

Makeeda Swan

 By [Martin Myers](#)

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Makeeda Swan is a Cape Town-based artist on the rise. She is a UCT jazz and music technology graduate, and has just released her two new singles: Got it Good as well as Locked. I spoke to her last week.

■ ***What does music mean to you?***

Music is my life source. Honestly, without it, I feel incomplete. I need to be singing, I need to be writing, and I need to be sharing it with people who are able to receive and celebrate it with me. Music is a powerful tool that touches people at the core of who they are.







■ ***What is the most enjoyable aspect of your work?***

This industry is full of quirky, interesting people. I love that when I go out, whether it's to the studio or to a gig, or to a talk or workshop, I'm pretty much guaranteed to meet at least one person that I can connect with and learn from.

■ ***What drives you: ego or humility?***

To be honest, a bit of both. As a human being, I'd be lying if I said I never have moments where my ego is driving me. I believe I have something to offer in the entertainment industry otherwise I wouldn't be pursuing a career in it. We need to believe in ourselves and make things happen, and we can't do that without our egos (which, I think, can be interchanged with 'inner-confidence') edging us on. But I suppose, on the whole, ego can only take us so far. It is those who remain humble in all circumstances that find elevation in a world that is so competitive and fraught with judgment from the public. So I believe humility is key, and is generally what I always seek to live by and express myself through.

■ ***Any funny moments on stage?***

Yes. During my performance at Muizenberg Festival in November 2016, we neglected to stick the keyboard pedal to the floor, which happened to be quite slippery. As a result, my right foot kept moving further and further away from me under the keyboard as the set progressed until I couldn't play anymore. So in the middle of a phrase I stopped singing, quickly bent down and pulled the pedal back to where it needed to be, and resumed the song – and somehow I managed to time it perfectly so that the rhythmic flow wasn't disrupted. Everyone laughed at that point but, to my relief, the laughter was followed by a big applause straight afterwards because of how I managed to recover. I think I may have blushed for the remainder of the set.

■ ***What is your most treasured possession?***

At the moment it's my Focus Rite Scarlett 2i2, which has made it possible for me to lay down good quality recordings of my music in the comfort of my own home.

■ ***It's your round what are you drinking?***

Kombucha or Red Grapetiser, depending on my mood.

■ ***What makes you stand out?***

I think I naturally stand out because of the way I look (my dreadlocks, my dress sense etc.). But I've been told by many of my listeners that I have a very distinct voice that can be easily distinguished as my own; that I don't sound like anybody else. That's a huge compliment for me, as it speaks of my individuality, which is an important aspect of my existence and something I wish to preserve as my career unfolds.



■ ***If you were not a musician what would you do?***

I would be a holistic wellness and nutrition coach and health-restaurant owner (It is actually still a dream of mine to open a health restaurant one day – just picture it: enjoying a delicious fruit smoothie at a restaurant with breathtaking ocean views, while listening to a live jazz band alternating with local musicians of various genres, and ending it off with a yoga session accompanied by a live downtempo DJ. Absolute bliss!).

🎲 ***Pick five words to describe yourself?***

Confident, passionate, tenacious, resilient, hardworking.

🎲 ***What song changed your life?***

Makeda by Les Nubians. It was just so great to have a song about the Queen that I was named after. The chorus translates to “The Queen of Sheba lives in me / Makeda lives in me.” It had an impact on me as a young girl because it communicated to me that I could accomplish great things, just as my namesake did. It made me start dreaming big.

🎲 ***What is your favorite word?***

I have two (I can't choose one, sorry): 'groovy' and 'shalom'.

🎲 ***Favourite fashion garment?***

A purple retro-chic wrap-jacket from Macy's in New York that my mom handed down to me.

🎲 ***Give us some real proper slang and what it means.***

“A big swell rolled in in the Deep South last weekend and the waves were cranking! Out of all the breaks, The Hoek was working the best... It was pretty gnarly and we got thrown over the falls a few times but we were still just stoked to be out there. The running barrels we caught made it totally worth it!”

“There were some really good waves around in the South Peninsula last weekend, especially at The Hoek (in Noordhoek). It was pretty intimidating and we got dunked and pushed under by the waves pretty badly but we were still just happy to be out there. The long hollow waves we caught made it worthwhile!”

🎲 ***Top of your bucket list?***

To be honest, I don't really have a bucket list. I've never been one for lists, nor have I ever really been one for thinking about death or when it's going to happen LOL. I guess I just dream and visualise things in my head but, seldom write them down.

🎲 ***Your greatest achievement?***

Being appointed as head girl of my high school after being there for only nine months. I really didn't expect it but I was

really amazed and very excited about it (and pretty nervous but I think I did all right LOL).



▣ ***What do you complain about most often?***

The looks and stares that my husband and I get when we're out in public, especially here in Cape Town. People just have no skaam. It really pisses me off. But I've had to learn to stay calm and not confront every single person I catch staring at us, whether it's in admiration or disgust.

▣ ***What is your fear?***

Well, if we're keeping things light then I'll say I'm afraid of those hand-held weed-eater machines. Man, I am so scared of those things! Even if I'm in my car and the windows are closed I scream whenever I drive past one. And if I see or hear one whilst walking, I either turn back or take a detour.

If we're getting deep then I'll say I fear being put on a pedestal and idolised. That's just really not what I'm about, and it breaks my heart because I see it happening with so many people in this industry, to the point where people forget that artists are human beings.

▣ ***Happiness is?***

A fleeting emotion. We can feel happy in a given moment because of a particular thing or a particular person. And that's cool, you know. But joy is something else. It's a state of being, rather than just an emotion. There's an assurance that joy brings that can't really be articulated. That, to me, is a greater gift than happiness.

■ ***On stage, I tend to?***

Read as many of the audience's facial expressions as I can. They give me clues about how people are receiving my music.

■ ***Where would you like to be right now?***

Surfing a tropical beach break in my bikini (i.e. not in a wetsuit in ice-cold water like Cape Town, which is what I'm used to LOL).

■ ***Wishes and dreams for 2018?***

Get a band, perform at some big shows, collaborate with some big artists (no names mentioned yet but watch this space), and release my debut EP, among many others.

Social media links

Website: makeedaswan.com

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