



Press Release

THE BACKSTAGE EMI SUPERSTAR SEARCH 2005 **PORT ELIZABETH: OUR NEXT PORT OF CALL**

The countdown to the semi-finals of the Backstage EMI Superstar Search, where nine regional contestants will come together to compete in Johannesburg on Sunday, December 4 at 6.05pm, has begun!

Last night we aired the eighth episode of this well-received show, and some brilliant talent was discovered in the Windy City. We've toured the entire country in our quest to find that one outstanding singer who will win the coveted prize of a recording deal from EMI worth half a million Rand, and now only KwaZulu-Natal remains. But more about that later.

Before we profile the three Port Elizabeth semi-finalists here's the winner of the Western Cape auditions, announced last night:

Jason Schaap

Says Jason, "I'm so excited and I went crazy when I found out I'd won... and I ran and told everyone! The competition was tough, but I was hoping to win. I didn't feel I was at my best during the auditions. I was nervous, but now I'm on top of my game, and everyone is going to see the real Jason. I'm going to be practising every day, and I'm really looking forward to the semi-finals. Everyone must watch out for me - because there's no turning back."

About 60 people attended the Port Elizabeth auditions, and the crew and judges soon found out why this place is called The Friendly City - they received an extremely warm welcome from everyone. A lot of the performances were original and many of the contestants performed their own compilations. What stood out was the number of proudly South African traditional songs many of the contestants chose to sing. One performer sang a tribute to her cousin who died this year and had everyone in tears. Another singer - a Michael Jackson look-alike - wanted to know if the judges were biased towards him because of the costume he was wearing. However, diplomatic Judge Grace had a long chat to him and encouraged him just to be himself. Actually Grace received an incredible amount of hugs and embraces from a number of the PE contestants.

The judges found it tough to choose the Port Elizabeth semi-finalists because there were six very good contenders. However, as ever, only three contestants could go through, and here they are:

Darren Scharneck (who nearly didn't make it because he was writing exams and had transport problems), Nehemia Louw aka "Stone", and Lwazi Sonwabile Gqabentshi.

Fact File on Darren:

Age: 18

Studying: Matric

Favourite Music: Pop/R&B

Favourite Musicians: Danny K

Hobbies: Listening to music

Quote: "My greatest ambition in life is to become an artist - I want to be an established performer in terms of singing, dancing and acting. I have been singing since I was really young, and I play piano a little, as well as the violin and the trumpet."

Fact File on Lwazi:

Age: 22

Studying: B Comm degree

Favourite Music: R& B, Jazz and Kwaito

Favourite Musician: Zola

Hobbies: Writing music, singing his songs, reading and watching television

Quote: "I'd like to be a successful musician and own my record label so that I can give back to people. If I had three wishes they would be to win the Lotto, get a recording deal and meet Nelson Mandela. I want to be a recognised songwriter and musician and also an actor on TV."

Fact File on Nehemia:

Age: 21

Favourite Music: R&B, Pop, Kwaito, Hip Hop, Rock

Favourite Musician: Usher, Lincoln Park, P Diddy

Studying: Public Relations

Quote: "I learnt to sing in church and I play the keyboard. I'd like to become a household name and help struggling artists. My greatest ambition in life is to be a worldwide entertainer."

This coming Sunday's Superstar Search show (November 27) will reveal whom the judges - and the viewers at home - chose from Port Elizabeth as the regional representative who will go through to the semi-finals. And then we'll showcase the talent from KwaZulu-Natal - our last regional show.

Remember: Viewers act as the "5th" judge and can vote any day, any time, directly after the Sunday show until the following Friday evening, after which there's the final count.

Watch the Backstage EMI Superstar Search and you could be a winner. Each week DVDs and CDs are up for grabs. The weekly winner's names go into a draw, and at the end of the competition, one lucky person will win a trip for two, to a South African destination of choice. You just have to SMS your favourite contestant's name to this number. BSS... then the contestant's name... followed by 35171.

For more information and photos of the Port Elizabeth regional winners, please contact:

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