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21 ICONS Season Three (the future of a nation)

By TMG Team on 14 September 2015

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Thulani Madondo – “People need to be reminded that they are powerful and they can still achieve whatever they want to achieve, because at the end of the day you are what you think you are.”

On 20 September 2015 on SABC 3 at 19h27, the acclaimed short-film series 21 ICONS will feature the third icon of its third season: co-founder and current executive director of the Kliptown Youth Program (KYP), Thulani Madondo.



21 ICONS traces South Africa’s history over the course of its three seasons, moving from the fight for freedom to the country’s growth during democracy, and concluding with a vision of the future. 21 ICONS is a celebration of individuals who inspire multitudes through their impact, integrity and influence.

As a world-class communicator of powerful stories, 21 ICONS uses photography, film and narrative to showcase the pivotal moments of South Africa’s nation-building journey.

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Gary van Wyk (34) will step up as principal photographer for the third season. In previous seasons, Van Wyk has been a crucial part of 21 ICONS camera work, visually recording the nuances and intimate moments of each shoot in his distinctive reporting style. Adrian Steirn, who conceived the project, continues his involvement capturing the behind-the-scenes images.

This season has been envisaged as a tribute to the country's future, shedding the spotlight on youth icons all under the age of 35. Their energy and drive has been captured in coloured portraits; a major departure from previous seasons which featured black-and-white fine arts portraits

Madondo has been selected for 21 ICONS South Africa Season III to demonstrate active citizenry is characteristic of true heroes. He uses his own life story to inspire individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to follow in his footsteps by highlighting the potential and possibility of what can be achieved when an individual focuses their attention on furthering their education. Madondo's selfless efforts to provide social outreach and upliftment for his community have earned him several humanitarian accolades. He stands as an example of how tenacity and determination can overcome great odds.

During a portrait sitting, Madondo tells Van Wyk how he stayed in a one-room corrugated shack in Kliptown, an informal settlement in Soweto with a population of 45 000, where he shared the space with seven siblings and his mother without electricity or running water, so he understands the challenges facing the youth in this area. He recognised from a young age that in order to break the poverty cycle he needed to do whatever he could to put himself through school financially, and so he washed cars and traded with spaza shop owners by sourcing products in bulk for re-sale.

The film gives an insightful and inspiring glimpse into Madondo's life, his work as social entrepreneur, humanitarian and education activist who provides extracurricular support to less fortunate children from the Kliptown community. One of the programmes on offer is the performance of gumboot dancing to a global audience.

For the portrait 'Africa Rising', which will appear on the same day that his short-film is released, Van Wyk describes the visual elements, "Madondo is photographed in Mandela Park, a township in Cape Town's Hout Bay. Wearing the gumboots that he uses to teach local Kliptown kids traditional gumboot dancing, he is pictured leaping above the roof of a shack. Emphasising his humble beginnings, the portrait imagines him literally rising above his circumstances – a feat he believes is possible for anyone through education."

On the future of South Africa, he comments, "I want the world to know that South Africa is the Promised Land because it is so rich in its diversity. The spirit of 'Ubuntu' really exists. We shouldn't doubt and underestimate ourselves while overestimating other people. That's the worst mistake we (can) make."

ABOUT 21 ICONS SEASON III

By making accessible the personal stories of young individuals whose lives are catalysts for positive change, the purpose of the project is to show the way forward for a new generation to aspire to be socially conscious and active citizens. 21 ICONS has built a truly unique platform for connecting and imparting key attributes of the lives of the people it features who transform societal norms for the better. It is not a definitive list and does not denote any ranking.

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.

The narrative storyboard incorporates the icons' descriptions of the people and social advances that have created opportunities for them. By sharing their personal stories and what they have done with their freedom, the short-films communicate these stories to inspire the next generation to follow in their footsteps and move forward collectively as a new democracy.

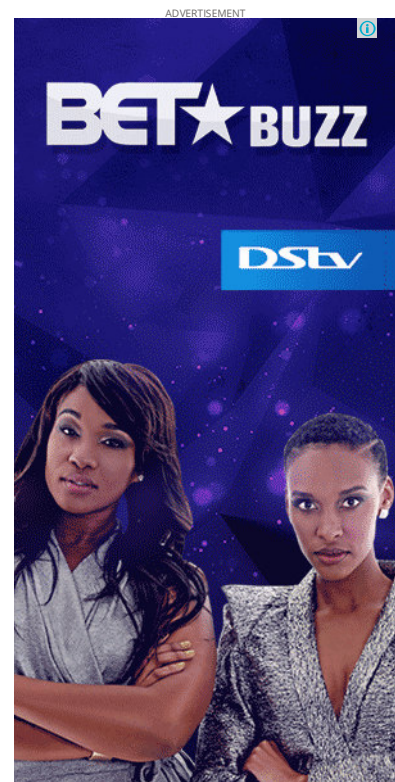
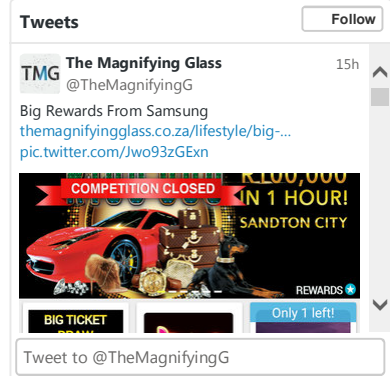
Following the broadcast on Sunday evenings, the icons' portraits, taken by Van Wyk, will be published online and on digital platforms immediately available for individuals to engage and interact with these 21 remarkable new South African icons.

Behind each portrait lies a carefully planned concept that captures not only the essence of each icon visually, but also in spirit. Each portrait pays tribute to the unique path carved by each.

Season three debuts on Sunday 6 September 2015 and broadcasts for a further 20 weeks, with a short film screened every Sunday on SABC 3 at 19h27.



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This is an exciting opportunity for South Africans to engage with, and among, themselves to drive nation building and cohesion in a way that redefines the South African identity.

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



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