What's ON

FUNNY FEST: Marc Lottering

Comedy at the Baxter
The fourth Vodacom Funny Festival is at the Baxter from June 17 to July 13, hosted by Marc Lottering. Comedians on the bill include Riaad Moosa, Nik Rabinowitz, Chris Forrest, Ndumiso Lindi, Les Bubb and Madame Galina. Bubb is one of Europe's most celebrated mimes and physical comedians, responsible for training the actors in movement on the *Harry Potter* movies. The festival will also take place in Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain on June 22, 29 and July 6. Tickets R110. Call 083 9158000. For block bookings call 021 438 2595.

David, Taliep's songs
The *Kramer Petersen Songbook* is at the Baxter until May 3. The production will feature highlights from the musicals *District Six*, *Fairyland*, *Poison*, *Kat and the Kings* and *Ghoema*. Veteran cabaret artist Terry Fortune will lead the company. Other cast members include Loukmaan Adams, Mono Dullisear, Carmen Maarman, Tarryn Lamb, Alistair Izobell and Bronwyn Reddy. Call 083 915 8000 to book.

Labour film fest
The third Cape Town Labour Festival will take place at the Ashley Kriel Hall, Community House in Salt River from Wednesday to Friday. It will showcase international labour films about privatisation of healthcare, transport, electricity and water. The programme will include Michael Moore's documentary *Sicko*. Call 021 447 2727.

Frootko-Gordon offers a nostalgic ode to the Polaroid picture

Exhibition: **TESSA FROOTKO-GORDON** at the ART Gallery, Colosseum Building. **MELVYN MINNAAR** reviews.

A FRIEND recently found a couple of Polaroid film cartridges, and the ensuing pleasure of taking instant shots that came alive as you watch was a complete nostalgia trip.

In the age of digital, few things signal such powerful memory and history as the now extinct Polaroid photograph – the original, that is.

Toward the end of its brief, but joyful life, the more creative of operators found ways and means of manipulating the developing ink process and making, what one can perhaps call, graphic interventions by scratching the surface, and so on. Tessa Frootko-Gordon calls herself a photo-illustrator, and her bright pictures are exactly that.

In fact, the first thing that comes to mind on seeing them, is how nicely some would work as images to go with stories. As it is, the art of illustration – an essential graphic accomplishment – is often sadly overlooked.

Starting with Polaroid SX70 prints, she embellished and overworked them in all manner of means, mostly in pastel.

There is some irony in the fact that what we are offered are, indeed, digital prints from those scanned images.

One cannot escape a feeling of ambivalence – especially when the pictures become a little soapy.

Nevertheless, if not for the process, one puts nostalgia aside and can still approve of the pretty pictures.

● For more information, call 021 419 2679.

LOCAL ROCK LEGEND'S COOKIN'

Steve Louw is back in town

JASON CURTIS

STEVE LOUW, the man behind the rock 'n roll that was All Night Radio and is the voice, inspiration and writer behind Big Sky, is back.

On the eve of the recording of the live DVD being hosted at Die Boer in Durbanville on Thursday and Friday, Louw is bubbling on the back of his band Big Sky's latest 10-track album, *Trancas Canyon*, and the upcoming Cape Town history-in-the-making shows.

"We recorded *Trancas Canyon* in three days and we're going to be recording a DVD in two – we clearly work well under pressure," he said.

With a catalogue that stretches three decades and counting, long-time producer, Kevin "The Caveman" Shirley as a friend makes for some great music, if his catalogue and especially, the new album is any indicator.

"When your mate (Shirley) is remixing Led Zeppelin one week and is Iron Maiden's right-hand man the next, getting him behind the desk to produce the next Big Sky album can only bring with it good things," Louw enthuses.

"I had written a lot of stuff since the last album *Beyond The Blue* (recorded in 2002)," Louw adds, "and having rehearsed much of what you hear on *Trancas Canyon* before I headed for the Californian desert where Kevin is based, I was more than ready to commit these songs to tape.

"The album has an almost swampy feel," he continues. "To use a word that's completely abused, but non the less true, all of the songs play out very organically.

SUNNY SKIES: Steve Louw is back with a new album.

"We recorded at Kevin's house, which is 50 miles (80km) outside of Los Angeles. I was playing in the lounge and Kevin was sitting in his booth starring back at me, which was the equivalent of jamming with a bunch of mates on a Sunday afternoon.

"All of the songs we recorded play out so incredibly naturally, with almost a live spontaneity, which is sorely lacking in so much of the music you hear today."

Having worked with Kevin for as many years as he's been noted for recording some of rock music's biggest hits, including those performed by Aerosmith or The Springbok Nude Girls, Shirley is without doubt one of the world's most gifted 47 year-old ex-pats making great music sound timeless, exactly what he does each time that he and Big Sky make time to record.

"He (Kevin) is never going to grow up," Louw laughs. "He's exactly the same as he's always been. His eldest son is 20 and his youngest 18 months, from a wife 25 years his junior. The man defies the rules on every level."

Steve admits that he writes and performs without assistance beyond his great band of players, which include Willem Moller on guitar, Simon Orange on keyboards, Schalk Joubert on bass and Tim Rankin on drums, all of whom will be performing alongside Steve at the upcoming Durbanvillle DVD recordings, but producing he leaves to the Shirleys of the world.

"Kevin's real ability lies in his knack to be able to embrace the best of what I do artistically, and couple that with his technical ability," Louw says.

"What you land up with on *Trancas Canyon* are songs with so much texture you can almost touch it, it's so rich."

So what can fans of the man and his catalogue expect on the night? "Rob Nagel from my All Night Radio days will be there, and it's rumoured Tim Parr may just also make an appearance, but you never know with him," he jokes.

Add excellent acoustics and a great sit-down venue in which to engage with classic tracks the weight of *Waiting For The Dawn*, *Mr Green*, *One Cut With A Knife*, as well as at least seven tracks from *Trancas Canyon*, evenly spread over the two-night Big Sky residency, and patrons will get to experience and be a part of performances and recording of some of the best songs in South African rock history.

Writing and recording is what gives Louw's life meaning and relevance.

With seven albums neatly tucked under his belt, the music within *Trancas Canyon* and it's complimentary artwork created by celebrated artist and author Pippa Skotnes, is fuel enough to generate yet another chapter born in Africa, realised in a canyon in Malibu, and soon to be captured live for posterity.

No dull moments in oddball show

KOMBUIS TRAFFIC. With Benita Olsen. At Obz Cafe Theatre until Saturday. **PETER TROMP** reviews.

ONE-WOMAN shows by young artists are in plentiful supply these days.

Kombuis Traffic is the umpteenth one I have seen this year. What is even more remarkable than the number, has been the uniform quality of these shows.

The majority of these plays, crafted by industrious female performers, have been bright sparks on the theatrical landscape.

Kombuis Traffic is no exception.

In the vein of such productions as Tamarin McGinley's *Off The Rail*, Deborah Vieyra's *Hunt* and Anne Hirsch's *Face-It*, Benita Olsen's production is decidedly quirky, filled with offbeat characters, all embodied by the actress.

The show features a very sympathetic protagonist, on her way to a baby shower, the latest she has had to attend in a relatively short time.

In attendance at these events are her aunts, a phalanx of stern individuals who put the ultimate premium on conformity.

They include such stereotypes as the scary aunt; the one who could almost be a mystic; the one who eats as a way of coping with her pain and the one who regrets getting married.

Along the way, Olsen's main character, essentially her stand-in, gets stuck in traffic, and this allows her to ruminate on her life.

All through the show, the protagonist, rendered with empathy by Olsen, has to struggle with maintaining her individuality in the face of bullish opposition from her aunts.

There is hardly a dull moment in *Kombuis Traffic*, and the staging has a welcome ambition.

Like the majority of the one-woman shows staged recently, it is not devoid of a certain depth, but it also doesn't penetrate deep enough.

It appears Olsen is expressing frustrations she may have experienced in her own life, but it would have been welcome to experience some of the grit of that, with slightly more heightened stakes.

The play is lacks somewhat in an emotional sense, although it is also lots of fun throughout.

Perhaps the big joke in the show is that the characters, who are so desperate for the protagonist to conform, are themselvs all oddballs.

Olsen gets that across wonderfully, but not enough for the play to have sufficient complexity to linger afterwards.

But her winning persona ultimately wins the day.

This is the first time I have been to the Obz Cafe Theatre since it has been renovated, and it is one of the most pleasant and intimate places to watch a performance.

● The show starts at 8.30pm.Tickets R50, or R40 for students. To book, call 021 448 5555.