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OLIVER MTUKUDZI LEAVES HIS FOOTPRINT WITH NEW RELEASE

Tsimba Itsoka Released Worldwide August 28
As Part Of The Acclaimed Heads Up Africa Series

Each of us walks through life on his or her own path. And yet, in the course of a lifetime, so many of those paths cross and re-cross again. The steps that we take and the footprints that we leave behind create a lasting mark – even if just a small one – on our families, our friends, our community and even the world as a whole.

Oliver Mtukudzi, the Zimbabwean Afro-pop icon who joined the Heads Up International label with the 2005 release of *Nhava*, examines the lasting effect of those indelible traces of humanity in his new release, *Tsimba Itsoka* (HUCD 3124), a twelve-song CD set for worldwide release on August 28, 2007.

Translated literally, *Tsimba Itsoka* means “No foot, no footprint,” a simple phrase that serves as the foundation for every song on the album. “Everyone’s footprint is different,” says Mtukudzi, who has crafted a brilliant body of work over the past three decades by cutting to the core of the most complex political, social and spiritual themes and recasting them in the most simple and direct terms. “Each person is moving on a different path through life. Some are traveling in a positive direction, while others are traveling in a negative direction. But everyone leaves their mark on the world, no matter how big or small.”

From the very first notes of the album, Mtukudzi – as always – is not afraid to examine the darker side of the human experience as well as the lighter side. From the opening hook of “Ungadé we?” (“Would you like it?”), he addresses the issue of violent crime, and asks the perpetrator how he would feel if the tables were turned. “I’m asking, ‘Would you like it if your daughter was raped?’” says Mtukudzi. “In other words, what kind of footprint are you leaving behind, based on the life you’re living now? And what would that footprint look like to you if it were pointed in your direction, or in the direction of someone you loved?”

The midtempo “Kuropodza” (“One who talks too much”), underscored by the murmur of muted guitars, is a song about communication, and how easily it can break down between individuals and groups. “If you just talk and talk and talk, you’re not having a discussion,” says Mtukudzi. “You need to make some space for someone else to speak back to you. If you speak and then listen, then it becomes a conversation.”

Driven by an understated guitar and a simple rhythmic line, “Mhinduro” (“Reply”) is a commentary on the fast talking that the guilty resort to in order to cover their tracks. “In the song, I’m saying, ‘Why do you give answers when there are no questions?’” says Mtukudzi. “It only proves that you’re guilty. You’re explaining yourself when no one has asked you to. You’re trying to cover your guilty footprints.”

The atmospheric “Kuipedza” (“Wasting”) features a haunting melody augmented by high-end female vocals behind Mtukudzi own resonant delivery. “The song talks about wasting precious time with negative emotions,” he says. “Hating each other is just a waste of time. If we love and respect each other, the world would be a beautiful place. We need to spend the time we’re here making good footprints.”

“Mbiri Hurimbo” (“Fame is sticky”) is a poignant ballad that peers into the bright and dark sides of fame and celebrity. “Fame is not something you’re born with,” says Mtukudzi. “It’s something that comes to you and sticks to you. It’s not you. It’s what you do, or the result of what you do. When you’re famous, your footprint becomes bigger than your foot. Maybe too big. It becomes easier for people to follow it, even if it’s not the best footprint to follow.”

“Kumirira Nekumirira” (“Waiting and waiting”) is a call to action to those who would rather be controlled by adverse circumstances than take control of them. “We can’t wait for miracles to happen,” says Mtukudzi. “If there are problems that have to be solved, if we want our lives to be better, then we have to do something for ourselves. If we’re not taking action to make our life better, if we’re not walking, if our feet are not moving, then there’s no footprint for people to follow.”

Indeed, the path through life is long and winding, and filled with obstacles and hazards, says Mtukudzi. Every step, no matter how small, is critical. “Life is how you make it,” he says. “The quality of life is measured by the kinds of steps you take as you walk through it. The footprint is a representation of who we are, where we are and where we’re going. If you happen to see a footprint in the road, it means someone has been there before you, and there’s something to be learned from that person’s life and that person’s story. *Tsimba Itsoka*. There is no footprint without the foot.”

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