



MAX AND MONA Press Kit

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DV8 Films

Presents

MAX AND MONA

A film by Teddy Materra

Starring

Mpho Lovinga, Jerry Mofokeng, Tumi Melamu, Coco Merckel, Seputla Sebogodi , Percy Matsemela

A Dv8 and Ice Media Production - with the participation and Support of Rand Merchant bank, National Film and Video Foundation, SABC 2, Ster Kinekor, Hubert Bals Fund. - Produced by Tendeka Matatu - Written and directed by Teddy Materra, DOP - Ivan Leathers - Production Designer And Art Director - Dimitri Repanis Editor Henion Han - Music Composer - Phillip Miller



Production Information

Production Team

Executive Producers:	Jeremy Nathan And Joel Phiri
Writer / Director:	Teddy Mattera
Additional writer:	Greg Latter
Producer:	Tendeka Matatu
Director Of Photography:	Ivan Leathers
Production Designer And Art Director:	Dimitri Repanis
Editor:	Kuing-Yuan (Henion) Han
Music Composer:	Phillip Miller
Production Company:	Muncho Productions

Key Cast

Max:	Mpho Lovinga
Uncle Norman:	Jerry Mofokeng
Nozipho:	Tumi Melamu
Six:	Coco Merckel
Skeel:	Seputla Sebogodi
Razor:	Percy Matsemela
Tony September:	

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MAX AND MONA

Log line

When friends are dark, days are few. The life and death tales of Max Bua and his Uncle Norman

Short Synopsis

A coal black comedy about a village boy with extraordinary mourning skills, who journeys to a daunting city town to become a doctor, but a riff-raff uncle, funeral gangsters and a sacred sacrificial goat, ensure that his objective ain't no picnic.

Synopsis

Meet Max Bua (Mpho Lovingo), 19 years of age, precocious jewel in the crown of the idyllic Zwartruggen's farm community, and the rising mourning star, on account of his extraordinary and magical talent for crying at funerals. Like his legendary grandfather before him, Max can melt a heart of stone and bring tears to the eyes of a killer. Even the dishonourably departed get a fitting farewell when Max "King of Tears" Bua is in the house. Despite this heaven sent talent, Max has his sights set on becoming a doctor, but in order to achieve this dream, he must journey to the daunting metropolis of Johannesburg and begin his studies at University.

The quaint community who hold him in such high esteem hail Max's departure with emotional fanfare. He is solemnly warned of the evils of big city life by his loving father who declares that he trust no stranger. But where Max is going, everyone is a stranger. To make matters worse, Max is addled with a sacred sacrificial goat that he needs to deliver to a wedding in Yeoville, a sleazy suburb in Johannesburg. The goat, aptly named **Mona**, has a penchant for creating mayhem in public areas that gets Max into more trouble than he needs.

Max's initial impressions of entering the super-charged city of Johannesburg, is one of awe and fear. Never in his life has he seen so many people charging like bloodhounds through a busy intersection, seemingly on some covert mission. It is in this mad throng of human traffic that Max bumps into **Nozipho** (Tumi Melani), a sexy siren who finds his naiveté somewhat appealing.

Instead of dropping off the goat as planned, Max walks smack bang into the middle of a dodgy police drug bust. As a result Max misses the cut-off time to pay for his tuition fees at University. Stranded with bleating Mona, Max turns to the only person he knows in town, his disreputable **Uncle Norman** (Jerry Mofokeng). He arrives at Norman's ramshackle digs in Soweto, only to become embroiled in a gangster face-off with feared township kingpin **Razor** (Percy Matsemela).

Heroically Max offers Razor his tuition money and consequently saves his Uncle Norman and his two laissez-faire pals **Six** (Coco Merckel) and **Skeels** (Seputla Sebogodi). They live to fight another day. Yet this is only the beginning of a thorny series of events, triggered by crooked Uncle Norman and his deadly plan to make a killing at funerals by exploiting his nephew's gift.



Director's notes

I recall a story my father once told me about, growing up in Sophiatown. He used to say: "When friends are dark, days are few". Ntibidi and Skelm had very few days. They were unemployed, their working days were few... like Sundays are. After a weekend of debauchery, they would leave home early on Sunday mornings to find funerals. "Funerals?" I asked. "Yes funerals!" In their dusty Black suits they would skip between streets looking for funerals. When they found one they would ask:

"Ekse wie het geklerie?" (Who died?)

"Ou Themba!" the mourners would reply.

"Themba?... Themba? Themba? Van? (who?)"

And the mourners would fill the necessary gaps:

"Ou Themba... Ou Jakes se laaitie van Alex in 14." (Themba... Jakes' son from 14th Avenue in Alexander township).

And before they could finish, Ntibidi would signal to Skelm, fingers behind his back. Skelm would send out a wail louder than the mistress and the wife near the grave.

"Oh Themba! Oh Teeza! my bra se laaitie. Hoe ken jy so gou klerie? Eish! Lewe is kak!!" (Oh Themba, my best friend son how could leave us soon!!! Damn! How unfair life is!!!) The mourners would step aside as Skelm and Ntibidi took the floor and gave their tearful outpouring whilst eagerly eyeing the food & drinks table.

Later I found out that in our ancient traditions we had professional mourners who led the mourning process, yes, the crying at funerals. The belief was that until you cried, truly cried, the soul of the departed would not leave the body to join the ancestors in the hereafter.

What struck me was the contradictions between these two worlds, in the one world we have professional mourners who help the bereaved express their emotion and allow the departed to transcend to the heavens, whilst in the other world, the sacred act of burying the dead seems to have been surpassed by the excuse for just another trendy social gathering.

"Max The King of Tears" explores what would happen if these two worlds came together. And Max's character is the vehicle through which these opposing worlds manifest and collide.

Underlying the entire story is the comedy and the pain, the fantastic and often absurd contradictions, the unlikely situations and the colourful characters that Max encounters on his journey.

The film is also a love letter to Jo'burg, my city. I have watched the Mafikizolo's (newcomers) with their suitcases and paper bags arrive on the bus or train, They come "...looking for gold on the streets" and all they get is a baptism of chaos!!! Welcome to Jozi!



Biographies of principal cast

Ma Bua - MPHO LOVINGA

Mpho's first appearance on television when he acted as Blessing in a series called Dr Lucille Teasdale. He worked his way up the theatre world playing in various roles as lead actor in a plays including Malaika (Market Theatre), Salt, (Grahamstown Arts Festival), Couple Terug (Market Laboratory) and Shoes Children (Wits Theatre) He received an award as Best stepping stones FNB Vita for "Shoes Children".

Mpho made his first film appearance in the feature, Final Solution and has since starred in another feature titled High Explosives.

Uncle Norman – JERRY MOFOKENG

Jerry obtained a BA in Dramatic Arts at the University of Witwatersrand in 1986 As Fullbright fellowship scholar at Columbia University, New York he obtained an MFA in Theatre Administration/ Directing in 1990. He went on to become Resident Director at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg from 1992 to 1993 and in 1995 he moved on to become Associate Artistic Director at the Johannesburg Civic Theatre. His theatre accolades include, Sizwe Banzi is Dead (Market Theatre and United States Tour), Baal (Wits Theatre), All's Well (Grahamstown/Baxter Theatres), As You Like It (Wits Theatre).

Jerry's television career begun with the Drumbeats series in 1992, and he made his mark on international television screens in 1993 as Duma in the series The Line. Other memorable performances on Tv include, Induna in the series called Rhodes in 1995, Mzwakhe in the series Inside also in 1995, Walter Sisulu in Mandela & De Klerk (1996). In 2000 he played Mafethe in Nna Sejene Kokobela and also made guest appearances as a magistrate in Justice For All. The last series he appeared in was Behind The Badge where he played the role of lead character Darkie in 2002.

The first feature film that Jerry appeared in was Friends where he acted as Thami in 1992. In 1993 he was supporting actor in A Good Man In Africa and in 1994 he starred as Hlabeni in Cry The Beloved Country. In Tarzan in Africa (1996) he played Vusi and in 2000 he appeared in Ollie as Matthew.

He has directed over 25 theatre productions, including Survival (Riverside Theatre, New York), Boesman and Lena (Market Theatre), Nongogo (Grahamstown / Johannesburg Civic Theatre), A Raisin in the Sun, and A Nun's Romantic Story (Johannesburg Civic Theatre), The King is Born (Johannesburg Civic Theatre), The Piano Lesson (State Theatre), and The Suit (Johannesburg Civic Theatre)

Jerry also directed several radio dramas including, Boesman and Lena as well as The People's Voice, which were aired on Radio South Africa in 1993 and 1994.

He has been nominated for numerous awards among which the Vita Award for Best Directing for Boesman and Lena, New York Audelco Award Nomination for Best Directing for Survival, the Artes Award for Best Supporting Actor as Duma in The Line, the Vita Award for Best Directing for Nongogo, and the Vita Award for Best Direction for Raisin In The Sun confirm his status as a truly seasoned actor director.

Nozipho – TUMIE MELAMU

Tumie was born on the 26th Nov 1980 in the North West Province, in a little township called Mothibistad. She is the second of five children born to Virginia (*a school teacher*) & Johannes (*a taxi owner*).

Tumie spent her first school years at Isagonthle Primary, then Ikettleletso Middle & matriculated from Galaletsang High. She excelled in English, Physics & Biology. She achieved great success at ballroom dancing and tennis.



She was also active in the SRC & Parent Teacher Student Association. She won the Old Mutual Young Communicators Award in 1997. Tumie presented her school, province and competed nationally in speech contests, where she obtained gold colours. She piloted the Youth Parliament Project, which was established in 1996.

Her passion for the arts was unleashed in high school where she was part of the school's and community drama society. While still at primary she took part in parents meeting, community functions & Sunday school sketches.

After leaving school she studied computer systems engineering, and went on to study Human Resources Management at the *Technikon Witwatersrand*. Here she was also a member of the of the SRC; Faculty Representative in Business Management.

She was lucky enough to be chosen as a lead in Mmabatho Arts Council Productions: Nkonyeni High & Battling AIDS, where she sang and danced. She further featured in a BOP TV Series: Teens On The Alert. This was followed by a brief appearance in Gaz'lam, a local SABC1 drama series.

Tumie is driven by the endearing love and support she gets from her family. She is single, but the greatest love in her life is a two-year-old genius; Bokao, her son.

Six- COCO MARCEL

After graduating with a Diploma in Drama from Fuba Academy in 1992, Coco appeared in various television programs including 'Nkosi Sikelele-The Healing Song', '**Onder Engele**' '**Flat 27**' '**Suburban Bliss**', 'Seventh Avenue' and 'Soul City'.

He starred in the feature film 'Dancing in the Dark' which was showcased by Total Eclipse in 2002 and has acted in numerous theatre productions including 'Julius Caesar', 'Twelve Nights' and 'No Room For Squares' in 2000.

Coco's was nominated for the Artes Awards **Best Supporting Actor for Suburban Bliss**, 'Best Performance in a comedy for "No Room for Squares" for the FNB Vita Awards

Skeel – SEPUTLA SEBOGUDI

Born in Selbourne in 1962. Started acting 1979 with the Godfather of black theatre Gibson Kente's show "Now is the Time", "Uyadlalwa", worked for PACT for three years on various productions including "Not to die Today", "Keep moving Majack", "Macbeth", "Place of Stone", "Die Prys", "Thing?" with Andrew Buckland, "Gathering of the Beasts", "Theatre for Africa", "Mooi street Moves", "Travelling Shots", "Once a Pirate" by Paul Slabolesky, "Tailormade", HE starred in several television dramas among which "Bophelo ke Sepheko", "Moipolai", "Lehlased", "Paradys", "Dr Verdier", "Suburban Bliss" and "Isidingo" stand out. Seputla also starred in feature films such as "African man called Cinema". "The Africano", "Mr Bones", "The long Run", "Place of Lions" and "Hijack Stories", and has received six nominations for the Best Actor, Won four Loerie awards as a director, and won two awards for his community plays as a director.

Razor – PERCY MATSEMELA

Scene stealing Percy has appeared in a number of SABC television programs including "Madireng" "Mafokisi a Maswa" "Crime Reporter" "Bitso Lebe ke serumo", "Keletso", "Virus 1 & 2" and "Gaabo Motho",

Percy's first feature film appearance was in "Doctor Lucille" where he was played the role of 'Soldier'. His latest appearance was in "Hijack Stories". He now appears in Dv8's first film "King of Tears" directed by Teddy Mattered where he acts as a ruthless drug dealer, 'Razor'



Biographies of Key crew

Producer - TENDEKA MATATU

Tendeka started his film career in Zimbabwe in 1996 as an assistant director, working on varying local and international pictures, including "The Big Time"(Moonlight Pictures), "Mangwana"(NFTS) & "Heat of the Sun"(Carlton TV UK), during which time he quickly establishing himself as one of Zimbabwe's top assistant directors. In 1997 Tendeka moved to London where he worked as production manager on numerous world-class music videos and commercials often managing budgets of over US\$ 1 million, including the MTV award winning "Deeper Underground" video for Jamirouquai (Sony Music). He was also given the unique opportunity to work with, and learn from, the award winning commercials and Hollywood director Tony Kaye - "American History X" in both England and around Europe. In July 1999 Tendeka co-produced his first short film "That Sinking Feeling" together with Claire Bennett of Brockwell City Pictures in London. In February 2000 Tendeka returned to Zimbabwe to join ICE Films, and produced "Mamuka Seyi"(a breakfast TV pilot). In 2000 he was involved in the production of "Uno's World" a Namibian film which for part of the Zimmedia/MNET Mama Africa Series. Tendeka has since joined ICE Media where he produced the documentary film "My Land My Life" and also has several feature film projects in development.

Director- TEDDY ERROL MATTERA

Teddy is a South African who did his film studies in the U.S.A., U.K. and Europe. The first film he worked on, as an intern, Hoop Dreams was nominated for Oscar in 1993. He has since worked on various documentaries for SABC (South Africa), BBC, Channel Four (U.K), and other international broadcasters. He has also is worked on a number of short films, commercials and music videos mainly as an Assistant Director.

MNET selected "Waiting for Valdez", a short film written by Teddy, as part of the 2001 MNET New Directions series. Recently Teddy directed the hilarious short film "Norman Comes to Jozi" as well as several inserts for the SABC2 flag ship series "Vuyani Mzansi"

Director of Photography - IVAN LEATHERS

From a background in fine arts, majoring in photography and graphics Ivan crossed over into the film industry camera department and progressed through the ranks from loader to camera operator, and finally Director of photography.

With fifteen years behind the camera, he gained experience working in commercials, features and documentaries. This transpired into a six-year period directing music videos, which proved an invaluable learning ground for creative freedom and experience.

The need for greater creative challenges drew him to concentrate predominantly as a cinematographer on commercials. This in turn opened up new opportunities, when producers familiar with his work offered him commercials to direct; a challenge he was technically and creatively prepared for.

Over the years, Ivan acquired extensive knowledge in the various aspects of the film industry, including local and international feature films, where experience was gained operating second camera on first unit and as DOP on second unit a number of pictures. Including: Red Scorpion, Ship of the desert, Coast of Skeletons and Cry the Beloved Country.

Experience has also been gained as DOP in documentaries for the BBC, Channel 4, Dutch and local television, where speed and minimal lighting techniques are an essential requisite.

Technically, Ivan is accomplished with most camera equipment, including 35mm, 16mm and Digital cinematography. He has focused consistently on the technical advancement of the Digital media and is one



of the most experienced DOP's in that medium. Experience with motion control, time slice and his postproduction knowledge and skills are updated on a regular basis.

Over the years Ivan has been credited with numerous awards as both director and cinematographer. Some of those include de'Afrique Canada – best music video award that accredited him with best video for Tu Nokwe's "Nyaka Nyaka" and later best video for Johnny Clegg's "Crocodile Love". Other awards include FNB – Sama Awards where he won 1st 2nd and 3rd prize three various projects including commercials, drama and music videos have been awarded to him over the years.

Ivan was invited to become a member of the SASC [SA society of cinematographers] after being awarded with both a "gold and the "visible spectrum" awards in 1999

Editor - KUING-YUAN (HENION) HAN

Henion (anglicized English name) was born in Johannesburg, South Africa on 8 February 1952 to Chinese immigrant parents. He completed a Bachelor of Arts Degree through correspondence at the University of South Africa. A love of photography ensued, and he showed his work at the National Gallery of South Africa, the Johannesburg Art Gallery, the Market Photo Gallery and the Pentax Gallery.

In 1984 he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to pursue a Master of Fine Arts Degree at the Art Institute of Chicago. Professor Peter Kubelka, the filmmaker and editor, invited Henion to spend a year training under his supervision, at the German State Art Academy in Frankfurt where he was the Dean. Henion then returned to Chicago to complete his thesis film, 'Utter', which was awarded the prestigious, Raymond Nelson Fellowship. 'Utter' then showed at the New York Film Festival, The Boston Film Festival and the Chicago Ethnographic Film Festival. It later went to film festivals in London, Paris and Berlin before showing in South Africa. A print was purchased for the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.

At the beginning of 1988 he returned to South Africa where he then worked in the film Industry. As an editor he has completed 41 documentaries, 5 short feature films and 38 educational films.. The topics include a 5 part series on the History of the ANC, a 16 part series on AIDS, a 5 part series on environmental issues in Africa, a music documentary on the Dave Matthews Band and 'Big voice" Jack Leroli, and a profile on Women Miners for Discovery Channel. He also directed 2 documentaries on the Truth and Reconciliation process.

Although his first love is editing, he continues to find time to direct 'personal' films including the highly acclaimed documentary 'Passages' about the writer J.M. Coetzee, who has won the Booker prize twice. In 1998 Henion was awarded a grant by the Department of Arts and Culture and in January 1999 completed 'Letter to my Cousin in China', an uncompromising documentary exploring the diaspora of his family. It was awarded best Documentary in 1999 by the South African Guild of Editors

Production Designer and Art Director- DIMITRI REPANIS

After graduating from Wits University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in social sciences, Dimitri decided to pursue a more creative career. This led to styling for well known stills photographers at the time including Mark Lewis, Frank Gross, Jonathan Taylor, Peter Smiley & Michael Lizagang.

Dimitri then decided to embark on a lengthy travel abroad. Self imposed exile found him living in London for 5 years. He took the opportunity to make use of the wonderful educational institutions and studied photography, life drawing, jewelry design, ceramic design and sculpture at the Chelsea Westminster Institute and the Camdon Art Centre. He assisted his wife at the time in establishing a clothing accessory business which designed, manufactured and marketed high fashion accessories in the greater London area. Clients included Top Shots, Harrods, Miss Selfridges, Peter Robinson and well known boutiques such as Josephs, Whistles, Burns and Ace.



On return to S.A. they established a design, manufacture and retail outlet SO MODERN which traded in the 80's. In the late 80's he decided to re-establish himself as a stylist but this time in the commercials film industry. He quickly went on to art direct commercials. This he has been doing since 1987.

He has worked with many local and international directors. Amongst them Tarseem Dhandwar, Mark Lawrie, Ricardo DeCarvalho, Daniel Levi, Keith Rose, Lourens Van Rensberg, Romhanyi to name a few.

Dimitri has also designed a small number of feature films, the most recent being Dangerous Ground directed by Darryl Roodt & starring Elizabeth Hurley, Ice Cube & Ving Rhames

Music Composer - PHILIP MILLER

Philip Miller studied composition in South Africa with Professor Jeanne Zaidel -Rudolph and Professor Joseph Horovitz at the Royal College of Music in London. In 1995, he completed a postgraduate diploma in electro- acoustic music at Bournemouth University with Professor Stephen Deutsch.

Since returning to South Africa in 1996, he has composed many of the scores for the animation films of William Kentridge including more recently, *Journey to the Moon*, *Automatic Writing* and *the Medicine Chest* which have been exhibited at galleries and museums all over the world. His CD, *The Music for the Films of William Kentridge* was released in 2000.

He has scored numerous soundtracks for local and international television productions and films including, *Yizo Yizo 1 & 2*, *Gazlam*, the short film *Portrait of a young man drowning* directed by Teboho Mahlatsi, which won the Silver Lion award at the Venice Film Festival for best short film.

In 2000, he received an Avanti Award for his score to the BBC documentary *Guguletu Seven* directed by Lindi Wilson, which has been short-listed for the international Grierson Award.

In 2001, he scored many of the soundtracks to the international documentary series, *Steps for the Future*, for SABC1 of which his work was featured on the SAMA award- winning album *Steps*.

In 2002, he wrote many of the songs for the children's TV series, *Takalani Sesame* with the singer/ songwriter Neo Muyanga. This year, he has just completed producing an album of children's Lullabies entitled *the Thula Project* which has been received to critical acclaim and has become an instant best-seller on the album charts.



Press release

Comedy to the Max with the “MAX AND MONA”

Dv8, South Africa’s digital film production initiative is formally out of the starting blocks, on a visionary journey to alter the fate of the South African film industry. Dv8 will over the next 3 years develop, produce and market 12 genuinely South African digital feature films. The first Dv8 film aptly titled – **Max and Mona** is promises rollicking comedy, a quirky array of characters and a screwball plot that will have you rolling down the aisles.

Max and Mona is a madcap combination of love, tears, death and riotous comedy that cleverly presents South African life through the comedic and eventful journeys of Max Bua, a country bumpkin who travels to the daunting metropolis of Johannesburg in the hopes of becoming a doctor. But Max unknowingly gets entangled into the perilous web of Soweto. His only hope is to fall back on his talent as a professional mourner at township funerals.

The way that South Africans deal with death and funerals was bound sooner or later to have its more comical aspects explored and exploited on film. Writer/director Teddy Mattera, a protégé of the London International Film School and Maurits Binger Film Institute in Amsterdam, has spent the last four years crafting a high quality script about a phenomenon that touches everyone’s lives across the globe, yet is uniquely dealt with culture to culture. South Africa’s only successful films have been comedies, mainly from Leon Schuster. His *Mr Bones*, the most successful local film to date, proved that South African films can shatter local box-office records and compete with internationally produced films. *King of Tears* builds cleverly on this local appetite for home-grown comedy.

The **Max and Mona** cast is made up of a diverse range of established and upcoming local talent. Star in the making, Mpho Lovinga (*Final Solution*), will play the pivotal title role, while sassy screen siren Thumi Melamu (*Watch Out*) takes on the female lead. Lovable Jerry Mofokeng (*Behind the Badge* and *Mr. Bones*) is set to inhabit the role of a shady uncle, and scene stealing Percy Matsemela (*Hijack Stories*) will channel a notorious township gangster. Coco Merckel (*Soul City*) will play Six, one half of an Abbot and Costello-esque comedic duo.

The film will be shot on state of the art Sony Panavision High Definition cameras with Primo Digital lenses, supplied by Panacam. The same camera was used to shoot the latest *Star Wars* film, *Attack of the Clones*, and has been heralded by George Lucas as a giant step forward for digital filmmaking. The Refinery will serve as the post-production partner using new, cutting edge editing equipment. Cinegate Africa will provide the lighting equipment. Sasani will provide the HD to 35mm transfers and Dolby cinema mix.

Dv8 principals, Jeremy Nathan and Joel Phiri, feel **Max and Mona** is the ideal film to kick-start the initiative, “Teddy’s unique visual style and capacity to find humour in South African culture lends itself sublimely to the format. We are extremely excited and optimistic about the project’s creative and commercial potential, and believe that it could become a benchmark South African comedy in years to come.”

The major partners of the Dv8 project are financial powerhouse Rand Merchant Bank, the National Film & Video Foundation, local broadcaster SABC2 and reputed theatrical distributor Ster-Kinekor. Berlin and Zurich based sales agency First Hand Films will handle the international sales.

Electric African Cinema is truly upon us!

Press Release Ends.