

You can't keep a good man down

HOTSTIX AND PHAT JOE KEEP RISING

 Noluvuyo Bacela

Fourty-five years later, musical genius Sipho "Hotstix" Mabuse returns to school, matriculates and influences young and old to follow in his footsteps.



Four decades after dropping out of Grade 11, the legendary Sipho "Hotstix" Mabuse went back to school and finished what he started. In a time where the education sector is in disrepute - with ministers not keeping their word and students destroying everything they can get their hands on during public holidays - he went back to school.

After having achieved major success in the music industry, which started from the not so tender age of 15, and touring the world with renowned legends, he says he always wanted the piece of paper we take for granted today. "I finally gave in and I swapped my musical instruments for books. I listened to that something that kept on prodding me for more than four decades." Some may think "what would everyone say?", but

this legend took it in his stride to go for his second dream because it actually made him proud. And in his mind his musical success was equivalent to his peer's academic achievements. A naive bystander may have expected him to enrol at a posh school with a tutor on hand and maybe have an education tender on the pipeline after matriculating as an incentive to say...maybe deliver their textbooks on time.



“Matric is a big challenge. The anxiety and trauma of waiting for your result can lead to suicide... I got to understand the worst experience of having to wonder whether I have passed or not”



He, in contrast, registered for secondary schooling under the Peter Lengene Adult Basic Education and Training School, near his home town Soweto. Attending three

times a week, Mabuse took on eight subjects: English SG, Sesotho HG, Cultural Studies HG, Economics HG, Business Economics HG, Geography HG and History. Mabuse says that he learned that being a matric pupil was not easy and now understands why people don't go back to school. “Matric is a big challenge. The anxiety and trauma of waiting for your results can lead to suicide. I am an adult but I got to understand the worst experience of having to wonder whether I have passed or not.” He also adds that when one is in matric, they are alone and their weaknesses are made public when they don't pass and this drives many to take their own lives.

But with the hand delivery of his results by Gauteng department of education official Thulani Nkosi accompanied by principal Masombuka, it was easy to guess what the outcome was. National as well as international messages of congratulations flooded the airwaves including President Jacob Zuma who was quoted saying “You are indeed an inspiration to all of us by showing us that one is never too old for education. We admire your tenacity, discipline and your zeal to succeed, and wish you well in all your future endeavors.” Headlines perpetuated by the journalistic exposés prying and probing into the Education sector, seemed to assist in his call for improving education in the country.

“If our nation is to strive for an educated society, we should start that journey from our homes, our neighbourhoods,” he says. Mabuse admits that he was fortunate enough to have an enquiring mind at a young age and that his parents recognised it and helped him to strive to achieve his goals. “You may argue that it was back in the day. Yes, apartheid was alive and well and we got subjected to inferior schooling, but I wanted to excel and to reach for the stars.” In a recent interview he said he forgot that he was a High School pupil and dropped out of matric because music took over. The money and all the opportunities blew him away but deep down he knew he needed matric. “My matric certificate is more important to me than all the gold and platinum discs I have won over the years,” he says.

Surely he doesn't regret he's 50 years of

musical accomplishment and all that history behind those records. His influence on the industry that gave him his voice continues to grow in leaps and bounds for such a time as this. The staggering numbers of unemployed youths, high school and university drop out have not been enough to propel government and leadership bodies into ensuring a sure fire system but instead have thrown money at the problem. We all know how that story ends.

“However, for the youth to understand the importance of education, schools and primarily parents must play a crucial role,” adds Mabuse.

Mabuse began his career as a professional musician at the age of 15 when, during his High School years, he formed his first band The Beaters. The Beaters evolved to become Harari, one of the most successful acts that dominated the music scene of the 1970's in South Africa.

In his solo capacity, Mabuse continued to create great music and his hit single “Burn Out” catapulted him into a new level of fame. Well into his 60's, this musical ambassador to South Africa, continues to tour around the world. At a time when his peers were settling their pension cheques marking the end of an era he released an album. “I love learning. I am inquisitive. We therefore need to push ourselves. Why did I succeed in achieving my lifetime goal? I had a drive to achieve. Yes, I had failures in my life, people saying no to me. But you know what? I got up and did it. After almost half a century, I got to realise that life is not a sprint, it's a marathon, a journey. Education.”

INTERESTING FACTS

* “Burn Out” was and still is one of South Africa's blow out anti-apartheid songs in the 80's

* He left school at the age of 15 and came back at 60

* He intends on studying Anthropology in Europe, to further his musical ambitions.