

Bittereinder: the mole-kangaroo that likes to *bons*

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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They've only been gigging for a year and yet have managed to pick up a SAMA, play internationally, collab with one of Europe's finest rappers, and they've been nominated for three MK Awards this year, all in one fell swoop. And yet, they still all have day jobs! We caught up with Bittereinder to find out their secret to success, and what to expect in 2012, apart from space-age-Gregorian-monk-priest-DJs...



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How did Bittereinder come to be?

In 2007 Jaco started writing Afrikaans rap lyrics, and at the beginning of 2009 he asked his old high school friends Peach van Pletzen and Louis Minnaar if they would be interested in starting a band. They said yes, happily, and Bittereinder started working on the first album in studio that very same month.

How has winning a SAMA impacted on the band?

It's hard to say, it's still a little surreal really. I guess it gives us some kind of "cred" in our CV. The award definitely encouraged us and affirmed that we were on the right path musically; the competition for that specific award was strong.

You've played in the Netherlands and Amsterdam, what was that experience like?

Absolutely awesome, they take very good care of their artists at Dutch festivals. We had an amazing time on and off stage, even working a little on some new material when we could.

Congrats on being nominated for three MK Awards this year, planned your acceptance speech yet?

Thanks. Peach and Jaco's combined acceptance speech at the SAMA's was such a horrible "fail" that we might have to think about some speech-planning in the future, yes! But realistically, without any false modesty, we don't really stand a chance in any of the three categories we've been nominated in. The competition is just really incredibly strong. We're sticking with the "it's an honour just to be nominated" line (which happens to be true, and also makes us feel a lot better about not winning).

We hear Louis is working on an upgrade to your live gigs; what sort of magic should fans expect?

Space-age-Gregorian-monk-priest-DJs.



Live at Firkin. (Image by Christo Nemandt)

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All three of you have full-time day-jobs, at what point will Bittereinder become a full-time career?

Maybe never. So far we're all managing to juggle between our different lives relatively well. The great thing about Bittereinder is that it's not our full-time job, it's what we do for fun. Perhaps it's better to keep it that way, we'll have to see what the future holds.

The band has some interesting influences that include sea monsters and dancefloors, what about musical influences from the past or present?

All three of us have very different tastes in music, but there are areas that overlap, of course. We really listen to so much music, we're always playing each other new bands or sounds we've discovered, so this question has proved on a number of occasions to be impossible to answer. We'd like to believe that between the three of us we've managed to create a rather unique sound with Bittereinder, especially on the recordings, and there aren't really any artists who we could honestly say all three of us are directly influenced by whilst creating our music. At live shows we tend to play most of the more upbeat, dance-oriented tracks, but our albums will most probably always be filled with a real mixed bag of different sounds.

How did the mash-up with Tim Beumers come about?

Jaco met him in Rotterdam in 2005 after a show, and saw him perform again in Amsterdam in 2006. When the idea for a Dutch-Afrikaans rap collaboration came about he was the obvious choice.



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Some feel that in South Africa there is an early cap on success for bands, you can only go so far before you hit a plateau - do you think your ultimate success lies internationally?

We're very excited about how many SA bands seem to be breaking into the European festival circuit, and we'd love to do a bit more of that ourselves. It's an undeniable fact that kwaito, house and sokkie music hold a firm monopoly on SA's music industry at large, and most other genres are effectively niche by default, so there doesn't seem to

be much room for growth once an "alternative" band has played all the festivals and clubs there are to play in SA a few dozen times and still have to keep their day jobs. Recent media revolutions like MK and the online musical universe have helped to change that little by little. We, as Bittereinder, are still not sure what "ultimate success" entails, however. We write conscious Afrikaans rap lyrics, so it's not exactly a viable global export. Netherlands and Belgium could probably handle us. We'd like for as many Afrikaans-understanding people as possible to come into contact with our music, that would be something like ultimate success for us.

When will the second album be released, and how does the sound compare to "'n Ware Verhaal"?

We're aiming for the second half of 2012. The overall sound of the second album, at this early stage, is rather tricky to define. Most of the songs we're working on are big and strong, others are intricate and more melody-driven. The three of us are definitely finding a new groove in the writing and production process, a lot smoother, faster and more effective than the first time round. We're relatively sure that people who liked the first album will enjoy this one, but Bittereinder's sound has definitely grown, or evolved into something we hope is relatively unique but still accessible.

The last three years must have been a rollercoaster of successes, what can we expect from Bittereinder in 2012?

Well, 2009 and 2010 were studio years, we only started playing live shows in February 2011. So it's almost our one-

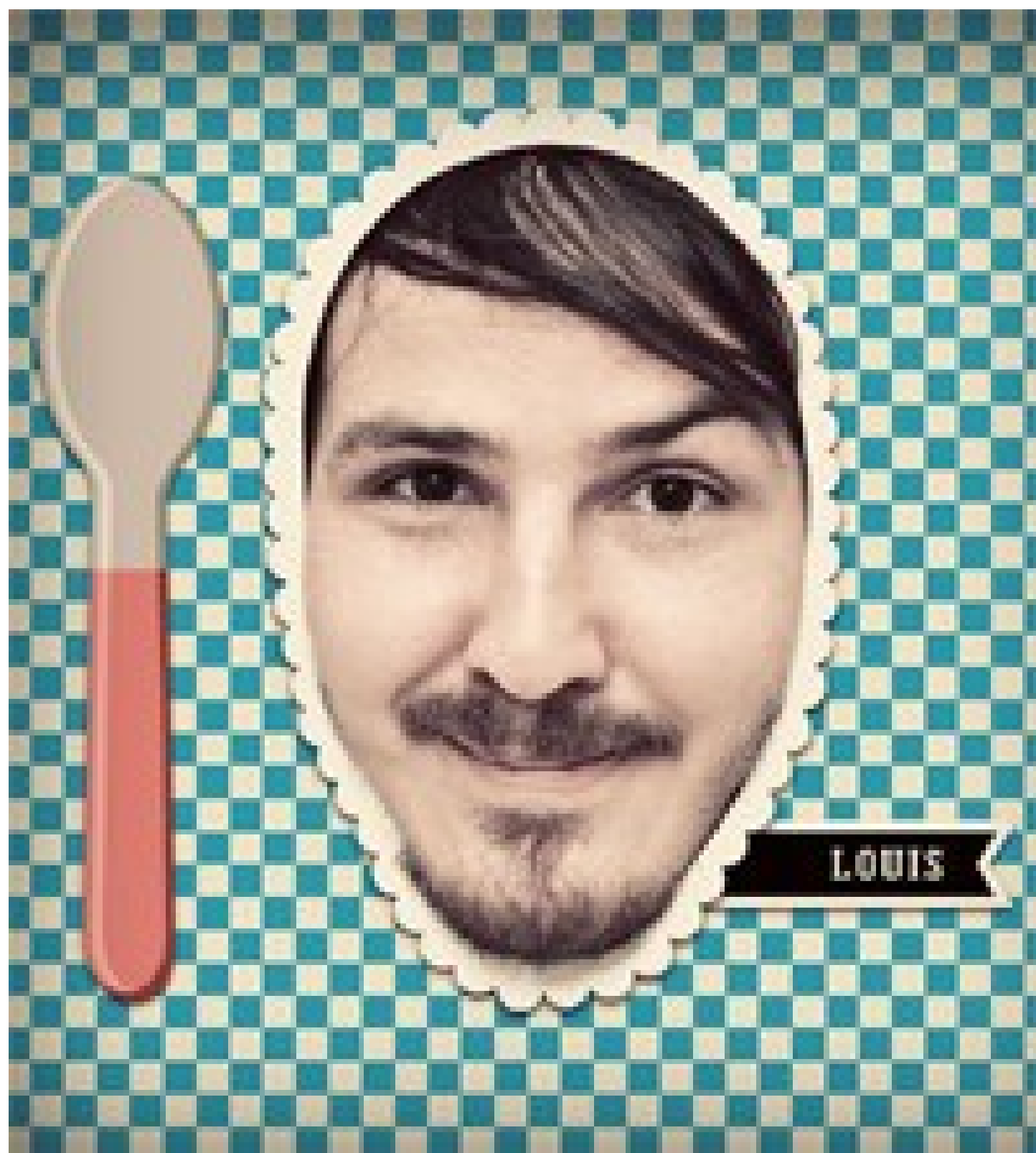
year-of-playing-live-anniversary. We've been blown away by people's response to our music, almost everything about being in the band has exceeded our every expectation. People seem to be ready for more from Bittereinder, and we're delighted to say that we have plenty more to give. We work hard on our live shows, Louis likes to keep the visual aspect of our performances fresh and witty, so expect some surprises at the gigs.

We're already booked for a couple of upcoming festivals, planning some new videos, so 2012 is looking quite promising. We'll just kind of wait and see which way the wind blows, so far that's worked pretty well for us.

If Bittereinder could be characterised by an animal, which animal would best reflect the band and why?

A mole-kangaroo. Because we're pretty underground but we like to "bons".







Bittereinder are Jaco van der Merwe, Louis Minnaar and Peach van Pletzen. Keep up with the band via their website: www.bittereinder.com, Facebook page: www.facebook.com/bittereinder, or follow them on Twitter: [@Bittereinder7](https://twitter.com/Bittereinder7).

Catch them tomorrow, Friday, 3 February 2012, at Klein Libertas in Stellenbosch where they'll be jamming with KONGOS, Van Coke Kartel and Yesterday's Pupil, as part of the Campus Invasion Tour.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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