

BREAK FOR LOCAL INDUSTRY

# Top music stars for city conference

CAPE TOWN had to bid "Olympic style" against some of the world's leading resort centres to host an international record company conference. **KAREN RUTTER** reports.

**O**VER 120 top music executives and several of the world's hottest recording stars will be in Cape Town next week to attend the first major international record company conference ever to be held in South Africa.

BMG Entertainment International —



**CITY-BOUND:** Visiting Cape Town next week will be soul diva Lisa Stansfield and (top) pop queen Michelle Gayle.

one of the world's biggest music companies — will hold its annual five-day APRO (Asian-Pacific Regional Office) conference in the city from Monday, April 28, with soul diva Lisa Stansfield, pop queen Michelle Gayle and dance sensation La Bouche joining top executives, marketing directors and record label heads from Japan, America, Australia and Europe for a series of "think and listen" sessions.

South African artists The Soweto String Quartet and Vusi Mahlasela will also be included in the entertainment part of the programme.

Among the BMG-owned labels that will be represented at the conference will be RCA (whose artists have included, over the years, Elvis Presley, Mario Lanza, Harry Belafonte and Jim Reeves), Arista (Whitney Houston, Toni Braxton, Kenny G, TLC and Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds), DeConstruction (M People) and Windham Hill (Shadowfax, Michael Hedges, Yanni).

Keith Lister, BMG Africa's executive chairman, regards the Cape Town choice of venue as a huge break for the South African music industry.

"We bid for the convention Olympic-style against some of the best resort centres in the world," he said. "Everyone knows where Cape Town is and everyone wants to come here."

The main conference will be held at a major hotel in the city centre, with private functions taking place at a variety of venues in and around the Cape.

Briton Lisa Stansfield has sold 10 million albums, picked up a string of music awards and performed all over the world, including at the Freddie Mercury Tribute at Wembley Stadium and the Rock in Rio festival.

Yet another British talent, Michelle Gayle, is well-known to UK viewers for her role in the popular soap opera *East Enders*. Her first album, released in 1993, spawned five chart hits and she has just released her second album, *Sensational*.

Euro-American dance duo La Bouche is made up of Alaskan D Lane McCray jun and American-born/German-based Melanie Thorton.