

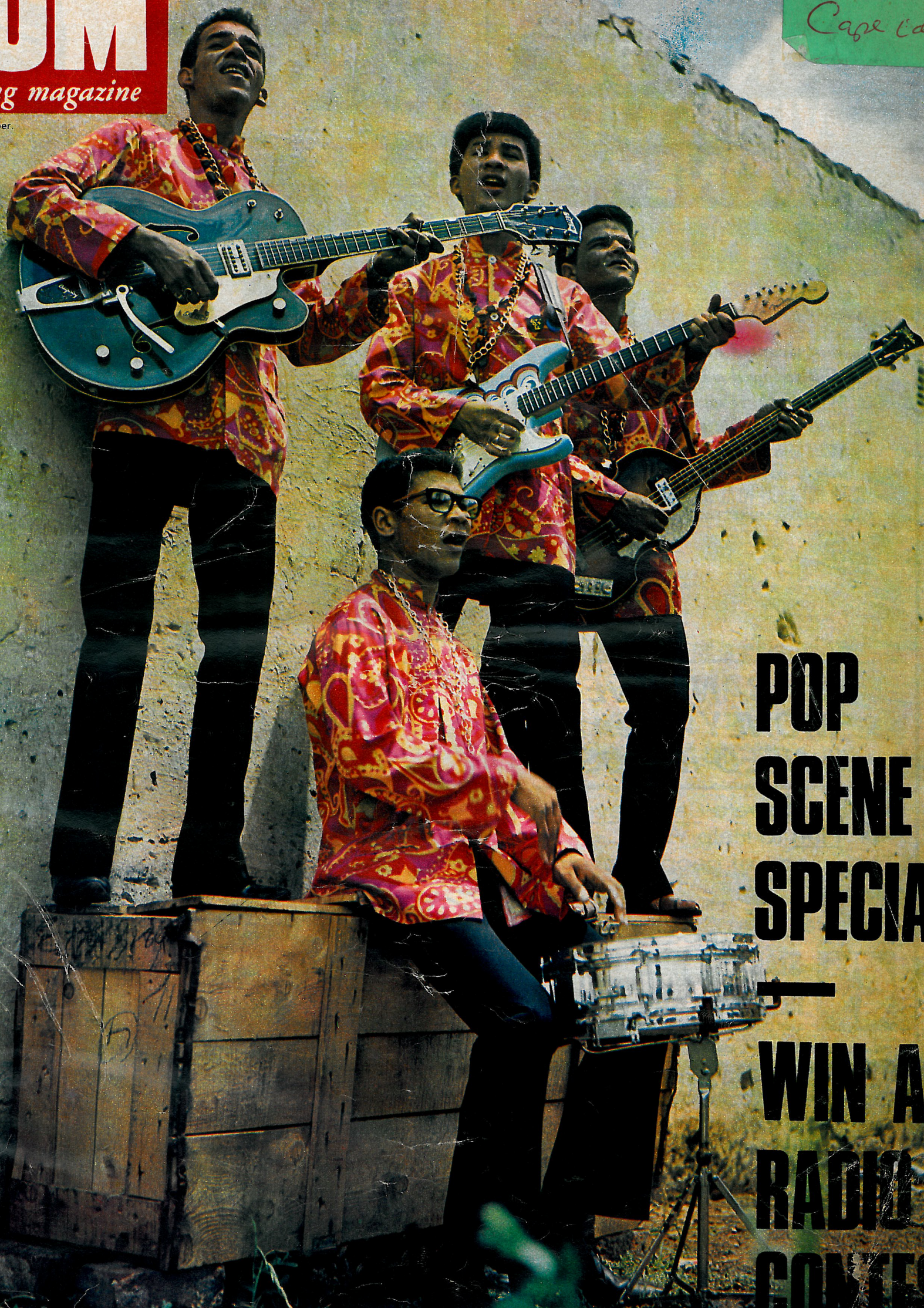
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DRUM

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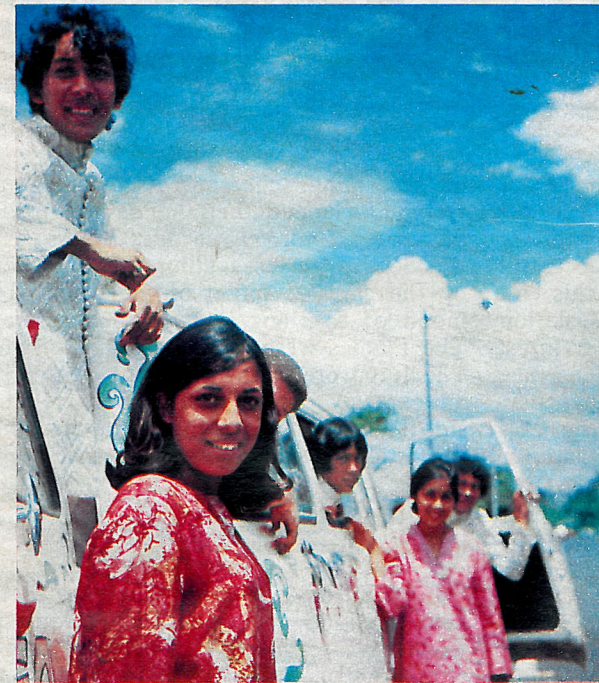
**POP
SCENE
SPECIAL**

**WIN A
RADIO
CONTEST**

POP BOOM FROM THE BACKYARD

1967 was a glossy year for South African pop. The Invaders became the first Non-White group to win a golden disc. The top White group, Four Jacks and a Jill, got theirs a month later. The Invaders' LP "Shockwave" sold 5,000 copies in ten weeks, a bonanza figure in this country. The Flames, from Durban, cut their LP "Burning Soul" which got a four star billing in America's Billboard magazine... This year looks even more explosive. The Flames are off on a lengthy US tour after five weeks in Britain. Their LP has been exported to both countries. The Invaders have already netted three golden discs. Other groups are tied up with recording contracts and there is really something happening to South African pop. JAMES FOX takes a look.

an international sound — and a tour of Britain and USA



Girls, part of the vital decoration of the pop image, flock around the Flames wherever they go. Below: In the caftans they will be wearing "24 hours a day" in the US — they will wear turbans, too — the Flames get into a soulful tableau outside the Durban tenement where Blondie Chaplin lives.

FOR the first time, Coloured pop groups from South Africa have this year broken into the international pop market with a sound that one record company expert described as "potentially equal to anything that is being produced in Britain and America as 'advanced pop'." Potentially, because at the moment the South African market is not ready for advanced pop. It doesn't sell, although Durban's Flames produced one track of it on their latest LP "Burning Soul" — a straight Jimi Hendrix number, with wild distortions — a technical masterpiece.

It's taken six years — from the time the Shadows toured the Republic and started a rush for electrical equipment in the music shops. The Flames, Durban's giant pop sound who started as a group at that time, have just received four-star billing for their latest LP in America's definitive showbiz magazine *Billboard*. They have sold exclusive rights for the LP in Britain to Larry Page, owner of Britain's Troggs. Page replied to producer Grahanne Beggs at Gallos by urgent rate cable, snatching up the rights. Says Beggs: "It normally takes us three months to get a British reaction to a South African group. This took two days."

Ricky Fataar, the youngest Flame brother, who was beating drums in public aged nine, now doubles on sitar. He expresses the mixture of fashionable Oriental mysticism and hard, groovy, soul in the Flames' image. Stunning to look at, he should be a knock-out on a TV screen



The White clubs are where the money's made — but not for long

The Flames leave for a five-week tour of Britain in early May, followed by four and a half months in America on tour. Says manager Peter Rice: "We're really building up their image for this tour. They will wear turbans and caftans twenty-four hours a day. They'll have peacocks strutting around their apartment. They'll eat with their hands at all the top restaurants. The three brothers are going to be the great-grandsons of one of India's great maharajahs."

The Invaders, from Uitenhage, currently the most successful pop group in South Africa, have netted two golden discs for their singles "Ice Cream and Suckers" and "Shockwave", and have sold enough copies of "June" — they were taken over by a recording company in the middle of its sales — to merit a third. Their "Shockwave" LP topped the 5,000 sales mark — an incredible figure in this country — within 10 weeks. Overseas rights for their LP are being offered and "June" is on sale in Europe.

Two groups from Fordsburg, the Strangers and the Hoochie Coochies, have signed up South African recording contracts in the past two months, and there are more big sounds looming out of the Coloured pop background in Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg which threaten to hit the market soon. It's mainly the Flames and the Invaders who are spearheading the tentative exportation of South African pop. In local terms it's nothing like the Liverpool bombshell of 1964 in Britain, but it's a colossal boom after years of derivation and stagnation during which everything that came out of an amplifier was a watery pastiche of overseas hits and fads. The sounds have now become original and exciting.

SEVERAL things have contributed to the blossoming of South African pop, apart from the slow but inevitable percolation of the pop message into the young soul of the country. The production of pop records, particularly under Grahame Beggs of Gallos, has taken 10 jumps in the last year. The Flames made two LPs of pretty mediocre stuff before the present Burning Soul album, produced by Beggs with brass backing and bowed guitars, sitar sounds, a wide variation of ideas and a solid "soul" stamp to it. It is a brilliant LP but without the wide appeal of the Invaders "Shockwave", which has sold twice as many copies. Beggs also produced "Shockwave".

The craze for soul music has unified the taste of South African pop lovers and funneled the market for the musicians. "It's really the music that sends you," is the normal reply from fans. Thirdly, the groups themselves — the Invaders, the Flames, the Insects from Durban, the Strangers and the Hoochie Coochies, have become in varying ways pretty adept musicians and performers.

Apart from the cream of the pop groups, there are literally hundreds of other groups in action in the main cities of South Africa. In Durban there are over 200 groups playing to audiences and getting bookings. In Cape Town and Johannesburg there are probably half that number, although Fordsburg alone can boast 20 groups of varying quality.

Two of them have recording contracts, and all

of them get work, mostly at weekends. There are many fine Coloured instrumentalists who can get work as session musicians, but only a handful of Coloured groups in the country are successful enough to make a living out of pop. And this will become a marginal proposition when legislation for bids Non-White musicians to play to Whites. The White teenage clubs like the Alfresco Terrace in Durban, where the Flames pound out their music, are the main money catchers for the Coloured kids at the moment.

Although the mania started six years ago, the business of pop didn't really start turning over substantial assets until late in 1965 when the Flames toured South West Africa and Angola with the Dixies Show and cut their first LP.

It was also the year when dancehalls like the Matador and the Chez Gay in Fordsburg replaced their sloppy dance combos with beat groups. Until then you simply couldn't dance to pop music in Fordsburg except on rare occasions. Ironically it was a year of disaster for the Flames. They came back from the tour in early 1966 with R2,800 worth of debts. They were out of work and the most they had lined up for the future was two gigs for R40 a time. They needed new instruments, too.

But at that point Peter Rice, their present manager, stepped in and offered them R500 for the first month, and R1,000 a month thereafter. Soon after that they signed a personal management agreement with Rice, with a guaranteed salary of R5,000 over six months. Rice promoted them, put on shows on Sundays in Durban, generally panned their name about and organised their second recording session with Grahame Beggs.

Gallos bought this from a Cape Town recording studio, and the straight follow-on from that was that Beggs personally took over the arrangements and recordings for the "Burning Soul" LP. Beggs, probably the most advanced pop record producer in South Africa (he produced the Dream Merchants' hit "Rattler" which gave South Africa a big seller on the British markets) says: "As pop progresses it's becoming musically very advanced, and the Flames are capable of creating the sort of stuff that's selling in Britain and America as 'advanced pop'. If they get one television appearance in Britain, the reaction is going to be incredible. They are as exciting visually as they are on record."

Every pop group worth its salt has a long history of struggle, disappointments, break-ups, financial embarrassments and then a slow up-curve of success or a sudden break-through. It's a tradition now. The Beatles had the same experiences. "I used to walk through the streets of Liverpool, wringing my hands and praying to God to give me a guitar," said Beatle John Lennon — the back street Liverpool kid who became the global guru of pop and the ambassador of transcendental spiritualism for good measure.

Many of the groups who started in 1962 have since fallen away. Some didn't even finish the payments on their instruments before going out of business. But the solid build-up of pop has produced a gigantic audience of teenagers, as receptive and hip a crowd as you would find anywhere where pop music is played.

Many young people in Durban remember the grand band contests at the City Hall a few years back. The scene was one of bedlam as hundreds

of screaming, cheering teenagers stomped their feet and clapped their hands to the beat of their favourite bands. Even first-timers who stood at the door, just for a glimpse, were soon won over by the carefree mood of the place. This was the mood of the new pop world that was emerging. The Flames were at the top in Durban even then. The Jets were in the forefront too, and the Rebels, an explosive group from Overport. On the outside looking in were the Footsteps, the Shyannes, the Sideburns and the Shepherds.

YOU'D have to go a long way to find a more beat inclined lot than the Coloureds in Cape Town — yet it is ironic that the two most popular groups don't hail from there at all. Way ahead of all other groups in the Cape's popularity stakes are the Flames and the Invaders. All the indigenous Coloured bands in Cape Town depend largely on what they can get at the White clubs and hotels in town. Perhaps their preoccupation with "making it" to Whites has led to their lukewarm impact on their own community. Local groups who come closest to the Flames-Invaders class are the Luna Five, Raiders and Magnets. The Luna Five in particular are beginning to go over big at the hops and sessions.

The threatened banning of all Non-White groups at local White nightspots could cause a revolution in the Coloured pop world with dozens of groups suddenly being thrown on to the limited Coloured entertainment market. The fierce competition would lead to an upgrading of standards, but also to a drop in wages. However, the number of openings for Coloured pop groups has mushroomed in recent months and this will help to alleviate much of the pressure. Many of the new liquor outlets hold twist sessions at weekends with one or even more groups in attendance.

The twist groups also play their part in the proliferation of variety shows at the different cinemas. But here they come second to individual "star" vocalists. However, they always fall in as accompanists with remarkable facility.

The pop cult reached Cape Town about eight years ago — coinciding with the visit to South Africa of the Shadows. The first local group to become the rage was the Big Beats, led by unassuming blind guitarist Ivor Wagner. This group still belongs to the upper echelons of pop, but somehow it has failed to reap the rich rewards that at one time seemed in store for it. After the initial success of the Big Beats, rival groups sprang up overnight. The fad suffered an initial setback when the skollie element rendered sessions a physical hazard. But gradually with the help of a private guard dog service the skollies were subdued and the movement really began to swing.

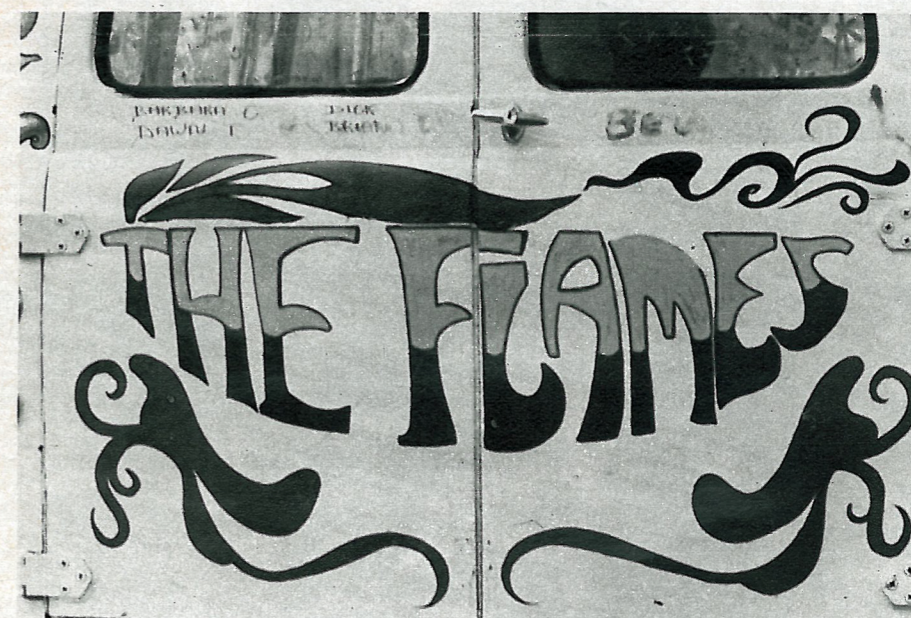
Why are the kids so crazy about twist sessions? "These crazy dances make us feel free, real free — it's the only chance we get to let our hair down," they say.

The Flames got an unlikely start in 1961. Their mother gave them R200 for a down payment on their instruments — while most mothers were up in arms, chastising their kids for going pop. At that time Ricky Fataar, the drummer, was nine years old, with short hair and an angel face — every mother's boy. Now his hair reaches down



'On stage you want to give and give'

"Tell it like it is . . ." Flames vocalist Blondie Chaplin puts it over at Durban's Alfresco Club — the group's home ground. Blondie's amazingly flexible blues voice is a giant crowd puller — and disc seller. "He's amazing on stage," says Steve Fataar, the leading Flame.



The Insects, a new sound in Durban but one that looks like catching on in a big way.

his neck and he's playing the sitar, and looks like every hippie's guru.

Outside a Coloured tenement in Durban, on an empty lot, 150 kids materialise out of back street air to mob Blondie Chaplin, the Flames' vocalist and lead guitarist. We take the pictures, backing the Flames up against a mean looking wall with giant graffiti for backdrop, and evacuate pretty smartly.

"These kids are quite jealous of us and what we've done. They give Blondie a terrible time here. I'm glad we didn't stick around too long," says Steve Fataar, eldest of the three Coloured brothers who make up three-quarters of the Flames sound. Blondie comes from outside the family circle. "You know, every Coloured kid's got a guitar at home. They all want to make it. That's how Blondie learned to play, sitting on the back stoep and picking for hours and hours."

Steve is the image of pop music. Groovy, flip-pant and relaxed to the point of mysticism on one side and bursting with humour and sensation hunger pangs on the other. Brother Fataar, 20, is perhaps the introverted member of the group — on stage anyway — but has an adequate helping of the Fataar family charm and humour.

In Durban's Alfresco Terrace the night before the White teenagers had stopped dancing several

times just to ogle the Flames in action from close quarters. Dressed in long white caftans and bell-bottomed trousers, the boys produced sounds that seemed to come from the very bottom of the earth, using sitar, bowed guitars, electronic distortion and plain talent.

"It's impossible to describe that feeling," says Steve Fataar. "When you're playing you just want to give and give. When you get in the groove you want to go on all night playing those sounds." On stage the Flames go into a state of frenzied exultation in the best tradition. Real gone happiness. They go wild about the music they produce, grinning at each other through the wall of sound and the barrage of lighting effects. Their whole act is effortlessly cool, uninhibited, imaginative, as if they had started when they were six years old and it's a part of their existence.

In the Alfresco dressing room, where Graham Beggs had arrived from Johannesburg a few minutes earlier, there was a nail-biting, manic scene between spots. The possibility of an American trip to plug their LP was in the air.

"Tell us in detail about the four-star billing for the LP," said Steve, wanting to savour every word. "What about a trip?" "Nothing definite," said Beggs, "because you'll break down and start crying if it doesn't come through." Now it's

happened, and the Flames are off to the States with their glad, glad, soul sound. The end of a pretty hard struggle, but not of hard work.

"It really started with the Shadows," says Steve. "Who else was there? Little Richard — there were no Beatles then. When you do anything for the first time, like surfing, you get to it slowly, it's exciting, it gets stronger and stronger. It was a struggle. We only started seeing any spending money last year. We were just playing for the music shop, for the instalments, until then. We've been through three or four guitars and five sets of drums."

The Flames have had support from their parents all the way, and they in turn have supported them — not the usual pop story. "They are so proud of what we've done," says Steve. "They love soul music records. They love our music, too."

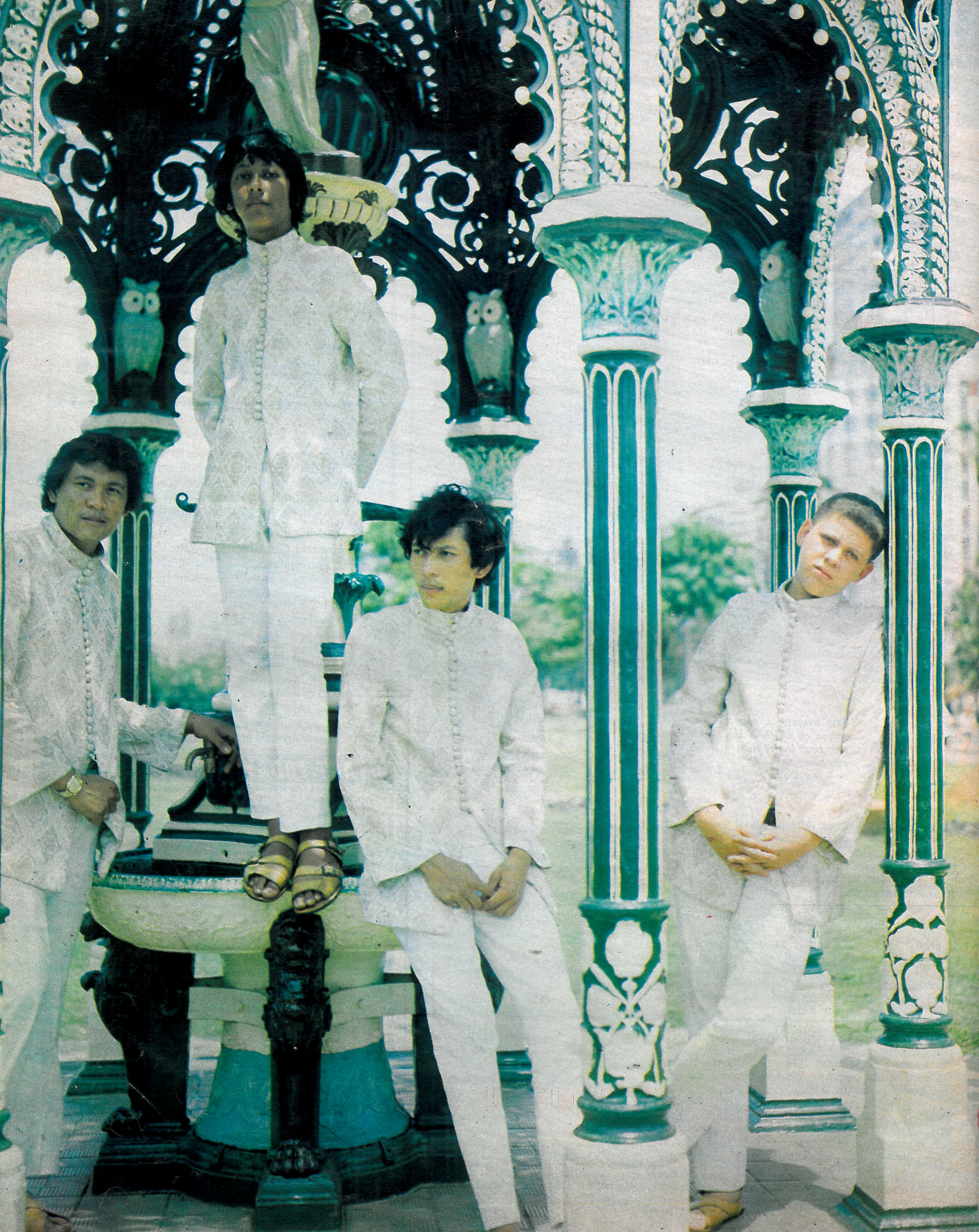
Not like the Strangers, Fordsburg's weekend soul sound who have signed a recording contract with RCA. Neville Carelse, their vocalist, says: "They're up in arms. They don't want their daughters to go out with us. They can't stand our clothes; they wish we would do 'something constructive' instead of playing pop music, and they accuse us of being arrogant." The Strangers also struggled. When they started in 1965 they worked

on the railway sidings during school holidays to scratch enough money together to pay deposit on pretty low quality equipment. Their instruments were stolen twice from nightclubs, and more than once they had to borrow from rival groups to fulfil appointments.

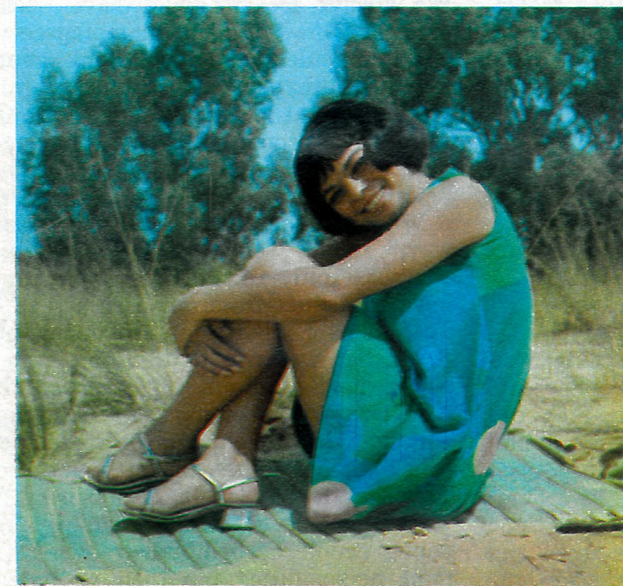
Fordsburg's other top group, the Hoochie Coochies, who played in the same billing as the Invaders on their last trip to Johannesburg, are a pretty unknown quantity at the moment. But they have a terrific sound, and between them the Strangers and the Hoochie Coochies give Fordsburg a pretty groovy atmosphere. There's good music to dance to, and the possibility of rave weekends for the kids.

"INVADE SOUTH AFRICA." That was bassman Johnny Burke's order to his brother Dave and his mates Errol Gobey and Joe Moses six years ago. Said Johnny: "We will build the biggest fan club in the country. We will become the best pop group in South Africa."

Today, what many people called Johnny's pipe dream is a reality. As Uitenhage's Invaders, four very clean-living young men have burst upon the pop scene with such verve and vitality that it seems nothing can stop them.



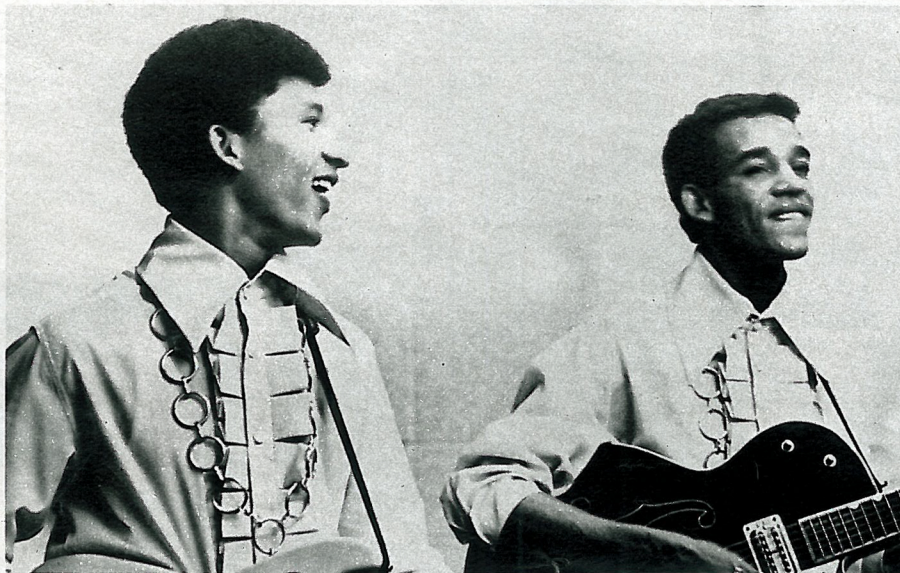
Rhythm guitarist Peter Snyman (above) and vocalist Neville Carelse (left) of the Strangers, a blossoming Fordsburg group who recently signed a recording contract with RCA. Below: drummer Stephen Cohen looks over a shoulder of a young strangers fan



Top: Fordsburg's Hoochie Coochies — another group with a recording contract in the bag, and the only one with a permanent girl vocalist. From top left: Little Danny Adams, vocalist Veronica Lewis (also seen solo above), Ramchandra Lakka, Ravincha Ranchod, Hassim Bulbulia, Lalloo Daya

'The screaming ignites something inside us'

Joe Moses(left) and Errol Gobey, two of the Invaders, S.A.'s number one group, pounding out the glad soul sound in a Johannesburg recording studio recently



Their story begins in the early 1960s. At the time, explains Johnny Burke, sleepy Uitenhage was suddenly awakened by the lilting beat of the Astronauts. This group, Uitenhage's first pop combination, had the ingredients for a successful future but, as Johnny says: "We just couldn't stick together." The group included a White lead guitarist, Richard Smith; the two Solomon brothers, Des and Vernal; and Errol Gobey. It was eventually disbanded. And while the Solomon brothers went away and formed the Telstars, Johnny Burke was stuck.

The inspiration to form the Invaders came in September, 1962, when British pop star Cliff Richard performed at the Feathermarket Hall in Port Elizabeth. "At the time I had just left school and had to choose between being a teacher or a musician," explains Burke. "I reckon Cliff Richard made up my mind for me. He told me just what a thrill pop could be, and how I could achieve a lot of happiness and make other people happy at the same time. I immediately decided to take Joe Moses out of school and my brother Dave left his printing job to join Errol and me." Quipped Dave: "My printing boss, a stern, straightforward kind of guy, said I would never make it. But I was really determined.

"Our greatest opposition came from our parents. They carried on about how we would never make it. But slowly we talked them into it. And as the engagements started rolling in and we gained popularity, they started thinking our way. Today they are really proud of us. Funny thing, that, but they are really very, very proud of us boys."

With Johnny Burke on bass, Errol Gobey supplying rhythm and Joe Moses on lead, the group shared one amplifier and used the crudest of guitars. Drummer Dave Burke learned to play on his knees and laughs today when he thinks back to the type of drums he had to play.

"We had to wait a long time before we could trade our old stuff in and buy new instruments," says Johnny. "We bought slightly more expensive equipment and this lasted us for some time. Both these sets were bought on H.P. but the third set was bought for spot cash. Terrific. Quite a far cry from sharing one amplifier. Try it sometime

— three guitars, one amplifier. The sound was terrible."

A week after the group was formed, the big break came. "We competed with the Arrows," recalls Johnny. "It was a beat competition at the Orient Hall with a first prize of R15. Imagine it, a whole R15. That was money in those days. Anyway, we thrashed the Arrows by 15 points and after that our popularity just zoomed up. You must understand that at the time the Arrows were the number one group down here. They used to get all the top engagements, and now suddenly the tide started turning our way. We never looked back."

Two years later the Invaders scraped the bottom of their piggy bank and financed their first disc, "June", composed by Johnny and Joe Moses. Shortly afterwards they signed a recording contract. "June" turned out to be their first gold disc, selling more than 25,000 copies. And now the song that is fast becoming something of a national anthem, "Ice Cream", is due for gilt-edge treatment.

Those are the cold, hard facts. But behind them lie the real Invaders, the Invaders with dreams and ambitions and really lofty ideals. They are mature men today. Johnny is 27, Dave Burke 25, Errol Gobey 24. Joe Moses is a very grown-up 19. "We realise a pop group can't be popular for ever," argues Johnny, "so we are planning ventures into cabaret and show business. There is such a crying need for good entertainment for our people. At present we are negotiating for a plot of land on which we hope to build a first-class nightclub in Uitenhage.

"We will never really leave Uitenhage. You can almost say we are in love with the town and its folks." On the other side of the scale the Invaders have built up their reputation on the highest ideals. "So many people look up at us and idolise us," says Johnny. "Our fan club membership is 27,000 and we are determined to set them a fine example.

"We condemn drugs and liquor. And we condemn even more those groups that use them. Drugs are evil. When a person is under their influence he loses all control of himself. The body is a sacred thing not to be contaminated by drugs."

And liquor? "We are all non-drinkers," answers Errol. "We don't even take a drop, not even at a wedding or a party."

Johnny chips in: "Another thing we swear by is the power of prayer. Before and after a show we say a little prayer of thanks. Just quietly among ourselves. Before a journey we have a little prayer. So many people wander about without any real appreciation of anything. Sometimes we have had to play under great strain. In one year Errol lost his father, mother and brother. Each time the news came just as we were about to go on stage. It was a terrible strain on us, and this is when we have really appreciated the wonderful sense of fulfilment we get out of a little prayer."

But what do the Invaders think of their own music? Replies Johnny: "We are really bringing happiness to our friends. We make people forget their cares and worries. To most of our people life is a terrible burden. When they come into the hall they are wrapped up in our music and forget about all the H.P. debts and where tomorrow's food is coming from.

"It's a release for them. They can let out all their pent-up feelings and for an hour or two just forget about life. We wouldn't call this escaping from anything. I'd rather say our people, especially the teens, need this release every now and then. They can't get it anywhere else.

"This in fact is our reward and payment. There can be nothing more thrilling than to have people screaming at your feet. This is a form of appreciation of our music. You can almost say the screaming means appreciation. This ignites something in us, and we go all out. The excitement of it all is terrific. We think very little of our music. We always feel it could have been better. I'm never satisfied and my mates agree with this."

The Invaders can also thank another principle for their great success. Punctuality. "If any guy pitches up at an engagement late he is heavily fined. We keep a very strict schedule, and if we have to start at eight we are ready five minutes before that."

What do the Invaders earn? "Let's put it this way," replies Johnny. "We are saving for a big overseas tour, and also for our future. Then we have to deduct from our earnings all our expenses. This takes a mighty big chunk out of our salaries. After that, we earn slightly more than a high school principal. Say about R300 per month."

It was with Lennon and is with all the kids who put down-payments on instruments, the urge to make the sounds inside your head come alive. This, not money, is the mainspring of pop.

It is music which is instantly recognised by young people as being their own manifestation of their personalities and their attitudes, a universal musical language, and adults should think hard about exactly how much it means before plunging in and writing it all off as useless noise. Mainly, of course, it gives real pleasure, the sort that can't be legislated against. And the success of a Coloured group can't be held back if their sound is the most popular and their talent the best. For the White kids in Durban it will be a maximum let-down in their weekend raving when the Flames are prevented from playing in White clubs. ●