

# Getting vocal with RJ Benjamin

 By [Martin Myers](#)

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RJ Benjamin, vocal coach and music MD for 'Idols' Season 12 and one of the vocal coaches on the inaugural 'Voice South Africa' is planning to release his fifth album titled 'The Fifth Story' in June this year. Martin Myers got in touch with him to discover the man behind the music.



## ***What does music mean to you?***

Music is oxygen for the soul. It's hard to imagine existing in a world without it.

## ***Who are your heroes?***

Prince  
Stevie Wonder  
Hugh Masekela  
Roger Federer (I'm obsessed with tennis)

## ***It's your round. What are you drinking?***

I've reverted back to a simpler me, so these days Klippies and Coke is my poison.

## ***Name a song you wished you wrote.***

'Alone' by Liquideep

## ***Where would your dream gig be?***

I'm not sure where it would be, but it would contain a full 80 piece orchestra plus my band and with Trevor Jones conducting.

## ***What makes you stand out?***

My skill set is quite unique. I'm a singer who writes and produces for other singers, but a big part of my career has revolved around being a vocal coach. The combination of all these skills has given me an edge; especially as far as understanding the voice goes.

■ ***Do you have any nicknames?***

Rjeezy, RJ Bendlamini... some people these days just call 'Rrrrrr'

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

My usual answer would be I wouldn't exist which is probably true... but I did find a true love for teaching and mentoring and I would imagine that if it wasn't to be music in any way, I would be teaching and mentoring something else... no idea what though.

■ ***Pick five words to describe yourself.***

Driven, soulful, curmudgeonly, childlike, private.

■ ***What five discs would you take with you to a deserted island?***

Stevie Wonder – 'Songs In The Key Of Life'  
Beatenberg – 'The Hanging Gardens Of Beatenberg'  
D'Angelo – 'Voodoo'  
Coldplay – 'A Rush Of Blood To The Head'  
Daft Punk – 'Random Access Memories'

■ ***Can you recall any funny moments on stage?***

About a year after I released my hit song 'Change The World', JR's hit 'Show Dem' had just come out. I was performing at a casino resort called the Carousel, North of Johannesburg and midway through the show an audience member shouts at the top of his lungs "SHOW DEM JR SHOW DEM". My band and I cracked up.

■ ***What do you think is the greatest movie ever made?***

'The Matrix'

■ ***What does the usual mean?***

For me... 'Star Trek', 'Star Wars', comic books, tennis, cricket (when the Proteas aren't making monumentally stupid decisions) and making curries.

■ ***What is your favourite fashion garment?***

Shoes, especially sneakers. I spend way too much money on sneakers.

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

Goy is a Yiddish word for a non-Jew; my wife to the Jewish community would be called a Goy... probably not to her face.

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

South African singers and so called musicians and producers not paying attention to the details of correct pitching.

■ ***What is your fear?***

Leaving this world not knowing whether I made a difference in the South African music industry.

■ ***Happiness is...***

A cold glass of Coca Cola, a big packet of tomato flavoured Big Korn Bites with some kind of milk chocolate bar.

■ ***On stage I tend to...***

Talk way too much.

■ ***If you were walking on stage for a keynote speech what song would you use?***

'Am I Wrong' – Anderson .Paak

■ ***What are you doing next?***

I'll soon be releasing my fifth album, 'The Fifth story'. Beyond that I'll be getting into another season as in-house mentor on South African Idols.

## ■ ■ ■ What are your wishes for 2017?

I wish to be able to have a fluent conversation with my Zulu-speaking friends in isiZulu.

[www.rjbenjamin.co.za](http://www.rjbenjamin.co.za)

## ABOUT MARTIN MYERS

Co-owner at Triple M Entertainment, founder Music Exchange, manager Sipho Hotstix Mabuse

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