

Media Release

Awesome Africa International Arts Festival – April 26 and 27, 2015

As a fitting finale to the Celebration of 20 years of Freedom and Democracy in South Africa, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Arts and Culture, in partnership with Awesome Africa Festival Productions, is set to host the Awesome Africa International Arts Festival featuring a host of world-renowned performers across a number of genres. The festival will take place over two days in different venues, kicking off with a Gala Concert at The Playhouse on Sunday, April 26 and followed by a full day at the Sibusisiwe Community Hall and Lovelife Centre in Mandeni, iLembe District on the North Coast on Monday, April 27.

For the Playhouse concert, doors open at 5pm and the concert begins at 6pm. Headlining the festival is the legendary Salif Keita from Mali, the “Golden Voice of Africa” whose place in the pantheon of African music has been well documented and revered. He performs with his dynamic 13 piece band from Dakar.

The award winning South African hip hop artist Kuli Chana together with MuzArt will also grace the Playhouse stage. Kuli is a multitalented musician well known for his ‘Motswako’ rap style which includes street-talk and highly influential messages in Setswana, English and other South African languages. MuzArt is a five piece musical collective that has collaborated with noteworthy musician. The group was nominated for South African Music Awards, Metro FM Music Awards and UK’s Soul Survivor Awards

Awesome Africa has become known for its unique collaborations in the past, and this year’s festival is no exception. The “Freedom Suite” collaboration, which will perform at both venues,

brings together the extraordinary talents of South African living legend Ray Phiri together with the “Jimi Hendrix of the kora” N’Faly Kouyate from Guinea in West Africa, who besides fusing storytelling, jazz, dance and traditional griot music is also known for his collaborations with the Afro-Celt Sound System which blend Irish Celtic music with that of West African countries. The powerful and trance-like Drummers of Burundi from Central Africa will also form part of this unique collaboration.

Other featured artists are Christine Salem, the maloya superstar from Reunion Island, award-winning guitar maestros Nibs van der Spuy and Guy Buttery, the alluring maskandi duo Qadasi and Maqhinga Radebe, and a 72nd birthday homage to Steve Fataar who will perform with master Cape Town guitarist Errol Dyers. Pride of the Zulu will also serenade the audience with their accapella styled traditional melodies.

The Mandeni festival kicks off at 11am on Monday April 27 with a free Business Management Workshop for up and coming artists as well as relevant arts practitioners. Topics that will come under the spotlight include; performing platforms and funding, contracts and copyright, studio etiquette and the value of quality sound, the digital freeway and international marketing and identity.

A broad spectrum of genres will be represented and the illustrious visitors to Mandeni will include Ray Phiri, N’Faly Kouyate, The Drummers of Burundi, the ground breaking DJ Websta, Holly - known for her “Kasi” vibes, house music and crowd rocking stage performances, Christine Salem, Existing Consciousness and the sizzling Afro-Latino sounds from Napalma (Brazil / Mozambique),

In keeping with the theme of showcasing talent from the Mandeni, KwaDukuza, Ndwedwe and Maphumulo regions of iLembe, artists include traditional Indian sounds from Kalakara featuring Keeran Eshwarlall, traditional Zulu dancing with Amasokemvelo, popular gospel band Mandeni Soul Healers, choral accapella from Central Voices, maskanda star Sgora, kwaito sensations GS, Ndwandwe Sister and Ukujabula Kuyashiyana the winners of Ndwedwe's Isigekle Competition. Comedian Siyanda Maphumulo, DJ Dope and Groutville's Uhuru Poets Society will keep the audience entertained between sets. Festivities close at 9pm.

"Besides many pro-active socio-economic elements, the Festival commemorates Freedom Day by linking a concert in Durban with a project to take the music and the arts back to the people - in essence straight into the communities who have supported our fight for freedom and democracy." says MEC for Arts & Culture Mrs Ntombikayise Sibhidla-Sapetha. "This important synergy also addresses the vital aspects of social cohesion and nation building in our country. No longer will iconic events and artists be the domain only of the big cities. Whilst offering our local artists a platform to showcase their talents on an international stage, this event also serves to bring a signature event to Durban as well as helping to boost tourism levels and create jobs in the Mandeni area."

Tickets for both the Playhouse and Mandeni events are R150 per person available via Computicket and Shoprite Checkers. Tickets will be available at the door but it is preferable to book early.

For more information go to www.awesomeafrica.co.za, or call Gabi on 082 419 4509.