

Post-task: Awakening the Entrepreneurial Spirit

To really succeed in promoting music, you have to have a passion and a love for music and your country. South Africa has had many fantastic musical groups that have not been able to break into the global context. But this is changing, slowly but surely. As the South African representative for the WOMAD (international world music and dance festival), Dan had the opportunity to recommend the Soweto band BCUC for the international stage. BCUC used this opportunity to establish themselves internationally. As Dan said, “BCUC are not commercial, they are not radio friendly, but they have something that is absolutely unique. They have an electrifying live stage show. Great hooks, great chants, great rhythms. BCUC play music from their soul and that is what we should all be doing as South Africans.”

World Music Festivals

WOMAD was established in 1982 by Peter Gabriel. Despite many opportunities to sell the WOMAD brand to big corporates like Live Nation, WOMAD has remained true to its roots – world music and dance.

WOMAD festivals have up to 11 different stages with hundreds of bands performing. Up to 80% of the bands are unknown, but are being showcased to the world for the first time. And that is the spirit of WOMAD, giving all artists the platform to play in this global festival environment where international festival directors congregate to scout for new talent.

Festival direction is an important job internationally. This industry has made a crucial impact on cultural tourism worldwide. The European Festival Forum for example has 2700 affiliate festivals across Eastern and Western Europe.

Africa also has strong networks and festival circuits which provide the dual benefit of efficient cultural tourism packages and economies of scale. There are festival circuits during Africa Month (May), Jazz Month, (April), National Festival Month, (July) and Cultural Heritage Month, (September).

Today WOMAD takes place in 24 different countries. Each WOMAD destination festival is very different. WOMAD Australia, or Chile does not have the same issues that South Africa has – so therefore the festival will be a different experience. One of the important roles of a festival director is to speak to their audience.

The festival era in South Africa was truly birthed in '94 at the unfolding of the new South Africa. People's overwhelming and bottled up desire to come together and share their cultural expressions could no longer be contained. And what better way of coming together than a music festival?

In 1999, Dan teamed up with musician Ray Phiri and cultural heritage practitioner, Professor Pitika Ntuli to create Awesome Africa, a unique festival experience that focused on fascinating musical collaborations, with deep links to natural and cultural heritage.

Awesome Africa was a landmark festival in bringing to life the magic and emotion of the beautiful natural Shongweni Valley. Through offering visitors world class experiences, whilst showcasing new locations, festivals became a cornerstone of the creative economy and a leading initiative for generating long term economic growth.

First and foremost a festival provides a great opportunity for artists to showcase their work, learn from other artists, and generate professional networks. But there are many other benefits to festivals. Festivals promote the location as a tourism destination through events marketing and media coverage; provide business and cultural development benefits through sharing skills, expertise and employment opportunities; and produce desirable social benefits such as building cultural capital and social cohesion amongst the audience.

As a festival director, Dan believes team work is the key to success. He said, “It is about getting the right team

together. It is never about the individual. It shouldn't be about the ego. It is about finding the right people and putting the right team around you."

Festival direction has changed over the years to become more inclusive in the need to reach a wider audience. Some of the many things a festival director in South Africa needs to think about are: cultural tourism, heritage, conservation, water management and preservation, access to health education and services, targeted participation of women and youth and the inclusion of all creative disciplines - Music, Film, Digital Content, Dance, Visual and Performing Arts, Fashion, Architecture, Writing and Publishing, Heritage and Conservation.

Now answer the following post-task questions

1. Innovation in sustainability is an exciting and important future trend of festival production. Bushfire festival has a tree planting programme. Oppikoppi had a waste management programme. Can you think of anything that you would like to add to a music and cultural festival to make it more sustainable?
2. South Africa is criticised internationally for Americanisation – copying the Americans and losing our own heritage and therefore our soul. Is there anything that you see around you that does not respect or admire indigenous culture that you can change and how would you go about changing that?
3. Music festivals contribute to the experience economy where audiences expect to have a certain experience; also to the transformation economy whereby audiences have life transforming experiences. Can you think of any transformative experiences you have had through music and how you would stage that experience at a festival?
4. A huge part of music management is marketing. Ladysmith Black Mambazo give 120-150 concerts a year around the world. How do you think they have built their brand to a global audience and what can you learn from them?