

Zolani Mahola

 By [Martin Myers](#)

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We chat to lead singer of the seminal South African band Freshlyground, Zolani Mahola.



The band's new album entitled *Can't Stop* will be out during March and they have a headlining performance at KDay in Cape Town, this weekend.

When are you happiest?

I'm quite happy when I'm onstage and in tune with my fellow musos and we are in turn completely at one with the audience. That moment when the circle is complete makes me very very happy!

What does music mean to you?

It means life really. There are only one or two other things in my life that make me feel like I'm in exactly the right place at the right time or that I'm doing what I was meant to do on this Earth.

Any funny moments on stage?

Once with Freshlyground, we were playing a New Year's Eve gig to a bit of a hostile audience in Mossel Bay. I made things worse by running around the stage in my knee-length colourful stockings and mohawk at midnight shouting, "What year is it??? 2011! What year is it??? 2011!" That wasn't the year.

Your heroes?

Ordinary South Africans who have been denigrated told all their lives that they are less than that they deserve very little in life, that they are intrinsically flawed. I admire the ones who somehow still get up every day in spite of the legacy they have been subjected to (which will be with us for a very long time) and still manage to live life without bitterness and with a hope

for the future. These are my heroes.

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

Oh my goodness, I love drinking so much I've had to stop! So it's water for me, sparkling!

■ ***The song you wished you wrote?***

So many! Near any Beatles, Stevie Wonder, Thandiswa Mazwai, Busi Mhlongo, Ed Sheeran, Michael Jackson song! *Smells Like Teen Spirit*, yes Nirvana!



■ ***What makes you stand out?***

I'm short. Draws the eye.

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

I would be an actress. In fact, I was derailed from the path of theatremaker by a seeming talent for singing during my third year at varsity. So, I'd be onstage still but more acting.

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

Warm, awkward, strange, engaging, contradictory/eclectic.

■ ***Five desert island discs?***

Bob Marley - *Natural Mystic*

Laura Veirs - *Salt Breakers*

Black Keys - *Turn Blue*

Stevie Wonder - *Songs in the Key of Life*

White Stripes - *Get Behind Me Satan*

■ ***Favorite fashion garment?***

I've recently designed and had made a corduroy cheetah print loose red jacket and I quite enjoy it.

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

'Le wey' - township slang in PE when I was growing up meaning this thing can also mean this girl or this boy. 'Jonga le wey yenza ntoni' - 'Check out what this chap/chick/thing is doing'. 'Khandiphe le wey' - 'Let me have this thing' (frequently in reference to S-E-X).

■ ***Your greatest achievement?***

Losing 25 kilos!



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

I lament about sexual abuse, how little it's talked about. How rife it is, how damaging it is and how much it seems a part of our human psyche.

■ ***On stage, I tend to?***

Want to connect.

■ ***The best life lesson you have been taught***

Before enlightenment, wash the dishes. After enlightenment, wash; basically and we are never above taking care of our own dirty laundry.

freshlyground.com/banana-republic

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