how things were in South Africa; they shouldn't allow sport to be ruined by politics. Such thinking was the consensus of many white South Africans, Kramer's future audience. There was a sense of the laager being drawn into a circle against those that were attacking South Africa. And then radio stations began playing

“Hak Hom, Blokkies”. It was just what the dejected rugby fans needed to hear, especially the line:

We played a gentleman’s game
but it’s all been spoiled by politics.

By the time the Springboks won the second test 24-12, David had a hit on his hands. South Africa lost the third and final test 22-25, but “Hak Hom, Blokkies” became a huge hit, as did the entire album. *Die Verhaal Van Blokkies Joubert* went on to become a triple gold album, selling 150,000 copies. Suddenly, David had arrived.

Hak Hom, Blokkies

The moustache on his lip is pencil thin
Like the middle path through his hair
And although his friends call him Blokkies
His wife calls him Joubert

Ag, Christina, Christina, he thinks to himself,
You never could understand
What it feels like to dummy and to sidestep
With a leather ball in your hands

Man, it’s hard to believe this is Blokkies Joubert
The hooker in the Springbok scrum
’Cause he’s old and grey and he sits in his chair
In the slanting winter sun
But he made his name with that wonderful game
That he played in 1931

Well, he sits in the lounge of the old age home
Just north of Beaufort West
And he watches a TV programme of the Springbok rugby test
As the images flicker upon the screen he can hear the manne call
They say hak hom, hak hom Blokkies, Blokkies hak daai ball

En ons sê:

Druk hulle, druk hulle Blokkies, druk hulle mannetjies flou
Hak hulle, hak hulle Blokkies, hak hulle bolletjie gou
Lig julle knieë, druk julle drieë daar agter die doellyn nou

He sits there in the afternoon sun,
His memories come and go
He can clearly remember Bennie Osler
And Boy and Fanie Louw
Yes, there they stand with the rest of the team
In the photograph on the wall
And if you ask him he will show you
Where they signed on his rugby ball

En ons sê:

Druk hulle, druk hulle Blokkies, druk hulle mannetjies flou
Hak hulle, hak hulle Blokkies, hak hulle bolletjie gou
Lig julle knieë, druk julle drieë daar agter die doellyn nou

Ja, ons ouens was rof in die ou dae
But we played a gentleman's game
But it's all been spoiled by politics
Never going to be the same
So he drifts back to the old days as he hears the manne call
They say: hak hom, hak hom, Blokkies, Blokkies hak daai ball

En ons sê:

Druk hulle, druk hulle Blokkies, druk hulle mannetjies flou
Hak hulle, hak hulle Blokkies, hak hulle bolletjie gou
Lig julle knieë, druk julle drieë daar agter die doellyn nou

En ons sê:

Druk hulle, druk hulle Blokkies, druk hulle mannetjies flou
Hak hulle, hak hulle Blokkies, hak hulle bolletjie gou
Lig julle knieë, druk julle drieë daar agter die doellyn nou.

Here are the chords to the opening lines of *Hak Hom, Blokkies*:

D A G D
The mustache on his lip is pencil thin like the middle part through his hair,

D A G D
 and although his friends call him Blokkies his wife would call him Joubert.
 D A G D
 Ag Christina, Christina he thinks to himself, you never could understand
 D A G D
 what it feels like to dummy and to sidestep with a leather ball in your hand.
 G D A D
 Man it is hard to believe this is Blokkies Joubert, a hooker in the Springbok scrum,
 G D A D
 because he's old and he's gray and he sits in chair in the slanting winter sun.
 G D A D
 But he made his name with that wonderfull game that he played in 1931.

The music was unsophisticated, and featured some concertina, a la boeremusiek. David sings with a flat delivery, as he had heard the farmworkers sing when he was a child growing up in Worcester. (In fact, one of the people the author spoke to about Kramer, thought that Kramer was a “coloured”. Admittedly, the person was twenty years old at the time of the conversation, and too young to know much about Kramer, his face or his music, but what he had heard made him assume that David was not white.)

The music of the hit song was very similar to other Kramer songs, in that it had a steady beat, modelled on the South African music known as boeremusiek (farmer’s music). It has three chords, D, A and G, and they are all major chords. There are no augmented chords or diminished sevenths to be found on this record. The record begins with the sound of a large audience, a rugby audience, one assumes, as well as a band comprising drums, bass, guitar and concertina. The concertina is heard throughout the song.

The song is in English, but the chorus is in Afrikaans:

En ons sê:

Druk hulle, druk hulle Blokkies, druk hulle mannetjies flou
Hak hulle, hak hulle Blokkies, hak hulle bolletjie gou
Lig julle knieë, druk julle drieë daar agter die doellyn nou

The recording is not perfect, as can be heard when Kramer sings the lines:

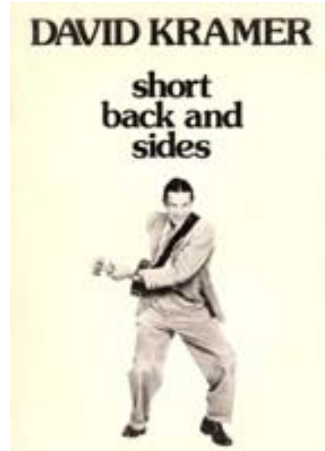
Man, it's hard to believe this is Blokkies Joubert
The hooker in the Springbok scrum
'Cause he's old and grey and he sits in his chair.

The backing harmonies are not quite in synch with David's voice. In later years, using computer software such as ProTools, this glitch could easily have been remedied. However, at the time of the recording it would have taken too much time (money) to re-record the backing harmonies.

Most people loved the song, but there were a few who found it rather shallow, and adding to the notion that Afrikaans music seemed to cater to the lowest common denominator. But those critics were by far the minority.

Overnight David's career was like a match-winning try against the All Blacks at Newlands or Ellis Park. He was on the radio, in magazines, and the South African public adored him. Editorials loved him. He made good copy with his interesting look and family-friendly smile.

He was also a shrewd player, and within months of "Hak Hom, Blokkies" becoming a hit, Maskew Miller had *Short Back and Sides* on the shelves (1982), a collection of photographs of David, his lyrics and drawings, along with some of his musings.



This book went a long way in creating the David Kramer persona. People could read his thoughts and see how he tapped into familiar elements from their daily South African lives. David was involving himself in his own star-making mechanisms, and it worked like a charm.

The public was becoming acquainted with the “blik” (tin) sound, as well as the “blik” look, there was something wholesome about it, something for the whole family to enjoy. David, the writer of subversive political songs, was shelved for the time being. Whereas *Bakgat!* had been banned by the SABC, *Die Verhaal Van Blokkies Joubert* was often heard on the radio. Quite often, in fact. When he agreed to do a commercial for Volkswagen, David’s voice was heard even more on radio and his face seen more frequently on television.

In the advertisement David is in the middle of nowhere, a typical Kramer image: big open skies over a flat landscape, covered with khaki-green bushes. He is depicted as some kind of travelling musician, with a dikwiel bicycle (read: down on his luck), and a guitar slung across his back. He is pushing his bike along a dusty road, truly rural. Of

course, he is wearing what had by now become his trademark red velskoene. A Volksie bus appears and stops to offer David a lift, which he gladly accepts. They set off, the bicycle apparently stowed away somewhere in the implied huge packing space of the VW bus. He entertains the family with his guitar and all goes well. He reaches his destination, and the family bids him farewell. Alas, they forget to unload the bicycle and David is seen running after the bus, frantically waving his arms, the scene played in fast motion for comic effect.

http://kr.youtube.com/watch?v=C_Q383K58nM&NR=1 shows the original advertisement.

Lyrics to the Volksie bus advertisement

After hours of pushing this bike,
There's nothing I like better
Than when an ouk offers me a lift
'coz when I'm moeg and tired
I get really inspired
When he's riding in a Volksie bus!
I can play my guitar
'coz it's bigger than a car
Stretch my legs and tap my feet
There's power to spare
You can grease back your hair
Be the main man (Afrikaans 'man') on the street
It's easy to drive
You can really come alive.
And there's room for all of us
It's lekker for me
To join a family
Riding in a Volksie bus
It's lekker for me
To join a family
Riding in a Volksie bus!

The campaign was so successful that Volkswagen created another, longer commercial, with David once again composing and performing the ditty that accompanied the visuals. Cf. <http://kr.youtube.com/watch?v=03Ny3U63QwY>.

It should come as no surprise that Volkswagen also rolled out another version of the television commercial, this time *sans* Kramer, instead Jeremy Taylor's "Ag Pleez, Deddy" being adapted to sing the praises of the Volksie bus. Of further interest, Volkswagen roped in the services of Slash (the guitarist for Guns 'n' Roses) to feature in another of their campaigns in which he plays a special 'Volkswagen' guitar: the black guitar has a VW emblem on the high E fret.

Cf. <http://kr.youtube.com/watch?v=Aqv9Z6W4nCY>.

Other musicians such as John Mayer have also been used to endorse VW in the USA.

1981 could be considered the breakthrough year for David Kramer. "Hak Hom, Blokkies" spent four weeks at number 1 on the Springbok Top Twenty, and David's follow-up single, "Die Royal Hotel", peaked at number 7. Not bad for an artist whose previous album had been banned by the SABC!

Die Royal Hotel

Hier sit die manne in die Royal Hotel
Ek ken mos vir almal, ek is almal se pël.
Luister ou vrind, daar agter die bar
Hoe lyk dit met nog so 'n doppie daar.

Ken julle vir Doepie, sy bynaam is Dop
Hy het vir die Springbokke doel geskop.
'n Lee bierblik kan hy maklik platdruk
Met net een hou teen sy groot voorkop.

Nou stel ek voor my ou vriend Fanie
Daar's niks ter wereld wat Fanie pla nie
Ontmoet hom in die straat se hoe gaan dit ou maat
Sê Fanie nee ek kan nie kla nie,

Hier sit die manne in die Royal hotel
Ek ken mos vir almal ek is almal se pël
Luister ou vrind, daar agter die bar
Hoe lyk dit met nog so 'n doppie daar

En hier sit die speurder, Sersant de Kok
Hy drink sy whiskey so on the rocks
'n Koel komkommer, ons noem hom op sy nommer
Hy's dubble 0, dubble 0 seven de Kock

Hier sit die manne, hier sit die manne
Hier sit die manne, hier sit die manne
Ja hier sit die manne in die Royal hotel
Ek ken mos vir almal ek is almal se pël
Luister ou vrind, daar agter die bar
Hoe lyk dit met nog so 'n doppie daar

En van die noordweste kom Karel Bester
Dra kortmou hemp en 'n khaki broek
Lank terug gebore, hare kort om die ore
Hy's lief om te lag, hy's lief om te vloek.

Hier langs die till, sit 'n man so stil
Daar's trane in sy oë
Hy's sê hy's die baas van 'n bankrot plaas
Hier ver van die klein karoo
Maar dis lekker, dis lekker, dis tog te lekker hier
Musiek op die draadloos en skuim op my bier
Luister ou vrind, daar agter die bar
Hoe lyk dit met nog so 'n doppie daar

Hier sit die manne, hier sit die manne
Hier sit die manne, hier sit die manne
Ja, hier sit die manne in die Royal hotel.

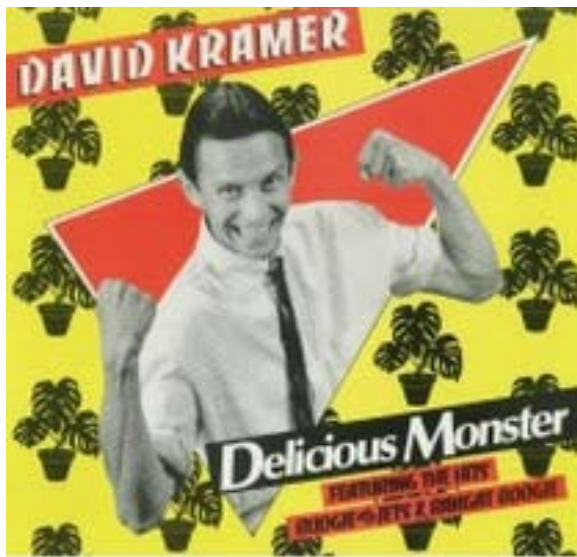
This song makes use of David's favourite images. It addresses working people from the South African rural parts, and the theme is also familiar to Kramer fans: men

drinking in a bar, in this case the bar at the Royal Hotel. The name Royal Hotel strikes a chord with most South Africans, as it would seem that every town in South Africa is graced with a Royal Hotel, usually a small, three-star hotel. Also typical of Kramer's songwriting, the song tells the stories of the characters, the bankrupt farmer, the police sergeant who always gets his man, and so on.

Chapter 16

Kramer was now a professional musician. His dream had come true. Years of hard work and dedication had paid off. David took his good luck and made the most of it.

He released *Delicious Monster* in 1982, which went gold, selling a very respectful (in South African terms) 50,000 copies. The serial number is MOULP (L)15 1982 MOUNTAIN.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

The tracks on *Delicious Monster* are:

1. I'm a Rooker
2. Budgie and the Jets
3. Country and Western Town
4. Ballad of an MCP
5. Father's Son
6. White Cortina
7. Bakgat Boogie
8. Cowboy

9. Suburban Dream
10. Barman (Turn up the News)
11. Oh Carol
12. Hekke van Paradise

According to David Smith, the guitarist for The Offbeats, the character Budgie referred to in “Budgie and The Jets” was a high school acquaintance of David’s.

Budgie Brummer played in the band, The Jets. They were crude and unpolished, with puny amplifiers, but there was something wild about them. The Jets had done something pretty smart back in Worcester: they started their own nightclub, if it could be called that. They named the place The Jet’s Cave.

The club was an illegal venue, a deserted hall they took over. It was a burnt-out barn, diagonally across from Frank Vos Garage. They ran power from a neighbour’s house. After shows the surrounding area would be littered with used condoms and empty brandy bottles. They were a Stones group with a Stones crowd, whereas David’s group, The Offbeats, were a Beatles group with a more civilised audience. The height of infamy for The Jets was when one of the Sunday newspapers trumpeted The Jet’s Cave as a den of iniquity, shocking readers about sex, and drugs use. At the core of this depravity was The Jets, and at the core of The Jets was Budgie Brummer. Budgie had been born with a cleft lip and palate.

Budgie was no tough guy. When the boys got together at the pool hall behind Good Hope Café, inevitably someone yanked one of his Chelsea boots off him, so Budgie then had to lurch about as he tried to retrieve his footwear. The boot would be bandied about across the pool table and until Budgie begged to get it back.

David wrote in his song “Budgie and The Jets” that Brummer played “Peter Gunn” in the key of E, because that’s how Budgie played the song. By all accounts he wasn’t much of a guitarist and didn’t think twice about using a major chord instead of a minor, just as “Budgie and The Jets” claims. The Fanie referred to in “Budgie and The Jets” was in actual fact the drummer, Fanie Immelman, not the bass player. The “breker on his 50 cc” refers to David’s pal from The Offbeats, James Munro, and the Texan cigarettes he used to smoke.

The song also makes mention of the Cumberland Hotel, which was (and is) a real hotel in Worcester. The other hotel at the time was the Brandwacht. “Budgie and The Jets” says that the band played at the Twentieth Century Fox – another fact.

Budgie and The Jets

Ja, I remember ou Budgie well
Didn’t he and the Jets play at the Cumberland Hotel?
With a Gallo guitar and a homemade speaker box
Playing the interval at the Twentieth Century Fox

Budgie played like Hank Marvin
And Duane Eddy and those ous
And he sounded like the record
When he used the tremolo
If he didn’t know the minor chord
He’d use the major one instead
He’d go down on his knees
And play the guitar behind his head

*Budgie, Budgie and the band The Jets
Always smoking Texan cigarettes
Budgie a breker on his 50 cc
He played Peter Gunn in the key of E*

One night in the Boland they held a Battle of the Bands
Budgie and the Jets were there and a few of their fans
It was a helluva night as I recall

Cause they nearly blew the roof off
The Eben Dönges Memorial Hall

Budgie played lead up on the stage like a star
Fanie on the bass and Chris on the guitar
I forget the drummer's name but he was hitting that snare
He had tattoos on his arms and Brylcreem in his hair

Budgie, Budgie and the band The Jets
Always smoking Texan cigarettes
Budgie a breker on his 50 cc
He played Peter Gunn in the key of E

It was Budgie and the Jets that night
Who walked off with the prize
In their white satin shirts
And their velvet bow ties
They came up on the stage and took
A bow with such style
A young girl screamed out 'Budgie!'
Then fainted in the aisle

I saw him the other day you know
He was standing in the square
Still wearing his tie
And grease in his hair
But he's not the same Budgie
That we knew you understand
Cause now he plays the guitar
In a hallelujah gospel band.

The song says that Budgie didn't know how to play the A minor chord – David taught him this chord. The lyrics also refer to the Eben Dönges Hall – this name is derived from the Eben Dönges Hospital in Worcester.

An interesting element of this song is that it seems to illustrate David's new influences – the events take place in his hometown, Worcester, but in the last verse he seems to be referring to the Grand Parade in Cape Town, the city David had relocated to after returning from Leeds University. Amateur pastors were at the Parade, Bible tucked

under their arms, belting out sermons to passers by, often with a musician or two to liven things up.

The lyrics showcase Kramer's skills of observation and commentary. On one level he sketches a character, but on another, deeper level, he implicitly addresses the notion of class and taste. This kitsch once repulsed him so, but now he's found inspiration in this ugliness and it's allowed him to make a very subtle political (with a small p) comment on his subjects. Ironically, those very subjects often did not notice the barbs in Kramer's lyrics, and embraced him wholeheartedly as (nearly) one of their own.

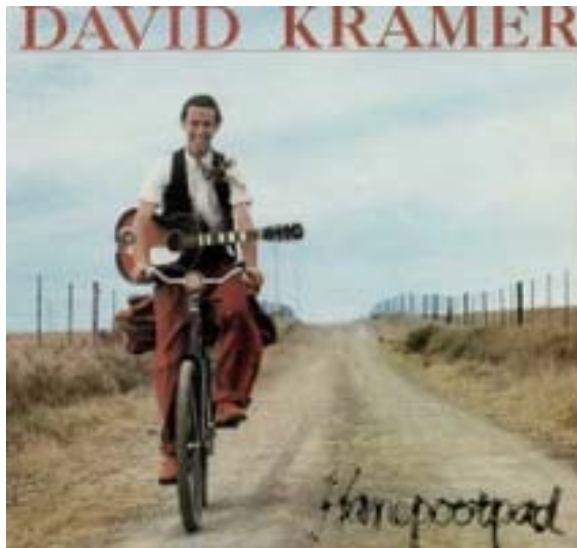
The story of Budgie has moved into the area of myth, depending on who one speaks to: according to David de Nobrega, who ran The Koffiehuis café with his father in Worcester, Budgie made his fortune during the construction of Sun City. However, David Smith of The Offbeats insists that Budgie died tragically, killed on Christmas day.

After school, Smith says, Budgie relocated to Cape Town where he worked various jobs. At one time he was a mail sorter at Goodwood post office. He then took a job as a security guard, and on Christmas day his detail was ambushed in a heist, and Budgie was fatally shot.

Critics complain that "Budgie and The Jets" is a typical Kramer song, unsophisticated, with David singing in his typical Kramer delivery, that is, rather crass and pretend low-class. The man has become more caricature than substance: his red shoes and baggy pants seem to be more important than the music to his targeted audience. That being said, Kramer's audience loved the song.

In 1983 David offered *Hanepootpad* to his loving audience. This album went double gold, selling 100,000 copies, a very good showing indeed. The serial number is

MOUKLP(L)20 1983 MOUNTAIN. Interestingly, and maybe this accounted for some of the album's success, all of the titles are in Afrikaans. There is no trace of the political Kramer on this album.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

Hanepootpad contained these songs:

1. Stanley en die Koei (De Vries, trad. Kramer)
2. Laat die Honne Huil (trad. Kramer)
3. Hanne (trad. Kramer)
4. Boggom en Voertsek
5. Lenie Lenie
6. Oranje, Blanje, Blou
7. Tommy Dippenaar
8. Hieronner ou Tafelberg (E Presley, V Matson)
9. Klong van Chavonnes
10. Ballade van Koos Sas



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

In 1984 Kramer released a studio album and a live album, which had been recorded the previous year at the Baxter Theatre in Rosebank, Cape Town. The studio album was called *Kwaai* and the live one *Jis, Jis, Jis*.



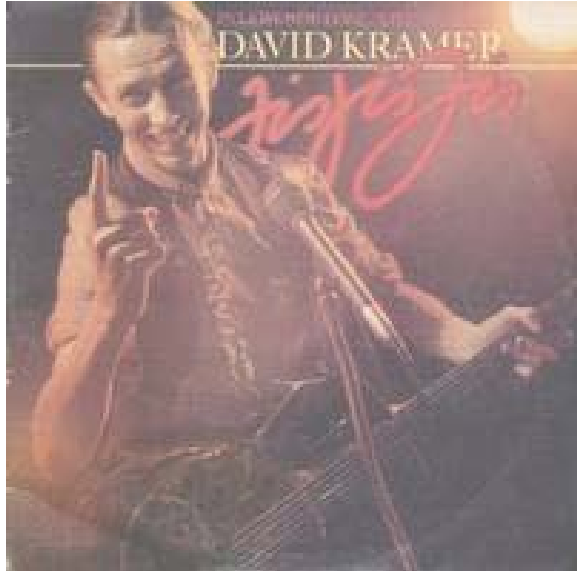
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The track listing for *Kwaai* was:

1. Volstruis Foxtrot
 2. Kom Kom Kom (deur Braam de Vries geïnspireer)
 3. Bokkie (Wil Jy Dans)
 4. Piet Soek Vrou (Vir Willem Steenkamp)
 5. Tant Mina
 6. Vroegoggend
1. Stoksielalleen
 2. Die Troue
 3. O Moeder
 4. My Bure
 5. Ek Praat Die Flaai
 6. Kwaai Lappies

Kwaai featured another well-known Cape Town musician, Jonathan Butler. He went on to have a successful international career as a musician and songwriter, having his compositions recorded by artists such as Patti LaBelle, Billy Ocean, Al Jarreau, Kenny Loggins, and George Benson (<http://www.answers.com/topic/jonathan-butler-1>).

The album was engineered by Kevin Shirley (AKA The Caveman), who would later work with Journey, Iron Maiden, Rush, Led Zeppelin, Dream Theatre, and others.

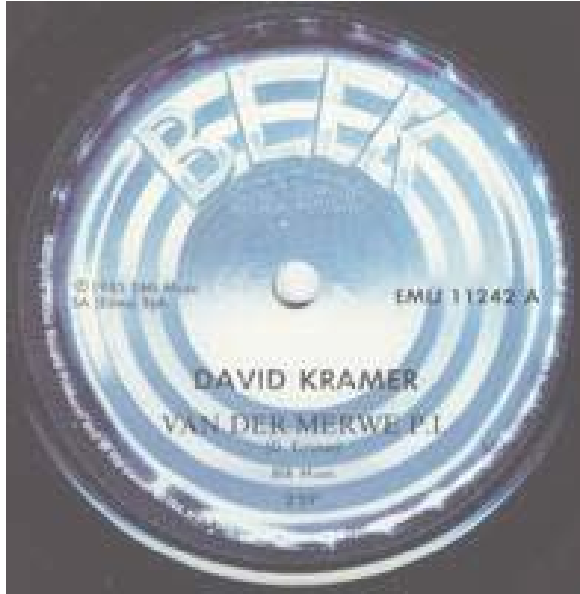


<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

Jis Jis Jis featured these songs:

1. Hieronner / Weskusklong
2. Sannie van der Spuy
3. Krisjan Swart
4. Ballad of an MCP
5. Hak Hom Blokkies
6. Montagu
7. Budgie and The Jets
8. On the Border
9. Botteltjie Blou
10. I'm a Rooker
11. Suburban Dream
12. Stooking Boom
13. Hekke van Paradise
14. Tommy Dippenaar
15. Hanne
16. Royal Hotel
17. Tjoepstil
18. Bakgat Boogie

Whilst 1984 saw David release two albums, 1985 would see the release of a 7-single, "Van Der Merwe, PI", from the television show of the same name.



Van Der Merwe, PI
<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

This was a good period in David's life. His career was consolidating and his second daughter was born. When Amy Kramer arrived, David and Renaye were more experienced, and things went a lot smoother this time around.

On one occasion David was stopped by a couple who recognised him inside the Gardens Centre Pick 'n' Pay.

“Verskoon my, maar is u nie David Kramer nie?”

David turned to face them and smiled.

“Ja,” he acknowledged.

The man stuck out his huge hand.

“Plesier om jou te ontmoet, swaer!” he said. “Plesier! Die naam is Johan Malan, en dis my vrou, Wanda.”

“Aangename kennis,” David replied in his English-accent-tainted Afrikaans.

“Ons is op pad huis toe,” Malan informed David. “Vereeniging toe. Die Kaap was lekker. Ons het die Coons gesien.”

“O, wonderlik ..!” his wife cooed. “So vrolik, die kleure en die musiek ...”

David had an immediate mental image of the annual carnival held in the city: groups of coloured musicians hitting the streets in a parade of traditional Cape Town music, their faces painted, adorned in bright costumes, little umbrellas held high as they danced through the streets of the Mother City. There were troupes of musicians, guitars and banjos playing wild, exciting music.

“Ek ken díe musiek glad nie. Gee vir my ’n boereorkes, en ek is gelukkig,” the man continued. “Maar ek moet sê dat die musiek wonderlik was. So opgewek.

“Nou ja, ons moet weer ry. Aangenaam om jou te ontmoet. Jy moet in die Transvaal kom speel,” Malan greeted, sticking out his hand again.

“Ja,” his wife agreed. “Kom gee vir ons ’n show.”

David was deep in thought as he went on his way, thinking about the sounds that had been right under his nose for so long: Cape music.

Chapter 17

Despite his success, David became more aware that he was feeling frustrated, stifled. He was sick of the outfit that he was becoming forced to don for each appearance, and he felt that despite the money, he was not being true to himself. He decided it was time for a change.

1996 was an unusual year for Kramer. He released three albums. The first was *Baboondogs* and the second *Laat Vir Die Dans*. These two albums could not be more diverse. *Baboondogs* was the liberal David, singing protest songs, and *Laat Vir Die Dans* was a collection of Afrikaans songs, Kramer's first collection of hits.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

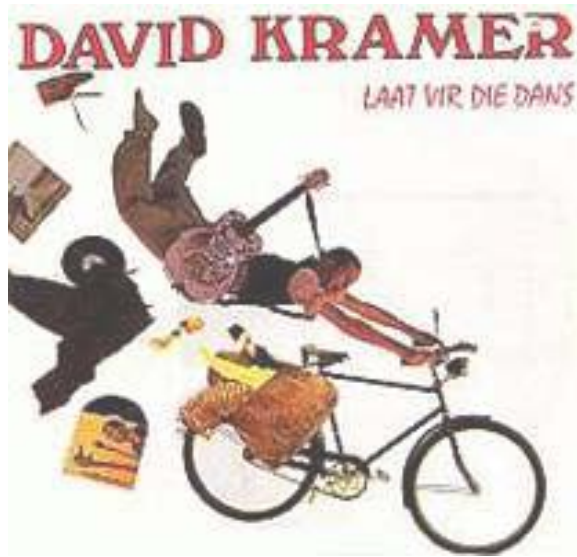
The track listing for *Baboondogs* is:

1. Mambas In The Gutters
2. Signal Hill
3. Going Away
4. So Long Skipskop

5. Driver Driver
6. Dry Wine
7. Shake My Head
8. Sitting On The Fence
9. Bobbejaan Bobbejaan
10. Born For Dreaming

He knew that he could be committing commercial suicide with the release of this album, but he couldn't deny this voice inside him any longer. He had become more brooding as the years went by, and he felt that he had to be true to himself. Life was too short not to heed one's own needs. As he had become older and more mature, he had begun thinking thoughts about his mortality, and what the point of it all was, and against these thoughts he felt he had to make his "protest" album, to hell with the consequences. The consequences, when they came, were surprisingly small, no-one really seeming to care.

It was as if all people wanted was more of the David Kramer they knew, and this they got with *Laat vir die Dans* (Late for the Dance). Once more David turned out the Kramer look. However, he was now becoming a more and more goofy worker travelling the countryside on his bicycle, and yet again the cover artwork showed more sophistication, a professional design studio behind the artwork.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za>

The track listing for *Laat vir die Dans* is:

1. Stoksielalleen
2. Hak hom Blokkies
3. Volstruis Foxtrot
4. Royal Hotel
5. Bokkie wil Jy Dans
6. Klong van Chavonnes
7. Van der Merwe P.I.
8. Stanley en die Koei (Kramer/De Vries)
9. Montagu
10. Boggom en Voetsek
11. Hanne
12. Tommie Dippenaar
13. Laat die Honde Huil
14. Brakpan Rugby Skrum

However, it was the third album which would be the beginning of a new phase in David's already successful career.

David came off the stage, sweat streaming down his face. The building was still reverberating with applause. He was wearing a khaki shirt, the sleeves rolled up to the elbows, with a striped school tie. The shirt was wet under the armpits.

Now the show was over. David could hardly bear performing live. He did them well, and once he got going it was almost fun at times. He loved the applause and when people laughed at the right times, but for days before a performance he was a ball of nervous tension, until he sometimes felt like crying. But, thank heavens this one was over now.

“Nice work,” David heard whilst he was placing his guitar in its case.

He straightened up and turned around. It was Taliep Petersen. The two artists had run into one another at a couple of gigs greeting and exchanging a few words each time. If it wasn't that the two were musicians, they would probably never have crossed paths, as Taliep was Muslim, a so-called Coloured, and David white, the two of them living in different worlds, even though they shared the same city.

David much admired Taliep's ability. Music just seemed to flow from him when he picked up an instrument. Petersen leaned more towards jazz than David, but he could still appreciate the man's talent.

“Thanks,” David replied gratefully.

He remembered the years he had begged venues to let him play, with no success. His thoughts went back to when he tried to push one of his home-made cassettes into someone's hands, how belittling and frustrating it had been, and that made this triumphant show all the more rewarding. All in all, though, David would gladly not perform live again – the nervousness, compounded by his shyness, was too much for him.

Kramer found a parking space and opened the door for Jesse. He held out his hand for his daughter to guide her to dance class. As they made their way to the dance studio near the Mount Nelson Hotel, Jesse skipped along, humming to herself.

“Hey, David ..!” came a voice.

David looked to see who it was. It was Taliep.

“Where you going?” asked Petersen, smiling his boyish smile.

“I’m taking Jesse to her dance class. Renaye’s got something on.”

David looked down at his daughter.

“She’s going to be a ballerina,” he said, mostly for the little girl’s benefit.

The weather was becoming cooler. The sun was still shining but in the late afternoons, especially when the wind came up, it was getting decidedly chilly. On this day the top of Table Mountain was hidden by a thick layer of cloud, rolling over the mountain.

“Taliép, do you have any contacts in the klopse music world?” David asked.

He had been toying with an idea for some time now.

“The klopse?” Taliép asked. “Of course. I know quite a few guys. Why?”

The klopse are troupes of musicians who take to the streets each summer and march through Cape Town, wearing colourful outfits and holding tiny umbrellas aloft as they sing their traditional songs, accompanied by banjos and guitars.

“Well, I’m looking for musicians. I want to do an album that’s more Cape. But I want the real thing, you know, not just some slick session musicians.”

“What exactly are you looking for? A choir? Or a ghoema band?”

David opened his mouth, but didn't say anything. He tried to take in this new information. He had only vaguely considered singers, not a whole choir. But now as he pondered it, a choir would be great: a typical Cape Malay choir. And ghoema? What was ghoema?

“Er ...” David began, trying to formulate his thoughts.

“I have a million ideas,” Taliep declared.

David realised this was probably so. Taliep would be a mine of information.

“Look, I've got to rush, but can we get together some time and chat?” he asked Taliep.

“Sure. When?”

“I'm free tomorrow afternoon. Can we meet then?”

“OK. Where?”

“How about that coffee shop at Riverside Centre in Rondebosch?”

“Good. Two o'clock?”

“Perfect.”

And so began what history would prove to be a fruitful collaboration, both artistically and financially.

When David arrived at the coffee shop Taliep was already there. They ordered their respective drinks and chatted. Time flew by. They had a second beverage each. Taliep hummed melodies and played air guitar, and David was mesmerised. Taliep was a walking jukebox.

“Can you come to my place tomorrow?” he asked.

“Sure,” Taliep answered. “What time?”

“How about three?”

At 3 o’ clock sharp the doorbell rang. David rushed to the door. There stood Taliep, a smile on his face. He was armed with his guitar as well as a box full of cassettes.

“Come in, come in,” David invited, opening the door as wide as it could go.

Taliep looked around him. It was clear that David’s career was doing well. The house was beautiful. Outside the walls were painted white, and the garden was well-kept, a creeper climbing up one of the stoep’s pillars.

David led Taliep to the lounge. David’s acoustic guitar was leaning against one of the chairs.

“Have a seat,” David offered and Taliep sat down, laying his guitar-case on the floor. The carpet was Persian, with rich, deep colours.

“Ok, let me show you what I have,” David said.

He picked up his guitar and put it in his lap. Taliep watched as David played and sang, listening intently, nodding to himself. He thought he knew what David was getting at. David stopped playing.

“What do you think?” he asked.

“Hm,” Taliep muttered.

He leaned down, opened the case, and took out his guitar. He took the capo from the guitar case and placed it over the neck of the guitar. He played an A chord, but with the capo over the G fret, the chord became C.

“Do you mean something like this?” he asked.

He played David's song, but with a slightly different beat, and David grinned widely. It was exactly what he was looking for! It was the same song, but somehow it had blossomed.

"Oh, that's lovely," Renaye exclaimed, coming into the lounge, carrying a tray of coffee.

David looked at Renaye, watching her face. He saw that she wasn't simply being polite. She really did like what Taliep had done to the song. Renaye put the tray down on the coffee table in the middle of the lounge and left the two musicians to work.

David played another song and Taliep mulled it over, biting his lower lip. David waited. Then Taliep dove into his box, pulling out a cassette player and one of his tapes.

"Maybe this is the style you could arrange it in," he offered, hitting the Play button.

After just a few bars David knew this was exactly what the song needed.

"That's it! That's it!" he cried excitedly.

Taliep grinned back at him and stopped the tape.

"What's the theme of this album?" he wanted to know.

"I want it to be about District Six," replied David.

Taliep looked at David intently, taking this information in. This was a very serious topic for him, and indeed for many Capetonians who had been affected by the government's forced removal of the people who were not white from District Six in 1968.

Taliep knew that David had a political side to his work. He'd seen some of David's shows where he'd performed songs such as "No Official Reason".

With the weather comes the rain
The wind in every season
A woman next door has been detained
For no official reason.

Days blurred into weeks, David and Taliep working furiously together. The music flowed freely and soon it was time to record the album. This time David recorded in Surrey Estate, on the slopes of Table Mountain. The area was inhabited by mostly Cape Malay people, the heartland of the sounds David and Taliep were making. They managed to acquire the artistic talents of Robbie Jansen and Basil Coetzee.

Jansen was a self-taught alto saxophone musician. He was a founding member of Pacific Express, and also took up saxophone duties for Abdulla Ibrahim's (Dollar Brand) band. He was a pioneer of mixing jazz and ghoema in Cape Town, playing in the group Ghoema Kings of Cape Town.

Basil "Mannenbeg" Coetzee was another jazz musician, also playing saxophone in the group Pacific Express. He began with the penny whistle, but found his niche with the tenor saxophone.

By the time the album was released in 1986 David was already working on its next phase: putting it on in a theatre as a musical.



http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

The track listing on *District Six – The Musical* are:

1. Heart of District Six
2. The Law The Law
3. This Time
4. Galiema
5. Sexy Boys
6. Kissing Like Old Friends
7. My Broetjie My Bra
8. New Year
9. So Long Goodbye
10. Hester's Complaint
11. Blind Man's Tears
12. When the South Easter Blows
13. Seven Steps of Stone

The idea came to David in bits and pieces, doing something about South Africa's apartheid past, of which the ramifications were still being felt. He was wary about not treating the subject with respect, making it into a cartoon protest, so he put it in the back of his mind to let the creative juices work at it.

At the same time he was toying with a romantic story, which would illustrate the class differences in South Africa. And then it suddenly came to him: he would set his love story against the backdrop of District Six. This would allow him to address many of the points that interested him. The political fingerwaving would be obvious, and on a more subtle level it would allow him to create a story which would show how apartheid affected people on a very basic, day-to-day level. There would also be the question of young people trying to reach their dreams, something which he could well identify with.

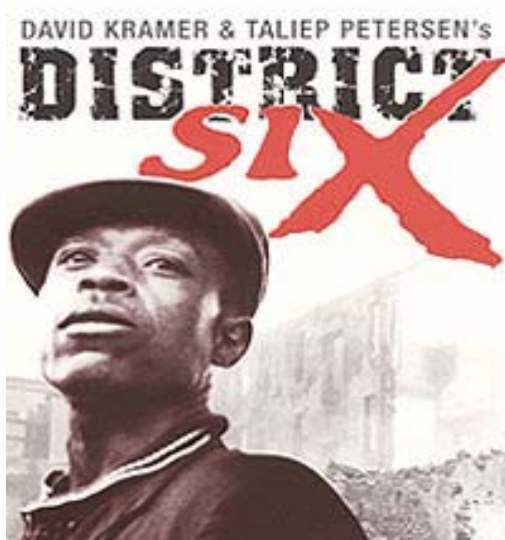
The task before him was monumental: writing a musical and putting it together. In the beginning doors were politely closed in his face, even though he was David Kramer – this was too ambitious, and potential partners just didn't see David succeeding. However, David was nothing if not stubborn in his pursuit of making this dream a reality. One might believe that it was partly fired by his wish not to perform live. The process took months of his time, but bit by bit it fell into place, and then it started to gain a momentum of its own. There were small victories, such as writing a line that worked really well, and larger ones, like getting the Baxter Theatre to accept his musical.

April 11, 1987. The theatre was packed. Cars lined the streets, every single parking space taken up.

The foyer of the Baxter Theatre was humming with excitement. This opening night performance of *District Six* was sold out, as, it would be the entire run. The patrons wore smart-casual clothes and many enjoyed a glass of wine. Voices called out as friends were recognised across the crowded foyer, and hands were shaken. There was a definite buzz about the place.

The lights dimmed and the bells rang to indicate that the show was about to begin. The audience moved into the auditorium.

No one could have dreamed that such a sad backdrop would be such a huge hit, but that's what *District Six* became. It changed the course of David's career in a profound way. It was a sensation. It was sold out, night after night, and would go on to be seen by 289,500 people in a total of 447 shows in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Edinburgh. (McCormick 2002:205)



http://www.musicals.co.za/district_six.html

The storyline to *District Six* was one that the audience strongly identified with. It was a love story: a tale of Mary and Cassiem's romance at a time when their neighbourhood, District Six, was declared a whites only area under the Group Areas Act. People of any other race had to vacate District Six.

Nines, a small-time local gangster, has a crush on Mary, complicating the love affair somewhat. There is further intrigue, not to mention romantic politicking, with the

character of Sandy, whose grandfather (both being white) wants to sign Mary to his Star Tone record label. Mary's chance of fame is scuppered by Sandy, who herself has an eye for Cassiem. When Nines finds that Cassiem and Sandy are having an affair, he informs on them to "the law".

Chapter 18

Towards the late 80's the political and cultural landscape was changing in South Africa. The so-called Alternatiewe Beweging played a substantial role, affecting music and literature, insisting that music didn't have to be insipid, commercially-driven entertainment. The Alternatiewe Beweging strived for a society which would be free from racial and sexual bias. This eventually led to the Voëlvry tour in 1989, with artists such as Koos Kombuis, Bernoldus Niemand en die Swart Gevaar, Johannes Kerkorrel, Die Gereformeerde Blues Band, as well as Die Briels all performing! (Bernoldus Niemand was also a member of the Cherry-Faced Lurchers.)

Generally seen as a movement driven by younger Afrikaans speakers, it turned upon the apartheid government, which, at the time, was quite revolutionary. These were the days when South Africa had a referendum to end apartheid. It was also a time of terrible violence in the townships, people seen as traitors were necklaced, schools burnt down. In the white suburbs boys had to practice cadets, in order to prepare for conflict.

Max du Preez wrote analytical articles in the newspaper Vrye Weeklad, criticising the government. Writing referred to as "Border Literature" made its appearance. P.J Haasbroek's *Heupvuur* (1974) is an example. Others writers of this genre include Alexander Strachan, Louis Kruger, George Weideman, and Koos Prinsloo.

Thanks to a large extent to the Alternatiewe Beweging, critical mass was being achieved, and South Africa was beginning to become liberated from apartheid. A new

South Africa would emerge within a few years, where freedom of speech, freedom of association would be the norm.

When the Alternatiewe Beweging came into being in the late '80s, some of the new breed of Afrikaners cited David as an influence. Of course, not all of the new musicians or members of the audience sang David's praise – many thought that he should have gone further with his protest songs, that he should have used his fame as a platform for a more vocal criticism against apartheid. (cf http://www.litnet.co.za/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=cause_dir_news_item&news_id=13657&cause_id=1270, as well as http://af.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternatiewe_Afrikaanse_Musiekbeweging)

It was in these times that Kramer and Petersen went back to work, creating and writing their next show.

This would be *Fairyland*, which opened in the Dock Road Theatre in 1990. *Fairyland* centred around the culture and everyday lifestyles of the people in District Six.



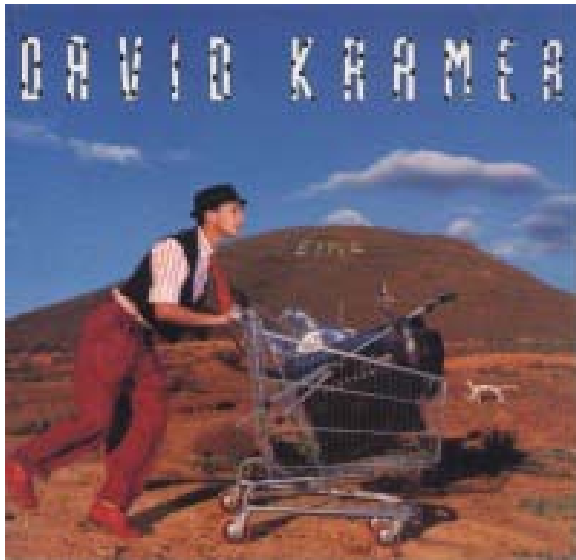
http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

The tracks on *Fairyland* are:

1. Fairyland
2. Smoother Than Vaseline
3. Ah Ja Ja Hoe!
4. Teardrops
5. The Guy Who Sticks The Stars
6. Farieda
7. Sexy Suzette
8. Ken Jy Vir My
9. I Wanna Ride On Your Motorbike
10. Take Me Home (The Cape Town Song)
11. Do You Remember

Fairyland was a rather insipid show by many accounts, with very little theatre to it, more a collection of songs being sung on a not very interesting stage.

However, before *Fairyland* opened, David released another album, titled *Eina* (Ouch!).



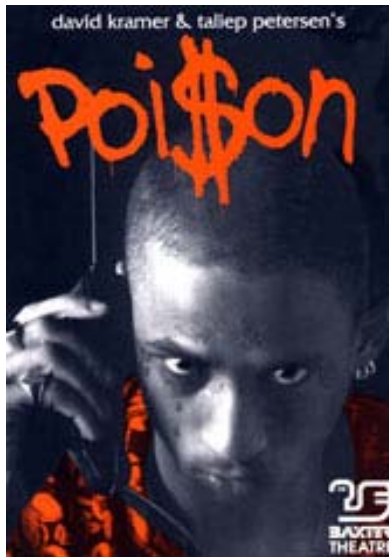
http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

The songs on *Eina* are:

1. Duiwel de Wet
2. Meisie Sonner Sokkies
3. Glynnis van Rensburg Marais
4. Ou Stuk Blik
5. David Ryk
6. Matchbox Full of Diamonds
7. Piet Mockingbird
8. Mense
9. Christmas in Kakamas
10. Piesang

The songs on *Eina!* were typical Kramer, but rather sub-standard, and the album didn't fare very well. There is very little one can say about this work.

The musical *Fairyland* was succeeded by *Poison* and *Crooners* in 1992, two more musicals David and Taliep put together.

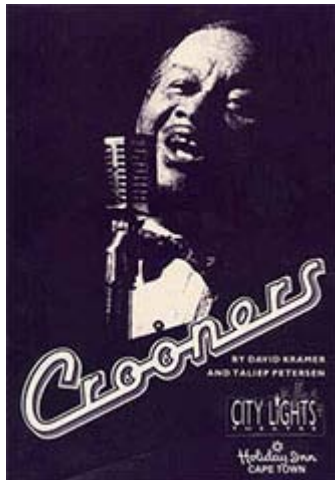


http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

The word *poison* is well-known term for a certain type of marijuana in South Africa, where marijuana is better known as “dagga”. The “dagga” referred to as *poison* is from the hills of Natal, actually known as Durban Poison. Also part of the *poison* culture is the drug Mandrax, which is crushed and mixed with the “dagga”. This is known as a “white pipe”. Some people say the name refers to the white smoke it creates, whilst others are of the opinion that it is based on the colour of the Mandrax tablet. *Poison* told the story of a drug dealer looking for revenge.

Poison was staged in London, and therefore was adapted to appeal to the local audience. The British critics were not kind, though.

Crooners was a smaller production, put on at one of the hotels in Cape Town, a very low-key affair. The storyline, the little of it there was, followed a group of has-beens who take another shot at stardom, this time in a more professional manner.



http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

For the next three years David was quiet, and then in 1995 he brought out *Kat and The Kings*.

The show started very small, really just a few paintings David had done as backdrops, a few props made by one of the actors, and an all-male cast. But it grew, and soon it was staged in the Dock Road Theatre, Cape Town, where *Fairyland* had also run. *Kat and The Kings* won the FNB Vita Award for Best Musical Production in 1996, as well as the cast each receiving an award for Best Performance in a Musical. David was very pleased with what the musical had achieved, and was about to end the run, when a telephone call came from London.

“David? Hi. It’s Andrew Jenkins from the Tricycle Theatre in London ...”

“Oh, yes. I remember you. We met when you came to Cape Town. How are you?”

“I’m fine. And you?”

“Fine. Couldn’t be better. I’m just about to wrap up *Kat and The Kings* ...”

“David, I have a proposition for you,” Andrew interrupted. “It’s about *Kat and The Kings*.”

“Oh?”

“Yes. We’d love to put it on here at the Tricycle Theatre.”

David was overjoyed at the words.

“That sounds wonderful. Let me come over to London in a week or so, and we can sort it all out,” he suggested.

“Great. Let me know when you can be here. It will be lovely to see you and Renaye again,” Andrew said.

Kat and The Kings was put on at the Tricycle Theatre, and it had a great run. Now David was invited to put the show on at the Vaudeville Theatre in the West End.

There was an unusual buzz in the audience, and David was worried that something was wrong. Maybe a patron needed medical assistance? He stuck his head out from behind the curtains for a moment.

“My God!” he exclaimed when he turned to face Renaye and the actors.

“What?” they wanted to know anxiously.

“It’s Mandela!”

“No!”

“Yes!”

David thought for a while. The commotion on the other side of the curtains was growing.

“Open the curtains,” he told the technician.

The curtains swung open gracefully, and there stood David, Renaye and the entire cast of *Kat and The Kings*. The audience oohed. This was all most unusual.

“Madiba,” David called. “Thank you very much for coming. I wonder if I could ask you to say a few words, so that we can get settled down ...”

The audience oohed even more. This was *most* unusual!

“Of course, my boy. Of course.”

Mandela rose to his feet and smiled at the audience around him.

“I remember David from when he sang a song about a rugby player.”

There were murmurs of agreement, and a few hands clapped.

“He has given many South Africans a lot of pleasure, and it is my understanding that this show, *Kat and The Kings*, will give many more people a lot of pleasure.”

Mandela had the people in the palm of his hands, everyone spellbound by his charisma.

“So let’s enjoy the show!”

The room erupted in applause. The curtains drew together and the house lights dimmed.

“How are we going to follow *that*?” one of the actors asked, and there were chuckles of agreement.

Such was the magic of Mandela, that that one appearance of his at the musical sealed its success. When David mentioned in conversation that Madiba had come to see the production, doors magically opened.

Kat and The Kings won the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Musical 1999 and the cast each won an Olivier for Best Performance in a Musical. Furthermore, Jody Abrahams and Loukmaan Adams were nominated for an Olivier for their choreographic contribution to the musical.

A second cast was assembled in Cape Town and they performed very successfully at the English Theatre in Frankfurt and The English Theatre in Vienna. For the next two years *Kat and The Kings* toured Holland, and a few European cities.

America was next. The original cast performed a six-month season at the Cort Theatre on Broadway in 1999, where it was nominated for 3 Drama Desk Awards.

For the 2003/04 Christmas season *Kat and The Kings* returned to the Tricycle Theatre in London. All in all, very good work all around.



http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

Kat & The Kings

ACT1: Memory, Lucky Day, American Thing, Mavis, Boetie Guitar, Cavalla Kings, If Your Shoes Don't Shine, Dress To Kill, The Tafelberg Hotel, Lonely Girl, Josephine, Wild Time

ACT2: Happy To Be Nineteen, Lonely Girl (reprise), All Rock & Roll Needs To Be, Only If You Have A Dream, The Last Thing You Need, Stupid Boy, The Claridges Hotel Medley, Cavalla Kings/The Singing Sensation/The Bell Hop/Blind Date/Lonely Girl/The Invisible Dog/Hey Baby/Cavalla Kings, The Skeleton Dance, Lagunya, Lucky Day (reprise)

After this David took a bit of a breather. The year after the debut of *Kat and The Kings*, he released a “greatest hits” album, *Alles Vannie Beste* (Everything of the Best).



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za/music.htm>

Alles Vannie Beste (Everything of the Best) contains these songs:

1. Stoksielalleen
2. Laat Die Honde Huil
3. Hanne
4. Stanley en Die Koei
5. Volstruisfoxtrot
6. Lenie, Lenie
7. Meisie Sonner Sokkies
8. Piet Bedien
9. Montagu
10. Krisjan Swart
11. Bokkie (Wil Jy Dans?)
12. Spore Van 'n Trein
13. Boggom en Voertsek
14. Hak hom, Blokkies!
15. Jy's My Sweetheart
16. Druk My Vas
17. So Long Skipskop
18. Royal Hotel

Chapter 19

1997 was a slow year for David. He released another compilation album: *Klassic Kramer*. He seemed to be tired and creatively treading water.

He sometimes thought of himself as the elderly man he had seen on the stoep in Worcester, the inspiration for the old rugby player with his faded memories of glories past. Then he would shake himself out of his bleak thoughts and tell himself that soon he would be up and running with a new project. He released another collection of songs from previous albums, seemingly filling in time, *Klassic Kramer*.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za/music.htm>

Klassic Kramer offers these tunes:

1. Jy's My Sweetheart
2. The Paul Simon Story
3. Kobus le Grange Marais
4. Druk My Vas
5. Spore Van 'n Trein
6. Hekke Van Paradise
7. Botteltjie Blou
8. Budgie and The Jets
9. Royal Hotel
10. Bakgatboogie

11. Matchbox Full Of Diamonds
12. So Long Skipskop
13. Hak Hom, Blokkies!
14. Bloemfontein Blues
15. Meisie Sonner Sokkies
16. Prisoners Of War
17. Out Of The Blue

He spent the rest of his time putting together the album which would eventually become *In the Days of District Six*. The rest of his time he spent at his brother John's studio, watching the elder Kramer as he worked on his almost photorealistic paintings, or setting off with his camera, inspired by the photographs that John took.

The one good thing about this relatively quiet time in his life was the opportunity to spend time with his parents, and to reconnect with his wife in a way that he hadn't done for too long.

Solly and Frances were getting on now, although both of them still seemed quite young at heart, especially his father. Solly was still as fit as a man half his age. Worcester was the town that David had wanted to leave as soon as he could, but it was always a joy for him to go back, to drive through the quiet, if ugly streets. The primary and high school of his days were gone, as were some other landmarks, replaced by new, gharish small-town versions of things like Pizza Hut.

He would allow his parents to take him and Renaye out to the yacht club or to play a round of golf, so that they could catch up on the gossip of the past few months. Each time he returned to Worcester, it seemed that there were less and less Jews, and then one day he was shocked when Solly mentioned that the synagogue had shut its doors. Even though David was not a Jew, he still had close ties with the Jewish community, and

this news struck a chord inside him. Jaffe, Landsman, Kahanovitz, Levinsohn, Merson, all names from his childhood, were no longer to be found in Worcester.

The spring sky was blue and clear, the mountains a darker blue, and here where David lay down the blanket and picnic basket the grass was lush and very green after the good winter rains.

He tugged at the blanket again to get it straight, and stood up. He looked about him, and as always the scene delighted him. There was the stream, overgrown with trees and bushes, the mountain hardly visible through the thick undergrowth. To the other side, where the hill they were on sloped down, lay neat patches of farm, squares of different colours, and further below slept Worcester. He went over to Renaye and stood behind her with his arms around her. She put her hands on his forearms and together they looked at the town in the distance, the town they had grown up in.

“Remember the time Van Luyt built the foofie-slide?” Renaye asked with a naughty chuckle.

David chuckled as well.

It was an incident which was part of the Worcester folklore, and he and Renaye had both witnessed it. Kevin Van Luyt had decided to build a foofie-slide from the tree in his back yard. He had tied the cable to the top of the eucalyptus tree and had secured it to a peg which he had hammered into the grass. He had even remembered to first put the cable through the copper pipe, onto which he would hold when he would go down the foofie-slide. David had been impressed, knowing that he might well have forgotten about this detail.

Kevin had climbed up the huge tree, the throng of neighbourhood children watching, all envious. Then he had gone down the slide, only to realise that the copper pipe was getting too hot to hold on to. He had let go, and fell to the ground, breaking his leg.

His father had then chopped down the huge tree, which had taken a considerable time. When the mighty tree eventually toppled over, it was broken. But not defeated. In a last gesture of defiant superiority it fell over onto the Van Luyt's brand new Mercedes Benz. Not long after that the Van Luyts moved to another town.

“Yes, I remember only too well,” David said, kissing Renaye's shoulder.

She hugged his arms tighter to her.

Chapter 20

In 2000 David released *In the Days of District Six*, and presented the play *Poison* to British audiences. The album was actually work that he had done during the previous year, and the show *Poison* in the United Kingdom had left him feeling flat.

He was sitting at the breakfast nook in the kitchen, having a mug of coffee. He watched his eldest daughter busy preparing that evening's dinner. He blinked as thoughts rushed through his head. Good heavens, where had the time gone? Here was Jesse, nearly twenty years old already, a young woman. Amy would be finishing high school soon, and wanting a car to set out into the world herself. Where had the time gone, he wondered again. And what had he done in that time? His thoughts were rather bleak and morbid for a moment, his mortality feeling near at hand, but as he counted off the things he had achieved in his life, he felt slightly better. But still there was that desire to grab hold of life, not wanting it to slip by and away so very fast.

"Penny for your thoughts, Dad," Jesse said, breaking his reverie.

He smiled back at her, and shook his head slightly.

"Just thanking my lucky stars for my wonderful family," he replied.

He had nothing to do, and it was not good for him. He needed to be busy. Jesse knew the signs well.

"You should get something to do," she told him.

He nodded his head, agreeing. But what? He was not in the mood to write any new songs. It felt to him as though he had out-Kramered himself. There was nothing left

there. And at the moment his mind was blank. Try as he might, he couldn't get any ideas for a musical that held his attention for longer than a few minutes. It was a very dry period for him.

“Well, you always talk about South African blues. Why don't you go and document some of it?” Jesse suggested.

David stared at her for a moment. That was it! That was what he should be doing! He jumped up from his seat and went over to her, hugging her tightly.

“You're an angel!” he informed her. “That's exactly what the doctor ordered.”

Chapter 21

The Karoo, 2000

The grey road was as straight as an arrow with repeating white lines down the centre. On either side of the road was a gently rolling landscape, flat-topped hills in the distance. There was nothing to see, for mile after mile. As they drove, the electrical pylons next to the road went thip, thip, thip when they passed by.

Eventually there was a sign: Herbertsdale 20km. When they reached the outskirts of Herbertsdale, Jan turned off the highway.

“Let’s see what Herbertsdale looks like,” he suggested.

They were in no hurry.

Jan Horn and Kramer were on a road trip, looking for interesting musicians to help out with the documentary Jan was making. David had agreed to be the presenter. He was fascinated by the project, and joined Jan whenever he could.

David had been frustrated that critics of his work called it crass, because he felt that they missed the point. That was exactly what it was meant to be: unsophisticated music made by an everyday man for everyday people. In this regard David was very interested in tracking the South African version of American blues, music made on home-made instruments, and played for the sheer joy of setting one’s emotions free. In fact, David became so well versed in this type of South African music that the University of

Cape Town would soon confer an honorary doctorate degree on him. Now he was happy to be on the road with Jan Horn as they searched for examples of this music.

They drove through the town until Jan found a petrol station and filled up. He paid and drove off again, slowly, taking it all in.

“So what do you think of Herbertsdale?” Jan asked, turning to look at David with a smile.

“Not much different to Worcester. The same quiet streets, the same dry air,” replied David, and Jan nodded his head. “Smaller, of course.”

Up ahead David saw a Coke sign, a big red rectangle with the white script. He was hungry.

“Can you stop over there? I’m starving,” he requested.

Jan pulled up next to the café. They went in. It was deserted, only a woman sitting at one of the four white and blue Formica tables. She nodded her head as they came in.

“Goeie môre,” she greeted.

“Goeie môre,” replied David and Jan.

“Wat kan ek vir julle twee doen?”

“Ek is rasend,” Jan told her and she chuckled.

“Dan is julle by die regte plek,” she boasted, getting to her feet. “Hier kry julle regte boerekos.”

She took another look at David, and squinted slightly.

“Verskoon my, maar is u nie David Kramer nie?” she asked.

“Ja, dis ek,” David smiled.

The woman put her hand over her mouth in surprise, her eyes big.

“My aarde ..!” she said, shaking her head slightly.

As she made her way towards her kitchen, she turned back to look at David.

“Ek maak vir jou'n lekker bord kos. Jy kan gerus 'n bietjie gewig aansit,” she giggled.

“Kan ons asseblief die spyskaart sien?” Jan asked.

“Hier kry jy boerekos,” she informed him with a proud smile.

It was clear that there was only one meal available – whatever she had cooked that day.

“Lekker!” David said.

He and Jan sat down at one of the tables, the one closest to the window. They waited, looking through the large pane of glass to the street outside. There wasn't much to see: a shoe store, a house, and on the corner a general store. The pavement in front of the general store was cluttered with spades and rakes, as well as a wheelbarrow. It was Saturday, so the streets were busier than usual. Most people were out doing their weekly shopping, many of them farmers from the surrounding area.

Inside the café there were a few racks containing packets of Simba chips, chocolates and boxes of cookies. Eet Sum More, David noticed. Against the wall was a large refrigerator with *Coke* emblazoned on it. Next to it was another fridge with a big *Dairymaid* sticker on it. Overhead a large fan turned slowly. Also hanging from the roof were a few strips of sticky brown paper which uncurled lazily, dead flies stuck to them.

David watched the cars drive past the café, noticing that a good number of them were bakkies. His reverie was interrupted by Jan.

“I think we'll find something to shoot here,” Jan said.

David nodded his head.

“Hm,” he agreed.

The place was rich with small-town milieu.

“I think we have something similar to the American blues here in South Africa,” David began. “We have the poor-white Briels singing their songs of hardship, with more feeling than technique. And then there are also the coloured farm labourers, even more disenfranchised.”

“Hm,” Jan agreed. “I’m dying to find some local farm musicians and film them.”

“What I love about their music is that it’s so terrible that it actually goes full circle, and starts having a beauty of its own.”

“Like The Ramones,” Jan suggested.

“What do you mean?” David asked.

“Well, they’re not good musicians, compared to say, Led Zeppelin, but as far as rock in general goes, they’re a great group,” Jan explained. “In their look, their vibe.”

David nodded his head.

“I see what you mean. Yes, I think you’re right.”

Their lunch arrived, a hefty meal of rice, potatoes, meat, and vegetables. It was evident that a good farmer needed a lot of starch to complete a day’s work. The café owner placed the plates in front of them and stood back for a moment to watch the celebrities, a look of pride and joy on her face. David and Jan made appreciative noises.

“Ek sal nooit hierdie bord kos klaarmaak nie,” Jan said in awe.

It seemed to be the right thing to say, as the woman glowed.

Lunch was followed by a big mug of coffee, very strong and very sweet.

They got up to leave. When they paid, Jan asked the owner whether she knew of any local musicians.

“Nee, hier is nie juis ’n orkes op die dorp nie,” she said, frowning slightly as she thought.

“Wat van kleurling musikante?” David prodded.

“Kleurling musikante?” she asked, surprised.

She shook her head. Then she called to the back of the café.

“Eunice, weet jy van kleurling musikante hier op die dorp?”

“Mevrou?” a voice answered.

“Kom hier.”

A middle-aged coloured woman came out to the front.

“Weet jy van enige kleurling musikante hier op die dorp?” the owner asked again.

“Nee, nie juis nie ...” Eunice replied.

“Hulle hoef nie professioneel te wees nie,” David told her. “Al speel hulle maar net plaasmusiek, is dit OK.”

Eunice tilted her head as she contemplated.

“Nee, meneer, ek weet nie,” she said. “Dis maar net Hannes Coetzee waarvan ek weet.”

“Hannes Coetzee?” David asked.

“Ja, meneer, maar hy speel maar net ons musiek.”

David looked at Jan. Maybe they should take a look?

“Waar kan ons vir Hannes kry?”

“Hy kom dikwels dorp toe op ’n Saterdag, meneer. Hy werk op ’n plaas hier in die omgewing.”

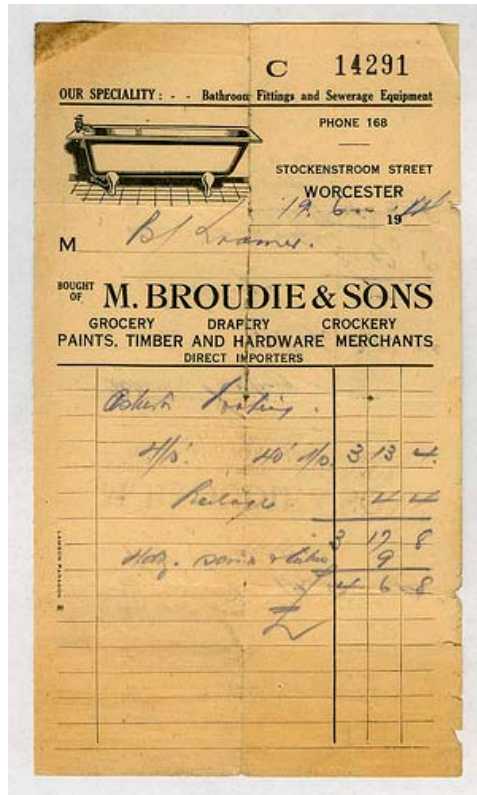
“Nou waar kan ek hom kry?”

“O, dis naby,” the owner of the café told them, pointing with her arm, eager to be of help. “Daar op die hoek, by die hardewarewinkel.”

“Baie dankie,” said David, and he and Jan exited the café.

They left the car in front of the eatery and crossed the road, making their way to the hardware store.

The interior of the shop was cool after the glare of the sun. It smelled of building supplies: wood, tools, bags of cement. The place reminded David of Brown & Brown in Worcester, and M. Broudie & Sons. He still had a Broudie invoice back in Cape Town as a memento of his childhood in Worcester.



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/capelight/233192379/>

“Middag, meneer,” greeted the clerk behind the counter. “Hoe kan ek help?”

Then his eyes opened wider as he recognised David, who smiled.

“Goeie middag,” he greeted. “Ek is David Kramer, en dis my vriend, Jan Horn.”

David stuck out his hand and the clerk shook it, smiling broadly. Then he shook Jan Horn’s hand.

“Andries Fourie,” he introduced himself.

“Andries, ek hoor dat hier somsn Hannes Coetzee kom?” David enquired. “Ons is op soek na platteland-musikante.”

“Ja, hy is hier. Hy’s hier agter iewers. Kom saam met my.”

They followed the clerk to the yard behind the store, and there David saw a man in his seventies.

Coetzee was sitting on a pile of wooden beams. His face was lined as though he had been in the heat and wind for too many years. His clothes were old yet clean. Still it was obvious he was living a hard life. His cheeks were sunken, but there was something of the hardy Karoo about him.

“Hannes ..,” the clerk called, and Coetzee stood up.

“Ja, meneer?” he asked.

“Jy speel mos kitaar, of hoe?”

“Ja, meneer.”

“Nou ja, hierdie menere wil hoor hoe jy speel. Weet jy wie hierdie meneer is?”

He nodded his head to David. Coetzee looked at him, but shook his head.

“Nee, meneer. Ek weet nie.”

“Dis Dawid Kramer ..!”

He pronounced the name as though it was Afrikaans.

“Dawid Kramer, meneer?”

“Ja, Dawid Kramer!”

Coetzee took another look, slowly recognising David.

“Die meneer lyk anders,” he said shyly.

David laughed, and touched his hair.

“Ja, ek weet. Ek is maar grys deesdae.”

They all laughed before David got back to the business at hand.

“Ek wil hoor hoe jy speel,” he began, and Coetzee raised his eyebrows in surprise.

Surely it couldn't be possible that David Kramer wanted to hear him play?

“Ja, ek speel s'n bietjie..,” he began tentatively, a smile playing around his mouth.

It was clear that he was delighted to be asked to perform.

“Nou laat ons hoor,” David grinned.

The clerk excused himself, wanting to get back to the store.

“Verskoon my tog, Dawid, maar ek moet terug winkel toe.”

“Glad nie. Dankie vir jou hulp,” David replied.

Coetzee moved behind a pile of wooden beams and returned with a very old guitar, badly scratched. He sat down again, shuffled a bit to make himself comfortable, dug his hand into his jacket pocket, and retrieved a spoon. David glanced over at Jan, who shrugged back. He didn't understand what Coetzee was doing either. Coetzee put the spoon handle in his mouth and bit down on it. Then he began playing, strumming the bass strings with his thumb and picking and tapping the top strings down, in a very percussive manner. Then, to David's astonishment, he leaned forward and pressed the spoon down on the fret board of the guitar, sliding it up and down, playing the melody with the cutlery.



<http://www.myspace.com/hannescoetzeeteaspoonslideguitarist>

It was wonderful music: crude, yet vibrant - from the heart. When the song ended, David and Jan burst out laughing with joy. They had discovered something truly amazing! They knew they had a hit. They clapped their hands and begged to hear more. Hannes Coetzee gladly obliged.

When they drove back to Cape Town, David was full of plans. The world had to see Hannes Coetzee.

“I have to get him into a studio,” he enthused.

Jan Horn nodded his head.

“What about getting him in at the KKNK?” he suggested.

“The Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees? That’s a wonderful idea.”

Hannes Coetzee was a hit at the 2001 KKNK. Within months he found himself on an aeroplane, heading for America. Once in the US he gave slide guitar workshops, with

David having to translate for Hannes and the audiences. When one of his performances was posted on YouTube, it was a minor hit. *Karoo Kitaar Blues* was released in 2001.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za/music.htm>

The songs on *Karoo Kitaar Blues* are:

1. Heideveld (Lakay)
2. Johnny Raakvat (Kramer)
3. Almal Het Iets Te Sê (Mouers, Nuwegeld)
4. Mahalla (Coetzee)
5. One Kappelala (Lodewyk)
6. Kruispad (Kramer)
7. Langarm (Jaers)
8. Die Hanetjie (Coetzee)
9. Sallie Weer Trou Nie (Mouers, Nuwegeld)
10. Die Pad (Kramer)
11. Antie Maak Oop Jou Deur (Lodewyk)
12. Jaloers Bokkie (Coetzee)
13. Kielie Mettie Mielie (Jaers)
14. Meisie Sonner Sokkies (Kramer)
15. Moenie Lujet Drinkie (Mouers, Nuwegeld)
16. Ek Ko Huistoe (Kramer, Coetzee)

Karoo Kitaar Blues is also the title of the documentary shot by Lisa Key.

Karoo Kitaar Blues follows South African songwriter David Kramer and slide guitarist Hannes Coetzee into remote regions of South Africa on their quest to find musicians who play an almost forgotten folk music. The film documents their journey into the harsh and arid landscape of Namaqualand and the Great Karoo interweaving musical performance and interviews with violinists, guitarists, piano accordionists and mouth organ players who play what Kramer describes as Karoo Blues. Little is known of the origins of this music. It is the music of shepherds and sheep shearers who are descendents of the original inhabitants of these semi-desert areas.



Karoo Kitaar Blues, 2003

Directed by Lisa Key

http://films-for-africa.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=28

As well as *Karoo Kitaar Blues*, David's solo album, *Kliphard* (Rockhard) was also released in 2001.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za/music.htm>

The tracks listing for *Kliphard* is:

1. Die Blinne Referee
2. Jolene Jolene
3. Die Brug
4. Brannewyn Babbelas
5. My Eerste Mistake
6. Weskusklong
7. 'n Man Stap
8. Kyk Hoe Lyk Sy Nou
9. So Mooi
10. Myl Na Myl
11. Koos Sas

Note of interest: it seems that the guitar on the cover of both the *Karoo Kitaar Blues* and *Kliphard* albums, is the same instrument – it's possible to assume that Hannes Coetzee had to borrow David's guitar for his album cover photograph.

Chapter 22

By 2001 David's betteries were charged again, and he had a new project to unveil. He and Renaye produced *Die Ballade van Koos Sas*. Koos Sas was a Khoisan man who became something of a folk legend when he escaped from custody after being found guilty of murder.

Born in Touwsrivier, he lived in the Montagu area, but fled into Namaqualand, trying to evade capture.

In 1917 he worked for Boetatjie Botha in Stellenbosch, the son of the local minister, but was fired after only one day. Later in the day he returned to the house and murdered his previous employer.

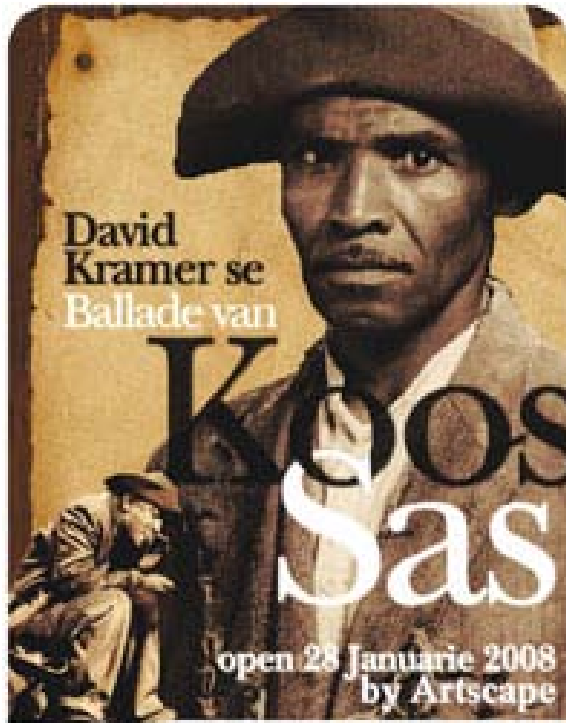
On the sixth of February, 1922, Constable Jurie Dreyer recognised Sas from a photograph which had been distributed to all the police stations. He chased Sas for two days, and on the eighth of February he shot and killed him.

After his death, one of the ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church had his body strung up, and photographed. Along with the picture was the following inscription: "Koos Sas, murderer of the son of Reverend Botha of Stellenbosch in 1917. Captured three times and escaped three times. Eventually shot by policeman Jurie Dreyer as he fled in Droodaap, near Springbok, Namaqualand. Funds from the sale hereof is (sic) for the ACVV (a social welfare organization – author's note) in Namaqualand."

After Sas was buried, Reverend Steenkamp obtained permission from the magistrate to exhume the body. He took the skull with him to Stellenbosch, and later to

America when he went to study there. On his return to South Africa he donated the bones to Professor Hercules Brink of the University of Stellenbosch, who in turn gifted it to the museum in Montague, where it was put on display as an example of Khoisan skulls. (cf http://af.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koos_Sas)

It was after seeing this display that David started toying with songs and early versions of what would eventually become *Die Ballade van Koos Sas*.



http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

2001 was a very busy year for David. Apart from releasing the album *Kliphard* and producing *Die Ballade van Koos Sas*, he also directed Marc Lottering in the comedy *Cape Flats with Love*. David would again direct Lottering in future productions, *Big Stakes & Chips* (2003) and *Hallelujah!* (2006).

Chapter 23

Cape Town, 2004

David stood in the bedroom, hands on his hips as he looked about the room, trying to do a mental checklist. He wanted to make sure he had everything. He looked at Renaye and breathed a sigh of relief. She always knew where everything was.

“Is there anything else?” he asked.

“No, that’s it,” she replied.

David picked up the first suitcase and took it to the car outside. Then he came back and got the second one.

“Jeez, what’ve you got in here?” he gasped.

“Weights. I want to keep fit.”

David grunted. He couldn’t come up with a smart come-back.

Once the car was loaded and everyone was in, David locked the house and got in behind the wheel. They set off and soon arrived at the airport: David, Renaye, Jesse and Amy. They were off to Las Vegas, where they were going to showcase *Kat & The Kings*. The effects of Mandela’s visit to the show at the Vaudeville Theatre were still being felt, doors still being opened to what was by now becoming part of a theatre legend.

As usual, Renaye was an integral part of the stage productions. She had been responsible for a lot of the production work of the musicals, since *District Six*, and she was heavily involved in *Kat and The Kings*.

Amy and Jesse were joining David and Renaye, with the idea that the girls would see a bit of Las Vegas while their parents negotiated the showcase. The sun was setting when they arrived at Cape Town International airport, and by the time their flight took off it was dark. There was something exciting and romantic about this night flight.

When they landed in Las Vegas they were met by a limousine, courtesy of the Hilton Hotel, where they would be staying. Amy took out her cellphone and pretended to call David, making a joke as to how big the interior of the car was.

“Hi. Can you hear me?” she asked, holding the phone to her ear.

David pretended to take the call, shaping his hand in the sign of holding a telephone next to his ear.

“Yes. I can hear you quite well. This line is so clear. It’s like you’re right here with me,” he replied.

“It’s American technology,” Amy pointed out.

“That’s why they’re the greatest nation on earth,” Renaye said, with just a hint of sarcasm in her voice.

“Hamburgers,” Jesse pointed out, her eyebrows raised, an expression of wonderment on her face.

“Elvis,” David reminded them.

And just then a young man came gliding by on a pair of rollerblades. Renaye raised her hands, as if to say: “See? I rest my case.” They all burst out laughing.

When they reached their hotel they checked in, and then met in the lobby, eager to see some of this famous city.

“Oh, my God, look!” Amy said, pointing to the sky once they were outside on the sidewalk.

They saw a tall, round structure. It was the Stratosphere Casino. A man was falling to the ground, held in place by only a few cables. They could hear his screams of fear and joy as he plummeted to the earth.

“I have to do that,” Renaye said.

“Bye,” David declined.

Over the next few days they did a little sight-seeing, but for most of the time David and Renaye attended meetings. Renaye did, though, jump off from the top of the Stratosphere Casino, and when she met up with David again in the rather faded and run-down foyer, her cheeks were flushed with excitement.

“Oh, God, that was wonderful! Buy me clean underwear!” she exclaimed, as she hugged him tight.

Jesse and Amy also made the most of their time in Las Vegas, gambling, taking the sky-train over the city, and driving past what their guide said was André Agassi’s house.

It had been a very busy few months, putting the showcase together. Now the theatre was packed with industry heavyweights. Renaye moved about, shaking a hand here, touching a shoulder there, always smiling, and making sure she remembered the faces and names. David’s musicals had been well received in Europe, but America was new for them, so she didn’t want anything to go wrong. She desperately wanted to be accepted by the Las Vegas audience. Tonight was the culmination of months of hard work.

A bell rang and everyone moved from the foyer into the theatre, and took their seats. The lights dimmed, the curtains opened, and the show kicked off. The music was vibrant, the acting excellent. Suddenly it was over and the room reverberated with applause.

After the show, snacks and drinks were offered, and the actors and musicians mingled with the businessmen David and Renaye had invited to the performance.

All in all, things went very well, and the Kramers were promised a run for *Kat & The Kings*.



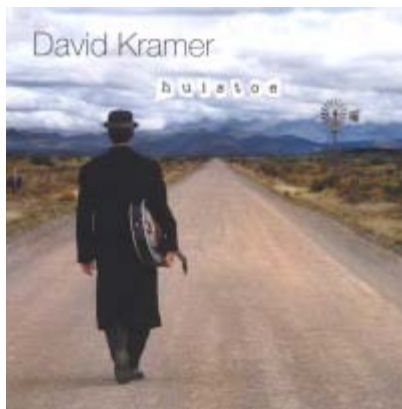
Kat and The Kings had already played to American audiences on Broadway in 1999. David was credited with the lyrics, whilst Taliep was acknowledged as being responsible for the music and arrangements. The directors of the Broadway shows were David, Jody Abrahams, Luqmaan Adams, Juniad Booyesen, Terry Hector, Alistair Izobell and Kim Louis.

Clive Barnes of *The New York Post* thought it an “extravagantly exciting musical.” He wrote: “Here is a show to be missed only at your peril.” (cf http://www.harrietnewmanleve.com/Past_Projects/past_projects.html)

The showcase had been produced by Harriet Newman Leve, Judith and David

Rosenbauer, in association with Richard Frankel, Marc Routh, Willette Klausner, Kardana-Swinsky Productions, David Kramer, Taliep Peterson, Renaye Kramer, and by special arrangement with Paul Elliott, Nick Salmon, and Lee Menzies. (cf harrietnewmanleve.com)

The year was not over yet. In that year David also released the album *Huistoe* (Home).



<http://rhythmmusicstore.com/music/605/David-Kramer/Huistoe>

The track listings for *Huistoe* are:

1. Weeskind
2. Kairo
3. Onnerwater
4. Dans Mettie Dood
5. Die Pad
6. Katie
7. Donnerweer Brom
8. Dikwiel Bicycle
9. Klipspringer
10. Bitterswaar
11. Stoomtrein
12. Ek Kô Huistoe

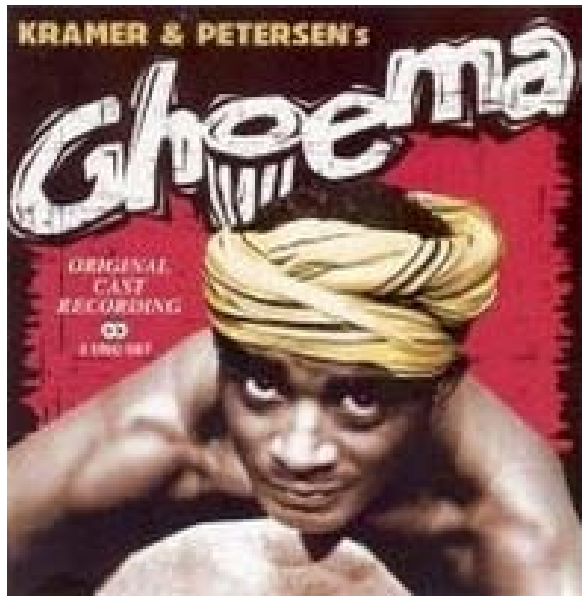
He was working hard, ideas seeming to come out of the sky for him. Once again he was toying with a Cape topic, yet again about the disenfranchised “coloured” people. The following year, 2005, he presented *Ghoema*. It would be the last collaboration between David and Taliep, and tells the story of slaves in the Cape at the time the Dutch arrived.

The title of the musical, *Ghoema*, is actually reference to a small drum fashioned from an empty wine vat and covered with animal skin at one end.

Inspired by South African history at the Cape, the revue explored the roots of slave music from as far back as 1650, when the Dutch East India Company had an enormous influence on the lives of the Cape people. The music was a mixture of the sounds from each group of slaves who were brought to the Cape by the company from countries as far away as Indonesia, India, Madagascar, and Java. *Ghoema* traces the evolution of music these people created, culminating with two Cape Flats rappers named Hot and Tot. Some Dutch and Malay folksongs were also included as well as a few newly composed songs (“Nuwe Naam”, “Blue Sky” and “Ghoema Vannie Kaap”). The show was assisted by two female narrators: Dina and Mina. They tell the story in a gossipy, romantic manner.

The song “A New Name” chronicles the way in which the colonial government confiscated some of the natives’ names, replacing them with insults, such as the month in which they were born (January, February). Or even worse, monikers like Teaspoon or Potato. (cf <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/spicedrum-rev.htm>)

The show introduced audiences to the terms “kron-tjong” and “karienkel”, as well as a Malay choir and a Cape Coon troupe.



http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

The songs from *Ghoema* are:

1. Ghoema
2. Na Batavia
3. Down At The harbour
4. The Old Spice Trade
5. Skepe Van Holland
6. Marahaban
7. Nuwe Naam
8. Oppie Plaas
9. Oewen Dat Zee
10. De Zilvervloot
11. Sal Ik Dan
12. Een Meisje Loos
13. VOC History
14. Spot Liedjies
15. Nou Is Dit Tyd
16. Achmat Samsodien
17. Blue Sky
18. Hie Kommie British Rap
19. Die Alibama
20. Swing Low
21. Pieknieklidjies
22. Als Is Onze Prinze
23. Rosa
24. Beestepote
25. Ghoema Vannie Kaap

26. Afklop



<http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/spicedrum-rev.htm>

Once again a Kramer/Petersen show took in awards:

2006 Fleur du Cap Awards

Best Lighting Design - Gert du Preez & David Kramer

Best Prop Design - Jesse Kramer

Best Set Design - Julian Davids

2007 Naledi Awards

Best Production of a Musical

Best Original Choreography - Loukmaan Adams

Best Musical Director - Taliep Petersen



http://www.davidkramer.co.za/productions_past.htm

David's daughter, Jesse, was also becoming somewhat of a showbiz person, delving into stage design. She won a Fleur du Cap Award in the Best Costume Design and Props Category for the latex Malay choir puppets she designed for *Ghoema*.

Chapter 24

The telephone rang in the quiet house. At first David was going to ignore it. He was late already. Renaye was waiting for him in Sea Point. He had promised to pick her up at five, and it was nearing that time already. Not to mention that the traffic along Sea Point Main Road was a nightmare at any time of day.

“Hello, Kramer,” David said with a hint of a sigh when he picked up the receiver.

“David, I have bad news,” the voice at the other end said. “Taliep’s dead. He was murdered last night.”

David was numb with shock as he drove to Sea Point. Renaye was waiting for him. David pulled up at the kerb. Renaye was about to berate him for being late, when she noticed something was amiss.

“What’s wrong?” she wanted to know as they got into the car.

“Taliep’s dead,” he replied.

Renaye gaped at him for a moment.

“He was murdered last night. He and Najwa were attacked by burglars. They took some money and shot Taliep.”

“How’s Najwa doing?” Renaye wondered.

“I’m sure it must be hell for her. We should go around there.”

“Yes,” Renaye agreed.



<http://www.channel24.co.za/>

The Petersen household in Athlone was crowded with friends and family, all still stunned, unable to believe the news. Part of the house was cordoned off by the police. Najwa was sitting in a chair in one of the rooms, and it was clear that whilst she was grateful for the concern shown, she would rather be alone.

Taliep had been tied up and shot execution-style on 16 December 2006. As time went by, the case took a few unexpected turns, and soon the police shifted their attention to Najwa herself. The South African media was frenzied.

On 2 December 2008 Judge Siraj Desai found Najwa guilty of murder, as well as robbery with aggravating circumstances. He sentenced her to 28 years imprisonment. Apart from Najwa, three others were incarcerated in connection with the incident. Abdoer Raasiet Emjedi was also convicted of Petersen's murder, and robbery with aggravating circumstances. Waheed Hassen was convicted of murder, possession of an unlicensed firearm and ammunition and robbery with aggravating circumstances. Jefferson Snyders, the fourth accused, was only found guilty of robbery with aggravating circumstances.



Najwa Petersen

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?click_id=3047

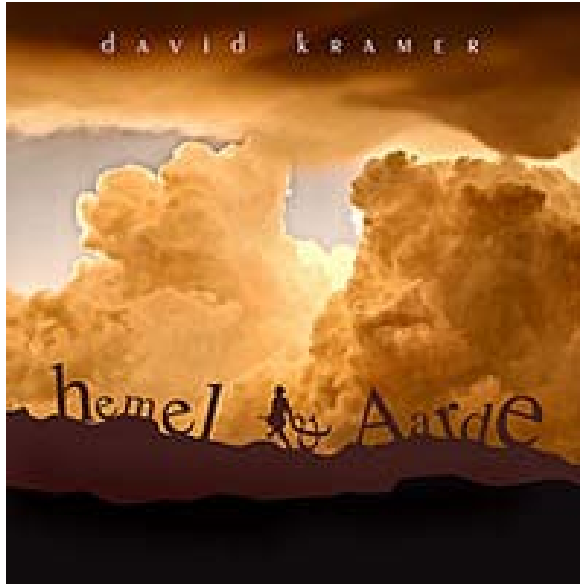
David drove to Blaauberg beach and sat there for a long time. He watched the waves rolling in, Table Mountain on the other side of the bay, but his thoughts were with his friend and colleague. He remembered the many experiences they had shared, good and bad. It was hard to believe that the always-smiling Taliep wouldn't be joining him for jam sessions anymore, tossing out melodies and ideas with such nonchalant ease.

David's thoughts turned to Najwa. He wondered what had made her do it. It was something he would never know. Maybe it was better that way, he thought.

He started the car and drove home.

Chapter 25

After Taliep's death David took it relatively easy. In 2007 he released *Hemel en Aarde*.



<http://www.davidkramer.co.za/music.htm>

Hemel & Aarde contains these tracks:

1. Die Verlosser
2. Die ou Aarde
3. Bleskop
4. My bloed is 'n Snaar
5. Oom Kallie
6. Hoekom?
7. Ek het my Les geleer
8. Stofpad
9. Die Duiwel
10. Sê vir Mamma

The next year he staged *The Kramer Petersen Songbook*, a collection of their best-known songs. His next offerings would be in 2008 when he staged *Three Wiser Men*, and then

again in 2009 when he presented *David Kramer se Kaapse Breyani*. (David Kramer's Cape Breyani [a Malay dish, popular in Cape Town].)

<http://realreview.co.za> gave this review of *Three Wiser Men*:

After the success of the *Three Wise Men* last year, popular stand-up comedians, Marc Lottering, Riaad Moosa and Nik Rabinowitz, return once more under the direction of David Kramer to bring seasonal cheer as *Three Wiser Men* – one Christian, one Moslem, one Jewish.

In each half of the show, they each take a turn at the mike and end with a skit involving all three, the first a rehash of last year, in drag as their alter egos – Auntie Merle, Aysha and Beryl Rosenberg. Between acts, Donvino Prins's live onstage band provides musical entertainment.

All three have their comic shtick down pat. Rabinowitz makes some political comment, one sketch imagining what happens when the police shoot-to-kill policy is implemented; Lottering has humorous observations around Facebook and end of year parties; Riaad is the freshest with various Moslem and Indian jokes.

It is a new show, yet last time it felt more creative; there were some poignant moments and the emphasis wasn't so much on verbal slapstick. This time I had the impression I was watching highly successful comics doing their spiel – the *Biltong & Pot Roast* (of SABC 1970s) for today's generation.



Photo: Jesse Kramer