

First-look trailer: twisty and twisted new Showmax original *Dam*

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Showmax has just released a first-look trailer for the Showmax original *Dam*, a small-town psychological thriller premiering Monday, 22 February 2021.

Silwerskerm Best Actress winner Lea Vivier (*Wonderlus*) stars as Yola Fischer, who returns from Chile to the Eastern Cape to bury her father. She discovers he's left his farm to her, to the irritation of her sister, Sienna. It turns out that this may be more of a curse than a blessing, as the house seems to be trying to tell her something. But with her mother institutionalised, and her own meds running out, Yola has to wonder if the spirits are real or just in her head?

Four-time Safta winner Alex Yazbek (*Unmarried*, *The Wild*, *Isibaya*) wrote and directed the twisty and twisted eight-part series.

Dam builds on the success of Showmax's first two scripted originals - the Safta-winning mockumentary *Tali's Wedding Diary* and the Safta-nominated murder mystery *The Girl From St Agnes*, both of which set first-day viewing records on the platform.

Dam was filmed on location in the Bedford and Adelaide towns of the Amathole District in the Eastern Cape. Judging by the trailer, three-time Safta-winning cinematographer Tom Marais (*Hunter Killer*, *iNumber Number*) has clearly made the most of the locations, which mark a welcome change from the cities we usually see in South African series.

But if you spell *Dam* backwards, you get *mad*, and there's plenty of madness lurking underneath the beauty of his framing. Pigs die with more violence than necessary; a psychiatric hospital patient uses unorthodox art materials; and wall-mounted barbel fish seem disturbingly popular.

"This town, look at it, it's perfect on the outside," Bernoldus, the local handyman, tells Yola during the ominous trailer. "But underneath, there's a lot going on."

Two-time Safta winner Pallance Dladla (*Shadow*, *Isibaya*) co-stars as Themba, Yola's love interest, a biker on the run.

Neil Sandilands (Bernoldus) and Natasha Loring (Sienna) both took a break from Hollywood for the series: Sandilands has appeared in hit shows like *The Flash*, *The 100*, *The Americans* and *Hap and Leonard*, as well as films like Paul Greengrass's *News of the World*, opposite Tom Hanks, while Loring has voiced game characters in both the *Star Wars* and *Game of Thrones* franchises, after starring in international series like *Beaver Falls*.

Keep your eyes peeled during the trailer for glimpses of Fleur du Cap winner and 2020 Africa Movie Academy Award nominee Faniswa Yisa (*Knuckle City* and the upcoming Showmax Original *Blood Psalms*); Safta-winner Antoinette Louw (*An Act of Defiance*, *Die Laaste Tango*); Gerald Steyn (*Meisies Wat Fluit*, *Fiela Se Kind*) and aKing frontman Laudo Liebenberg (*Black Sails*, *Die Byl*); Fiesta winners Tarryn Wyngaard (*Noem My Skollie*, *Raised by Wolves*, *Dwaalster*) and Andre Odendaal (*Swartwater*, *Dwaalster*); Fleur du Cap winner and three-time Safta nominee Jennifer Steyn (*Goodbye Bafana*); and David James (*District 9*).

Picture Tree has put together an impressive creative team that includes Safta-winners Sue Steele (*Material*) as production designer, Smartie Olifant (*Intersexions*) overseeing make-up, and Brendan Jury (*The River*, *The Girl From St Agnes*) handling the score.

Dam is a Showmax original made in partnership with the Eastern Cape Development Corporation, the Amathole District Municipality and Picture Tree.

Other upcoming Showmax originals include the long-awaited second season of the Safta-winning comedy *Tali's Wedding Diary* in March and the Cape Flats neo-noir murder mystery *Skemerdans* in April, not to mention Jahmil XT Qubeka's ancient Africa series *Blood Psalms*, a co-production with Canal+ International; the Kenyan police procedural *Crime and Justice*; and the reality series *I Am Laycon* and *Uthando Lodumo*, all expected in 2021.

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