

SIMPHIWE DANA PROFILE- UPDATED OCTOBER 2008



In South Africa an incredible creative potential exists that ranks among the world's finest. One of that potential's most recent success stories bears the name Simphiwe Dana. This young vocalist with an earthy voice that gets under the skin is one of the absolute shooting stars on the South African music scene. Media in South Africa hails Simphiwe Dana as "the best thing to happen to Afro-Soul music since Miriam Makeba" and entitled her as "South Africa's Jazz Diva No#1". Her debut album "Zandisile" has received platinum status. During her first European tour in 2006 Simphiwe was celebrated by audiences with standing ovations wherever she performed. Simphiwe is one of the most sought-after performers to emerge from South Africa in many years and the future looks even more promising for this hard working artist.

BIOGRAPHY

It is credit to her immense schooling in different musical forms, not to mention her talent that Dana sings as if she has known a lot of pain and suffering in her life. Musically schooled in a church choir from her native East Cape, the distinct influence of gospel music can be heard on her first album "Zandisile". As the apartheid era came to a close Simphiwe Dana started off by studying fashion design. But after moving to Johannesburg, the hub of the South African music industry, it was her appearances at open-mike sessions that immediately caught the attention of established musicians and producers. They eventually resulted in the recordings for her first album.

When asked about direct influences, Simphiwe Dana names the jazz legends Lena Horne and Sarah Vaughan, South African veteran vocalists like Dorothy Masuka, but also lesser greats from the realms of reggae, jive and traditional Xhosa music. She defines her own style as Modern African Soul. Her lyrics speak mainly of the significance of tradition, but also of the struggle for self-confidence and freedom, especially freedom for women.

PERFORMANCES

In her short spanned career, Simphiwe Dana has received many invitations to perform on big concerts and has shared stage with notable and excelled musicians. With the brand of her music that is irresistibly wayward and so persuasively soothing like a hornbill to the ear, she is one of the few renowned South African female acts that has rocked the Mzansi, across Africa and abroad, with her music that exhibit a total African traditional flare. Asking her what prompted her to fame she would quickly mention the love for what she does. 'There is no love in doing something and you don't give your all to it' Among the notable performances she has put, she has performed at the Noble Peace Prize Winner and former South African President, Nelson Mandela's 83rd birthday. Simphiwe Dana has also performed at both the North Sea Jazz Festival and twice at the Standard Bank Joy of Jazz- both being the top Jazz and Soul events that South Africa has to offer. Simphiwe recently represented South Africa as a cultural ambassador in an extensive tour of China prior to the Olympic Games 2008. With many more performances in her record, from the scenic Dolomites in Italy to the trendy theatres of Berlin in Germany, this is only the start for Simphiwe Dana's both South African and international live performance career.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

Simphiwe has scooped an assortment of accolades and honours along her career both on home soil and abroad:

- Simphiwe has won a total of 7 South Africa Music Awards (SAMA):

2005, for the album "Zandisile": # Best Vocal Jazz Album, # Best Newcomer

2007, for the album "One Love Movement on Bantu Biko Street": # Best Female Artist, # Album of the Year, # Best Contemporary Jazz Album, # Best Vocal Jazz Album.
- While touring in Switzerland in 2006 she received the prestigious AVO Session Arising Star Award.
- Simphiwe has been nominated in the 2008 BBC Radio 3 Awards for Best Artist in the category World Music - Africa.
- Number 1 on Billboard Music Charts for the album "Zandisile"

DISCOGRAPHY

2004 Zandisile, Gallo Records

2006 The One Love Movement on Bantu Biko Street, Gallo Records