

Electric first episode of South Africa's *Masked Singer* wows all

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For multi-talented media personality and entertainment production company owner, Anele Mdoda, it was weeks of electrifying energy and precision preparation ahead of the launch of South Africa's *Masked Singer*. "Nothing but perfection" was the everyday anthem for Rose and Oaks Media, the Black female-owned production company headed up by Mdoda, and the key force responsible for bringing this worldrenowned show to local audiences.



L to R Sithelo Shozi, Mbgau Seshoene (The Lazy Makoti) and Anele Mdoda

The South African version of the *Masked Singer*, which launched on Saturday 3 June 2023 on SABC 1 and on S3 brought much needed and necessary cheer to South Africa on the eve of a bitterly frosty winter.

The *Masked Singer South Africa* follows the same winning formula as its international counterparts.

Celebrities don elaborate masks and costumes to conceal their identities while singing some of the world's most popular songs. A panel of celebrity detectives, along with the studio audience, must guess who is behind the mask. Each week, the least popular contestant is eliminated, leading to moments of surprise and delight as masks fall in the great reveal.

As viewers clearly saw from the Saturday evening launch, the hallmark of the show is quality. Considerable investment has been made to ensure world-leading set design, classy and unique costumes, and highest level production value.

Prior to the premier of the first episode on Saturday, Mdoda said "From start to finish, audiences will be captivated by the breathtakingly spectacular and splendour of costumes and masks as well as by the mystery of this ultimate celebrity guessing game. It is a dazzling detective show which will have audiences on the edge of their seats."

"We are going to set a new standard in television production," SABC head of local productions, Lala Tuku, said ahead of the highly anticipated first show. "The exquisite innovation and sheer beauty of masks and costumes, the high calibre of

celebrities and top notch “detective” panel is certain to make this one of the biggest and most popular shows not only in South Africa but on the African continent as a whole. We are intentional about moving the needle to greater heights when it comes to entertaining our audiences.”

Lindile Xoko, Primedia Group's chief revenue officer, emphasised the importance of investing, developing, and supporting the creation of high-quality local content and Black production talent. “This aligns with Primedia's values, vision, and growth strategy. We walk our talk. Rose and Oaks Media is a majority female Black-owned home grown South African production company. For this new, unstoppable production company to bring the first version of this global hit show to Africa is a significant milestone for the continent's television industry.

Xoko continued, “The economic impact of *The Masked Singer South Africa* is substantial, with a production budget of R70 million. The involvement of sponsors, advertisers, and streaming platforms, has secured the financial success of the production. Marketers are clamouring for advertising spots which are in short supply, and advertisers who want their brands associated with this family fun show are competing for sponsorship opportunities. “I am proud to announce that the sponsors of the *The Masked Singer South Africa* are Andolex, LottoStar and CTM. We are extremely grateful to these premium, stylish popular brands for believing in the show early on when we presented this incredible marketing opportunity to the industry”.

It was showtime at its best on Saturday night as the show's host, comedian, Mpho Popps, and his prestigious panel of “detectives,” media personalities Somizi Mhlongo, DJ Sithelo Shoji, comedian Skhumba, and musician J'Something, were honoured at the exclusive premier viewing event in Hyde Park, Johannesburg.

The live audience was quickly spellbound by the charisma and chemistry of the on-screen celebrities and the majesty of costumes and masks. Beautiful individual singing performances from the adorned in splendid, fantastical and futuristic costumes got the panel and audience on their feet in appreciation and awe.

For the first time on South African screens, our favourite stars and personalities battled it out on SABC 1 and S3, and saw riveting performances from Zebra, Warrior, Tree, and Elephant. If excitement was the opening line for the launch episode of South Africa's *Masked Singer*, exhilaration was its final note as the studio audience rose in anticipation and chanted “Take it off, take it off...” as they took Zebra's mask off to reveal none other than The Lazy Makoti aka Mogau Seshoene. Mogau Seshoene, celebrity chef and author of a winning cookbook belted out Lira's “Ngiyazifela” with a super-star powered voice and gusto.

It was a real feast for audiences who were shocked to discover the petite gourmet star behind the fantastical Zebra mask and costume. Two of the four detectives had correctly detected that it was Lazy Makoti behind the costume. Social media platforms lit up as fans across the country participated in the guessing game.

Seshoene said “I had so much fun singing, something a lot of people did not know I could do. This show is exciting...a brilliant concept to hit our shores.”

Over the next weeks, audiences can expect some very high profile celebrity reveals that will certainly be the talk of the day.

Audience response for the first show are exceptionally promising and bode well for the success of this show and its potential to be a flagship television property for SABC1. With #MaskedSingerSA trending on twitter on Saturday evening, the first show was a sure fire hit with target audiences.

If the first episode is anything to go by, South Africa's *Masked Singer* looks certain to be a real game changer for television broadcasting in South Africa and a delectable viewing treat for the viewing public.

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