



Taxi Talk

Whose party is it anyway?

That's the question Mahadi Miya asks after going to a children's birthday party

The other day I went with my daughter to a birthday party at my neighbour's, the Mthethwa's. As we entered the house we could hear the sounds of partying.

"Hip-hip Hooray!" roared old Mthethwa. He was sitting with some other neighbours in the living room. Mthethwa jumped up and made as if to do a traditional dance, then sat down again. People cheered and clapped - obviously having a great time.

I certainly wouldn't want to deny them that good time. The problem was, it wasn't Mthethwa's party. That day, his youngest child, Zuko, was turning three.

In the dining room things looked a little different. Zuko and about 12 other kids were sitting around the table waiting for their fun to start. Zuko looked very unhappy. The other kids were beginning to pick on each other as they waited for his mother, Mamzo, to light the three candles on the cake. Poor Mamzo was busy running to and from the living room with beer bottles and ashtrays.

I quickly offered to light the candles and started singing 'Happy birthday to you!' Zuko was not to be fooled. He threw a tantrum - yelling for his mother. The other kids were

fighting with each other. There was nothing else for them to do.

Zuko looked at his father as if to say: "Whose party is this anyway?"

He wasn't the only one asking this question. I felt the same.

This was supposed to be Zuko's special day, but adults seemed to be the only ones celebrating.

Zuko's "party" is not unusual.

Kiddies parties should be fun for children and parents. Instead, too often, parents take over and use the occasion to have a party themselves.

This of course means alcohol.

"A party without liquor is no party - even if it is a child's party," is what too many people say and think.

At the rate Mamzo was supplying liquor to the adults, they were likely to get drunk soon. There is then the danger the parents and their friends will forget about the kids altogether. My mind runs wild and I picture children wandering into the street - perhaps getting run over.

Shouldn't we be trying to give our kiddies real parties? Parties which are fun for them and alcohol-free? Shouldn't we make their parties something special - not something they would rather forget? ○

