



Press Release

DUKE NGCOBO IS AN EVIL MAN!

Duke Ngcobo, the suave-smooth villain of Backstage, is a dreadful and disgusting manipulator with the traits of a sociopath.

Since their marriage, a mere two months ago, Duke (Carlo Radebe), has so emotionally abused his adoring wife (alternatively wooing and whipping her verbally) that she has, in her ever increasing misery, turned to drink - resulting in her ever so public humiliation. Her close friendship with the principal of Vulindlela College, Ipeleng Theledi (Grace Mahlaba), is rapidly deteriorating, with her career as a music teacher/voice coach teetering into possible collapse. Katlego (Baby Cele) is also seeking (at this stage, platonic) solace from former lover, college film lecturer, Mpumi (Sello Motloung), having already admitted to him that her marriage is a mistake.

And that's just Duke's private life.

His recent busy and sleazy criminal career, to date (aside from being a club owner who deals in drugs) includes:

- A traumatic blackmail scheme, via his henchman, Mike Jennings (David Dukas) and a group of thugs, that had Peter Mzamo (Sello Sebotsane), wife, Zinzi (Tselane Tambo) and son Duma (Leroy Gopal) under constant attack, harassment and siege. All because Duke wanted his diamonds back (obtained from an illegal transaction, of course) that Peter had hidden as payback for his company being forced into bankruptcy by the despicable Duke. (Peter initially didn't know that his transport business was being used to smuggle diamonds into the country).
- The anonymous threats to the Mzamo family; the break in and ransacking of their household; the physical beating of Duma and the horrendous kidnapping (and return) of Zinzi
- Peter's murder on the day that he and Zinzi remarried and were about to emigrate/escape to England
- Zinzi and Duma being left financially and emotionally destitute - with Zinzi the prime suspect in the police investigation of Peter's death; Zinzi being the focal point of vicious rumours circulating at the college and the target of tabloid papers.
- Musclemann Mike, on Duke's behalf, effectively removing a demanding criminal associate (Moloi) from current negotiations, by way of a paper frame up that has police involved with a separate investigation.

What's more - the stunned and grieving mother and son don't even know that Peter was embroiled with Duke and Mike. And the diamonds are still missing!

While the search continues, Duke rules his dismal empire with great arrogance, much relish and glee - and no apparent conscience.

Carlo Radebe, 33, has been with Backstage since February 2002. In that time he has owned the role of Duke, infusing it with his own eccentric interpretation. (The man's role models are John Hurt and Forest Whitaker and his favourite movie scene is the opening sequence of 2001: A Space Odyssey).

Carlo puts a lot of thought into his character saying that playing Duke is an evolutionary process - a work in progress. Carlo got his first job as an actor when he was 10. After matriculating at Johannesburg's Sacred Heart College, he studied drama at Pretoria Technikon.

Does Carlo identify at all with his character? "At school, I was a loner - like Duke. Then, one day I grew up - and I transferred all those pent up emotions into an acting career - and Duke."

We asked Carlo if there are viewers who, over the years, haven't been able to separate his sinister screen role from reality, and he says, "Sometimes viewers have blurred reality, but it's a rock and a hard place scenario, and it's always best to walk away if things get nasty, but even this can be considered 'stuck-up', so you can't win every time. However, I believe that there are a lot of good people out there who make all of us in the public eye realise what a privilege our careers are and what they mean to our viewers."

NEVER TRUST A MAN IN A SUIT!

What will Duke do next?

Find out on Backstage: Mondays to Fridays @ 6.30pm

Only on e

For new pix of Carlo; Baby Cele; Grace; Sello; Tselane; Leroy and David, please contact:

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