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Entertainment 14.9.2014 01.00 pm

# 21 icons featuring Pops Mohamed



Acclaimed musician and producer Pops Mohamed. Picture; Supplied.

**Don't miss acclaimed musician and producer Pops Mohamed as he discusses culture and tradition with filmmaker and photographer Adrian Steirn.**

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Tonight at 20h27 on SABC3, the acclaimed series 21 ICONS South Africa will feature the seventh icon of its second season: acclaimed musician and producer, Pops Mohamed, who has been playing, protecting, and nurturing traditional ways of making music in South Africa for the last 30 to 40 years.

### Multimedia

On his selection as an icon, Steirn says, "Pops understood the fragility of musical culture through apartheid. As a result he started to leave behind the commercial focus of his music and immersed himself in a traditional way of making music. He spent time with the San Bushmen which ultimately allowed him to make a seamless shift from pop music to traditional music.

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He also quickly understood how easily cultures can evaporate, be suppressed and forgotten, and for that reason, he has played a major role in protecting South Africa's indigenous music. He is vitally important for South African music because he is the conduit between the past, the present and our future generations.



Acclaimed musician and producer Pops Mohamed. Picture: Supplied

In an intimate conversation with Steirn, Mohamed talks about his life as a musician; a journey which got its start when he was a boy watching the jazz greats in his hometown of Benoni. "My best childhood memories are of watching the musicians who came from Johannesburg – Zakes Nkosi, Kippie Moeketsi, Miriam Makeba.

They were all in exile but they used to come and play at our community centre. We would sit on the steps of the hall, waiting for the musicians to come, and we would watch them and think 'wow, I want to be like that when I grow up'."

Mohamed's first step towards fulfilling this childhood dream came as a student at Johannesburg's Dorkay House; a musical hub where sightings of greats like Abdullah Ibrahim weren't uncommon. This fuelled Mohamed's ambitions further, so that when one of the music teachers took a special interest in him, he leaped at the opportunity with alacrity.

Mohamed sees his commitment to preserving traditions as "futuristic". He explains this view: "It's the same as if you're having a problem with your hard drive. If we don't back up things, we lose them. It's the same with culture. If you don't know where you're coming from, you'll never know where you're going to. In order to move forward in life you have to take a few steps backwards. You can't just live for now, or live in the future without understanding your background. It's not possible."

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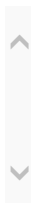
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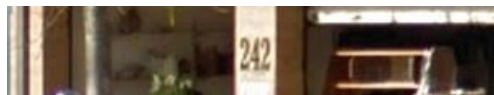
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