

LIRA



South Africa's Afro Soul Queen

A few highlights ...

Lira is South Africa's best selling artist of today. She has amassed an impressive collection of accolades in recent years. These honours pay tribute to her across the spheres of music, fashion and charity. They include:

South African Fashion Icon – Cape Town Fashion Festival 2008

Winner South African Music Award (SAMA) for:

Most down loaded song – Feel Good 2008

Best Music Video – Ixsha 2008

Best Music Video – Feel Good 2007

Best Jazz Album – Metro Awards 2007

Lira caused a sensation 2009 when she was nominated for 6 South African Music Awards. She finally won in the following categories, making her the most decorated winner of the 2009 SAMA awards:

Best adult contemporary album: English,

Best remix of the year,

Best Female Artist
Album of the Year- Soul In Mind

In November 2009 Nils Landgren came on stage when she performed at Berlin Jazzfest. 2010 Lira performed at the Midem in France. Lira wins "Best Female Artist" at the South African Music Awards again ! This never happened before in South Africa's music history. Lira opens the Kick-off concert for the world cup in South Africa on TV together with Hugh Masekela. Billions of people all over the globe watched that event. 2011 Lira's new album "Return to Love" is released in South Africa.

RETURN TO LOVE

Over the past few years – buoyed by multi-platinum sales of her two studio albums and live DVD, a mantlepiece full of awards and support of fans – Lira has made no secret of her desire to find a global audience for her music.

"I have big dreams," Lira has frequently been quoted as saying – and it looks increasingly likely that this rare artist will see those begin to flourish in 2011, with the release of her fourth studio album (and third for Sony), RETURN TO LOVE.

RETURN TO LOVE is a masterful record that draws together everything that Lira has worked for since she first embarked on her music career – at first tentatively with her 2003 debut ALL MY LOVE and, from 2006 onwards, with mounting confidence in her singular abilities.

Lira's triumph at the 2009 South African Music Awards, where she won '**Album of the Year**' and '**Best Female Artist**' for the 2008 record, SOUL IN MIND, and subsequent multi-platinum sales of her second two records and her LIVE IN CONCERT – A CELEBRATION DVD (2009) were proof enough that her heady mixture of old school soul, spiced with enough contemporary twists, had exploded with serious intent amongst her South African audience.

But, one listen to RETURN TO LOVE, and it's clear that over the course of her first trio of albums, Lira was only just beginning to reveal her musical gifts.

"I was very focused on defining the 'Lira' sound even more, with this album," Lira says of the vision behind possibly the classiest – yet infinitely accessible – record to come out of South Africa in a long while. "I wanted to send this out into the greater musical world with a real solid, really refined sound that is unmistakably my own."

In this quest, Lira, and producer, Robin Kohl, have succeeded handsomely. If comparisons are to be made, there's a real feel of Sade's earlier work, in Lira's scorching, soul-filled vocals. And yet the subtle sense of her South African roots that flickers throughout the material, along with Lira's unique vocal stylings mean there is nothing copycat about RETURN TO LOVE.

"It was always my feeling that I don't want to be boxed into being a particular kind of artist," Lira says with the quiet emphasis of someone who knows precisely what they

desire. “On this album, too I didn’t want to be restrained in what sounds we included on the album so there is some funk, ragga, urban, traditional African sounds, and, of course, plenty of soul.”

At 11-tracks, the album finds its lyrical footing in all the things that Lira loves – from dancing to singing, being introspective, loving others, philosophising, and stirring people’s consciousness. “I love to dance. I love to love! I’m a romantic. But I also like to be contemplative,” she says.

Aside from this tribute to the things she adores, there’s another – perhaps more subtle – reason for the album’s title.

“My first album was titled ALL MY LOVE and it was an album that initially caused some heartache for me,” Lira says of the kwaito-pop offering that introduced her to South African music fans. “It was released at a time when I hadn’t yet found even the real beginnings of the sound and presence that I wanted to convey and was fumbling a little in the dark. But yet that album forms part of my history and so this new record is something of a statement about an acceptance of who I am – a return to me.”

Fittingly too, Lira’s given name is Lerato Molapo – Lerato meaning love in seSotho. It’s no surprise, then, that Lira sings, so full of joy, “Over the years I’ve gone through so many changes/But I’m ready to get back into my skin again” and, later, “Falling in love with who I am” on the uplifting and unabandoned album opener, ‘When I Dance’.

Soulful – Romantic – Playful – Contemplative: RETURN TO LOVE is all of these things and more. What’s perhaps most striking about the album is that, in the hands of Lira, none of these come across with even a hint of cliché.

Indeed, throughout the songs on RETURN TO LOVE, Lira’s lyric writing shows the kind of growth that only few artists can boast of. Whether she’s writing about the relentless tug of heartache on ‘Call Me’, or the plaintive plea for answers in a world that’s lost its way (“Money and greed cast a shadow on the sun/Yes, I see it burning up the skies”) on ‘Abba’ or the need for individuals to take charge of their live on ‘Get Into Action’, Lira’s words have a force that few can match.

In preparing for RETURN TO LOVE, Lira and her producer (and husband) Robin Kohl took a “songwriting sojourn” – their first ever.

The result is a set of songs that’s as diverse (stylistically and in language) as they are sparkling fresh. “The process of working together was something that we really focused on – and at least four new songs came out of that intense breakaway to just write,” Lira explains. One of the songs that emerged from this process was ‘Mali’ – a delightful and hugely infectious take on money that sees Lira directly ask “money” to bless her, her family, her community and humanity and spread amongst everyone. It is based around a Bossa and Mbaqanga musical mix and is an album highlight. Another written during this joint creative period was ‘Phakade’, a remarkable composition that’s as pure a song about finding a soulmate as you’re likely to hear – and has all the makings, in lines like “You are my joy/A beautiful gift”, of an evergreen wedding song.

For an artist known for her emotional-ballads and uplifting songs about personal journeying and fulfillment, RETURN TO LOVE also features a song that's slightly more sombre. "I'm aware that, as a musician, you can't fight the urge to write about how you are feeling – including the times that you are not at your best," Lira says, revealing, yet again, her now trademark frankness in her comments about the track 'Be My Friend'.

RETURN TO LOVE, more than any of Lira's previous releases, captures the energy of Lira's live shows. "There's something about this band that only those who have seen us know and that is that we are a rocking live act," Lira says. It's for this reason that Lira's band members, including bassist, Tshepo Sekele, pianist Victor Mngomezulu, drummer Joshua Zacheus, backing vocalist Brenda Mtambo and guitarist Grant Tregellas are among the musicians contributing to RETURN TO LOVE.

Says Lira, "Our live shows are a journey that we undertake on stage – that takes audiences through different emotions, as we travel through the songs and we wanted to capture that on record in a way that conveys real energy."

Few who listen to RETURN TO LOVE would disagree with this approach –and, in the end, the album is a triumph; a perfect introduction to Lira for newcomers to her sound and nothing short of a deserved new step on the journey of an artist who really is extraordinary.

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