

Johannesburg's BLK JKS cast a dub-fuelled, psychedelic Afro-blues spell that connects musical freedom fighters worldwide. "We listen and vibe and meditate to whatever we feel is good. The beautiful sound – whatever shape or form that comes in," explains guitarist Mpumi Mcata. "From Burial to Gang Gang Dance. That's what we are about." From London to New York to Johannesburg, theirs is a universal statement of liberation. "It's freedom music," adds the sage-like vocalist Linda Buthelezi. "It's all about honesty."

Both 25 years old, BLK JKS's main players Linda and Mpumi are self-taught musicians who grew up in the East Rand (an urban area of Greater Johannesburg), and they are joined by two very talented Soweto artists – 35-year-old Molefi Makananise (bass) and 25-year-old Tshepang Ramoba (drums). The foundations of the band were initially laid eight years ago, though their international breakthrough can be credited to last year's independently released 10", "Lakeside". Appearing on the shelves of Rough Trade and the like, the single worked glorious, soaring harmonies broken up with African rhythms.

"Our writing process is very much open-ended. The songs are like people. It's about that feeling of being. They're alive and feel different depending on the situation," explains the softly spoken Linda. "Dance and pop music are commercially the biggest things in Johannesburg," adds Mpumi. "But there's a growing alternative scene where the kids are trying to do something different. The Afrikaans kids are creating their own voice that frees them from the old legacy. Then there's the reggae dub scene. There's a rebirth of young people here making a conscious decision to tap into their own culture."

"*Toyi-toyi* (an African dance that originates from Zimbabwe) is the art of struggle. Marching, singing and rallying during the apartheid era when they didn't have any weapons," explains Linda. "It still applies today, there are still a lot of things that we need to riot against. Whatever your chains are – it's about cutting them off. To feel liberated, that's what the songs are about."

Recording at Electric Lady Studios in New York, the group have just released an EP entitled *Mystery*. Expect them to hit these shores very soon. "I am very keen to see Europe. Travelling outside of the country gives you a better sense of where you are," concludes Mpumi. "We are moving forward and these places are fusing themselves into our songs – we are becoming far more universal."

[myspace.com/blkjks](http://myspace.com/blkjks)

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