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[21 Icons Season 3] Kyle Shepherd



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"What I love about jazz and improvisation is the freedom it gifts you. It allows you to be yourself." - Kyle Shepherd.

Kyle Shepherd has been selected for 21 ICONS South Africa Season 3 for his ability to transcend cultural barriers by using music as an art form to communicate commonalities and differences across diverse nations. He has used his aptitude for music as a thread to embrace and harness creativity in society.

He



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attributes the connection between people and music to the idea that everyone plays an equal part in the formulation of jazz - the composer, the player/s and the audience - all contribute to making the music what it is.

Shepherd was raised in Belhar in the Western Cape and attended Settlers High School. It was here where he was introduced to his first academic mentor, Mr Smuts, who he still admires today for giving him the creative freedom to explore his musicianship while laying down the solid foundations needed to develop his intellectual and technical musicality.

When he matriculated, Shepherd enrolled at The University of Cape Town to study jazz. During his second year he decided that if he was going to make something of himself as a South African jazz artist that he would have to focus his energy and dedicate his time to honing his craft as a musician.

At the young age of 20, he released his debut album 'FineART' which earned him two SAMA nominations - one for Best Traditional Jazz Album and the other in the Best Newcomer category. Since his debut in 2007, he has released four albums and received numerous awards and nominations for his music.

In 2014, he was awarded the Standard Bank Young Artist Award ? an acknowledgment that industry experts felt was long overdue. This year he received the Newton Memorial Music Scholarship to study his Masters at Stellenbosch University.

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About the portrait

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For the portrait '*Making It Up*', Van Wyk describes the visual elements, "Shot in Shepherd's studio at his grandmother's home in Cape Town's Grassy Park, Kyle is pictured playing the Grand Piano that he uses when composing his music. Seated before the instrument - his eyes shut - his reflection in the polished wood is caught in frame. The resulting image is one that imagines a musician and his instrument as one."

On the future of South Africa, he comments, "Opportunity that comes in the form of a silver spoon is gone which is a good thing. You just have to do the work. There are no short cuts. You've got to do the work and be committed to your craft - that's it!" he says.

View the video

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About 21 Icons Season 3

The short film-series documents the conversations between Gary Van Wyk as the photographer and filmmaker and the icons. Each short film provides insight into both the subject and photographer's creative approach to the portrait.

Behind each portrait lies a carefully planned concept that captures not only the essence of each icon visually, but also in spirit and in terms of their unique legacy.



Season three of 21 ICONS South Africa is proudly sponsored by Mercedes-Benz South Africa.

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