

South African Film and Television Awards  
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## Press Release

**\*\*\*For immediate release\*\*\***

### **SAFTAs Celebrates *20 Years of Freedom***

The 8th Annual South African Film and Television Awards (SAFTAs) was held in Johannesburg on 4 and 5 April 2014. Prominent officials and entertainment industry leaders gathered to celebrate 20 years of Film and Television in line with the *20 Years of Freedom* celebrations that are building up in the country. The SAFTA nominees and winners got together to honour all those who've contributed to building the industry. The showcase unfolded in a glamorous awards event where guests were taken on the journey South Africa has travelled in the industry in order to arrive at landmark achievements that changed the course of the industry for the better. The night was one of inspiration, and as we reflect we can't help but look forward to the future!

"It has been inspiring to see the SAFTAs, as our industry's flagship event, growing from strength to strength," says Minister of Arts and Culture, Mr Paul Mashatile, who was a guest of honour at the SAFTAs ceremony. "This year is one of the most significant in our democratic history as we celebrate *20 Years of Freedom*. The film and television industry, like most sectors in our society, has a good story to tell. The industry has evolved in so many respects - from a development point of view, to our state of the art production facilities, through to the diversity of platforms showcasing these productions. The entire value chain has truly evolved to be where we are today."

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This year's SAFTAs was an opportunity to reflect on the impressive South African film and television journey, re-living some of the major industry highlights over the past 20 years. From the broadcast of the first episode of *Generations* in 1994 (which grew to become one of the most popular TV shows in SA TV) to the signing of the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) Act in 1997, to the introduction of new TV channels in the early 90s which redefined the landscape of local television. Most notably, hand in hand with the additional TV platforms, was the commitment to creating diversity in the industry and to utilising more local talent. And on the big screen, who could forget the groundbreaking moment when *Tsotsi* won an Oscar Award in 2005? As well as the establishment of the South African Film and Television Awards in that same year.

With the recognition of *Tsotsi* on the Academy Award stage, South Africa's film industry became more visible as a global partner. "It was a very defining moment for the country and the industry," says NFVF CEO and Chairperson of the SAFTAs Committee, Zama Mkosi, "*Tsotsi's* success also created the space for the development of films like *Jerusalema* and *Hijack Stories*. Doors were opened for South African actors, including Terry Pheto, who went on to win supporting roles in Hollywood TV productions such as *The Bold and the Beautiful*. It all started with *Tsotsi's* success."

These pivotal TV and cinematic moments form part of the unique industry story that will inspire future generations of South African writers, producers, actors and directors. When asked about industry plans going forward, Zama continues, "We remain totally committed to the ongoing journey of transformation and to improving access to finance. That said; we are enjoying looking back at our *20 Years of Freedom* and all the milestones we've achieved. I am in awe of talent that the SAFTAs give us an opportunity to honour. I know the hard work and the sacrifice that many of this year's winners have gone through, and I salute the talent, creativity and hard work that keeps our industry so dynamic." Asked what some of her key moments in SA movie history are, Zama responds, "They would have to include *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1995), *Mr Bones* (2001), *Drum* (2004), *Yesterday* (2004) and *Tsotsi* (2005)."

Over 60 Golden Horn statuettes were awarded to the crème de la crème of South Africa's film and television industry at the SAFTAs this year and the ceremonies were attended by celebrities and entertainment industry leaders as well as the Saturday evening being screened live on SABC 3. The glittering event truly lived up to its democratic theme of *20 Years of Freedom* as the TV audience engaged all evening via Twitter, using #SAFTAs2014, and commented on Facebook throughout the show.

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The celebratory atmosphere was also translated into the design of the Awards set. Genna Lewis Creative Director from Clive Morris Productions, explains how they translated the *20 Years of Freedom* theme into an epic audio-visual story, "We created an open and all-surrounding approach to the stage design. Celebrating two decades of freedom means the opportunity to bring film and television to life on stage – celebrating 20 years of the industry's achievement through every aspect of the show – from the script to the entertainment. This year the SAFTAs celebrated the nominees and winners as one community with the show becoming part of the audience space, the audience surrounding the work and the work celebrated on screen."

The Minister of Arts and Culture sums up the mood of the moment, "The industry looks bright, particularly in light of our committed focus on supporting the commissioning of more local content on different local platforms. This is how we see the future of the industry growing. South African's have incredible stories to tell, about our *20 Years of Freedom* and our future."

***About the SAFTAs:***

The first SAFTAs were held in 2006 under the National Film and Video Foundation of South Africa (NFVF) banner. The Awards honour talent in the South African film and TV industry by celebrating and promoting home-grown creativity, quality and excellence - as well as encouraging talent, entrepreneurship and development within the industry. A SAFTA winner is presented with a [Golden Horn](#) which symbolises Circularity as an organising principle in African thought and, like a continuous reel of past-present-future, speaks to endless creativity.

SAFTA Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/safilmandtvawards>

SAFTA Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SAFTAS1>

SAFTA Website: <http://nfvf.co.za/saftas/the-golden-horn-story>

**/Ends.**

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